

## TERRORISM AND THE GULF OF GUINEA: HOW SAFE ARE WE?

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### ABSTRACT

*Sequel to 9/11 attacks, the United States (and its allies) decided on countering-terrorism. This led to the establishment of initiatives like the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI), the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), and African Command (AFRICOM) amongst others. Critically looking at the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) -a region where the 21<sup>st</sup> century scrambles for oil and gas resources is deepening-however, factors that enhance terrorism and might equally turn the region into a haven for terrorists are prevalent. This becomes of immense concern, particularly after the recent massacre of Osama bin Laden; an action that his lieutenants have threatened to retaliate. This they might attempt by targeting extra-territorial powers interests, and citizens within the zone; a situation that Boko Haram is already actualizing in Nigeria.*

*Given this backdrop, this study takes a broader look, on the basis of experiential knowledge of facts on ground, at the ruinous domestic terrorism that is being unleashed against the Nigerian citizens; and which could spread through the GoG region. As such, it sets out to examine the heights that the growing domestic terrorism might attain, even in the face of extra-territorial powers global security framework, and the intended cooperation between them and the states of the region.*

*Based on its findings, the study concludes that in spite of the zero-sum militarist approach already being taken in the region, and the growing collaboration with extra-regional powers, terrorism might deepen. Thus the study suggests that the examination of the linkages between terrorism and poverty is a way to go and, that there is need to curb corruption that is ravaging the foundational principles of the regions countries. Finally, the study insists that extra-regional powers would assist these countries a great deal by, at a level, sacrificing their interests which corrupt leadership in the zone could be ensuring in order to impel such regimes to put things right.*

**Keywords:** Gulf of Guinea (GoG), extra-territorial powers, terrorism, counter-terrorism, Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION

In understanding the challenge that this study sets out to grapple with, a fore-knowledge of the region regarded as the GoG is considered useful. There are varying opinions about the exact composition of the GoG. According to Merz and Yates, the geo-political entity known as “the Gulf of Guinea consists of the seven countries along the South Atlantic Ocean, namely Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon, Angola and Congo.”<sup>1</sup> Given this opinion about the geographical stretch of the region, the GoG can be said to have straddle countries within three sub-regions of Africa –West Africa (Nigeria), Central Africa (Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, EG, STP) and Southern Africa (Angola). Within this stretch, there are smaller oil producing countries namely Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea,

<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Traub-Merz and Douglas Yates ed., *Oil Policy in the Gulf of Guinea: Security Conflicts, Economic Growth, Social Development*, Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Bonn, 2004,

Gabon, the Islands of Sao Tome and Principe, and Congo Brazzaville in Central Africa. Damian Mane conceives the region in a broader perspective; thus, he insists that the region is made up of “a large number of countries from West and Central Africa: Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR) Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra-Leone, and Togo.”<sup>2</sup> Fred Agwu however insists that the:

Gulf of Guinea is not coterminous with all the countries that are physically within the prescient of the Gulf itself. The Gulf of Guinea is rather used to designate the oil producing states at the fringe of the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, whereas countries like ... Benin Republic, Togo and Ghana that are comfortably sitting in the Gulf of Guinea are excluded from the geopolitical delimitation ... countries like Gabon and Angola, which though oil producers, are geophysically off the Gulf and located in central and southern Africa, are included.<sup>3</sup>

The contested geographical puzzle that the GoG represents is complicated by the colonial antecedent of countries within the zone; balkanized, as it were, into the Belgian, British, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish colonial outposts. By virtue of their heritage, therefore, countries in this region range from English to French, Portuguese and Spanish-speaking; each endowed with immense geological geographical diversities.

In the context of this study however, the GoG is an all-encompassing description for the coastal region, stretching across Central Africa, from Nigeria to Southern Angola; or delineates the maritime space between Benin and Equatorial Guinea's continental enclave of Rio Muni. The study region could also be said to extend along the coast of the Bight of Biafra from the Niger River to the Sananga River in Cameroon, and includes the continental shelf island of Bioko, in Equatorial Guinea.

On 27 October 1986, the UN General Assembly, through its Resolution 41/11 declared the South Atlantic Region, part of which the GoG is, as “a zone of Peace and Cooperation.”<sup>4</sup> In this vein, the countries within the zone are expected to coalesce meaningfully so as to ensure socio-economic development, environmental protection, and guarantee the peace and security of the whole region. Recent developments in the GoG, however, continue to provoke crucial questions about the prospects of achieving such goals, and the status of the South Atlantic as a zone of peace and co-prosperity. These developments include the current growing scramble for oil and gas resources of the region; a desire that rides on the crest of Middle-East becoming a boiling cauldron of instability, and the knowledge of the peak oil thesis. More so is the desire to deepen other extra-regional powers interests of mining solid mineral resources, market for their products, and counter-terror moves. Some of which might become the bull eye for terrorists.

In recent time, certain events within the international system are providing fertile environment for the mystification of terrorism as an awesome mechanism for responding to perceived grievances and/or denied ambitions. This is particularly so because of its destructive nature that could reverberate globally. In historic present, such acts were seen as part of management tools for resolving violent conflicts. In line with this, Imobighe claims

<sup>2</sup>Damian Ondo Mane, ‘Emergence of the Gulf of Guinea in the Global Economy: Prospects and Challenges’. *IMF Working Paper*. 2005, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Fred Aja Agwu, *National Interest, International Law and Our Shared Destiny*, Spectrum Books Limited, Ibadan, 2009, p. 209.

<sup>4</sup>Bolaji Akinyemi, ‘National Interest and Military Capability’, Text of Keynote address at round table on the South Atlantic Region as a Zone of Peace and Cooperation: Nigeria’s Security Interests, NIIA, Lagos, 2004, p.2.

that “in the fifties and sixties, terrorism was a prominent instrument used ... in revolutionary or liberation struggles across the globe, be they in Asia, Africa, Middle-East, or Latin America.”<sup>5</sup> Presently however, depending on where one stands, it is regarded, on one hand, as an avenue that the terrorists perceive as fit for the attainment of their goals. On the other, it is the forms the monstrous act of extreme fundamentalists. The foregoing lends credence to the notion that terrorism, like many Social Science phenomenon, does not lend itself to singular definition. This study however agrees with Schmid, Jongman et al that “terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby -in contrast to assassination- the direct targets of violence are not the main targets.”<sup>6</sup>

Since 9/11, the news of terror acts has been on the increase in news tabloids globally. This is because terrorists, most times, are fighting their home governments or are against certain acts of extra-regional powers, and often employ the destruction of socio-economic infrastructures and/or the massacre of innocent citizens as a means of getting such governments to see from their [terrorists] view points, which most times are considered poignant.

The GoG is yet to witness the magnitude of terror acts that have occurred in some other zones of the world like the Middle-East, and North and East Africa. In the face of events globally, like the present scramble for the oil and gas resources of the zone, to which General Brantz J. Craddock insisted that the more “you look at West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, it becomes more focused because of the energy situation ....”<sup>7</sup>; and the recent massacre of Osama bin Laden, who in 2003 implored terrorists to pay attention to Nigeria- an act his lieutenants have threatened to retaliate; the growing waves of domestic terrorism by Boko Haram in Nigeria, and by implication GoG, begs for consideration. Particularly when the:

Country (Nigeria) sizzled under a new form of social violence of serial bombing with a suicide streak, hitherto unknown. Notable public places such as the Nigeria Police Headquarters and the United Nations building both in Abuja, the seat of government, were bombed. The spate of terrorist act climaxed in the Christmas day bombing of a church in Niger State in which an estimated 43 lives were lost.<sup>8</sup>

Given the foregoing, the study seeks to explain the graveness of the growing domestic terrorism in the face of extra-African powers global security framework. The material that follows is thereby divided into three parts. The first discusses terrorism in the GoG. The second part is an analysis of the enabling milieu for terrorism in the GoG; while the third part examines the impacts that terrorism might have in the GoG. The study concludes on the note that the growing terrorism in the region would, aside from foisting unnecessary insecurity on communities, would gravely impact the lives of the citizens of the region.

### **Terrorism in the GoG**

There are two sides to the coin of terrorism. The first is terrorism, the other is counter-terrorism. The terrorism side of the coin can equally be divided into two; the first being the terror acts perpetrated by the leaders of the countries of the region, against their citizens. An instance of this was in the Niger Delta in Nigeria, where after embarking on the ingenious

<sup>5</sup>Thomas A. Imobighe, ‘Rethinking Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism’, in *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: An African Perspective*, ed. Thomas A. Imobighe and A.N.T. Eguavoen, Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Plc., Ibadan, 2006, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>A. Schmid, A. Jongman et al, *Political Terrorism*, 1988, cited in L. Weinberg et al, ‘The Challenges of Conceptualising Terrorism’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2004, p. 780

<sup>7</sup>Tony Cappacio, ‘Securing African Oil a major role for the New Command’. Viewed at [www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com) on 12 June 2009.

<sup>8</sup>Sylvester Odion-Akhaine and Kunle Sanyaolu, ‘Chinua Achebe: A Moral Voice in the Anthills of Decadence’, *The Guardian*, 1 January 2012, p. 9.

construction of oil as a national asset, the peoples of the region were not only alienated, but maltreated, with massive troop deployment to their communities. A situation that made the Delta oil communities to “harbour deep-seated resentment against government, and multinational oil companies, aggravated by the curious irony that they host vast oil and gas reserves but still live, for the most part, in abject poverty, acute unemployment and poor health.”<sup>9</sup>

If such a government is working in tandem with extra-regional interests, it would be taken as client regime and shrouded in regime security. A case in point was in the Middle East, where “the energy policies of the United States and Britain, based on setting up client states, or local surrogates ... to ensure long term supply, as noted by Kaldor, Karl and Said became the lynchpin of the Truman, Eisenhower and Nixon doctrines. And when Mohammed Mossadegh, a former Iranian leader challenged these policies, he was ousted by the CIA and British intelligence, who overthrew his government and re-installed their preferred ruler, Reza Shah Pahlevi- a loyal client ...”<sup>10</sup> For any form of regime security to be in place, it means the rights of the citizens has been or could be violated. Thus, irrespective of type of government:

Whether democratic (very seldom) or authoritarian (almost always), it is propped up by an international regime based on a series of Faustian pacts that promise developed, oil-consuming nations a steady supply of oil in exchange for a seal of legitimacy and the freedom to carry out its own policies at home –even repression, as the governments of consuming countries look the other way.<sup>11</sup>

In this vein therefore, “the globalisation of the Niger Deltas oil has gone side-by-side with its “securitization”, in which, as Cyril Obi puts it, global hegemonic forces see the oil as a vital “globally-needed” resource, whose continue “uninterrupted” flow along with the safety of (transnational) oil investments and oil workers must be protected at all costs, including military means.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, for a long while after independence, citizens within the zone suffered gross violations of their rights, with some dying in the course of action against such violations. An instance of this was in Equatorial Guinea, where Francisco Macias Nguema emerged as the first President. And because of the poor performance of his administration, there was an abortive coup detat in 1969, a situation he used as an excuse to mount an extensive purge of both traditional leaders and qualified cadres; (and) all political parties were fused into a United National Party. The constitution was suspended, with Macias assuming dictatorial powers. Macias neglected all functions of government other than internal security; almost all formal education ground to a halt, with most of the population being forced to revert to subsistence agriculture.<sup>13</sup>

The second format of terrorism concerns the current wave of terror, conducted by unseen disgruntled individuals, who have scores to settle with the government. Immediately after 9/11 attacks, the US government decided on giving all it takes to safeguard its national security. In this bid, the US alongside other extra-regional powers seem to have decided for Winston Churchills position that “... on no one quality, on no one process, on no one country, on no one route, and on no one field must we be dependent. Safety and certainty in

<sup>9</sup> M. Lindsay, ‘The security threat to oil companies in and out of conflict zones’, *Oil and Gas Review*, Vol. 2, 2005, p. 1-4.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Kaldor, Terry Lynn Karl & Yahia Said, ed., *Oil Wars*, Pluto Press, New York, 2007, p.18.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> Cyril Obi, ‘Enter the dragon? Chinese oil companies and resistance in the Niger Delta’, *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 35, No. 117, 2008, p.428.

<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Wood, ‘Business and Politics in a Criminal State: the Case of Equatorial Guinea’, *African Affairs*, 103/413, 2004, p. 548.

oil lie in variety and variety alone”<sup>14</sup>; thus, they made the GoG a new el dorado for their oil supply.

Through prompt announcements and instant jostling for the GoG, they accentuated the zone, particularly for terrorists. In no too distant time from their declarations, spates of terrorism were recorded in the region, particularly in Nigeria. These terror attacks have accentuated Nigeria, even as its “...violent situation featured at the UN Security Council, where the Secretary-Generals Special Representative for West Africa Said Djinnit reported that Nigeria was among countries in the sub-region that remained vulnerable. And that such weakness might ... jeopardize peace building, democracy and stability.”<sup>15</sup> This is more so since 2010 when Boko Haram has been claiming responsibility for the brutal campaign of attacks, targeting public officials and institutions and, increasingly, ordinary civilians, wreaking havoc across northern Nigeria; and with growing threats of attacking places in southern part of the country. Even, about “550 people were killed in 115 separate attacks in 2011, a grisly toll that has been accelerating.”<sup>16</sup> The tactics and rhetoric of the terror group therefore expose its link with terror organisations beyond its base in northeastern Nigeria.

This situation is however not limited to Nigeria, even as its neighbour, Cameroon, seems to be facing a grave threat from a “hybrid criminal/separatist movement operating in the swampy peninsula of Bakassi, as Andrew McGregor points out, which is now targeting oil industry infrastructure in the Gulf of Guinea in its effort to shake off Cameroonian control of the region.”<sup>17</sup> This is even so, as the type of insurgency witnessed in Nigeria, which centered on oil production, is on-going and growing; with an attack on security forces near the offshore Moudi oil terminal. The insurgent group -Africa Marine Commando (AMC) - claimed responsibility for the attack, which “left six dead, including three civilians, two members of Cameroons *Bataillon d’Intervention Rapide* and one of the assailants.”<sup>18</sup> The AMC was equally responsible for the kidnap of six sailors from a Belgian ship anchored 40 km off Douala in September 2010.

When these spates of terror acts and perverted nationalism are added together, one realizes that the GoG is full of strange bed fellows of lunatic fringe elements of the black-sheep of a dysfunctional family. One is turbaned and goes around the bend bowing to the crescent moon and star, suffering from a very contagious Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease of his mad cows. The other has gone loco from sniffing too much hydrocarbons in his littoral states at the bottom of the river Niger.<sup>19</sup>

On another plane, there are either real or imagined terrorist cells that are linked to al-Qaeda in West Africa. And these are, according to Cyril Obi “... in the predominantly Muslim Saharan and Sahelian Belts of the region.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, Africa is regarded as the “... soft underbelly for global terrorism.”<sup>21</sup> Given the foregoing, one realizes that some factors must be feeding into the growth of terrorism, which is turning the region into an unsecured area.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 173-174.

<sup>15</sup> Madu Onuorah, Oghogho Obayuwana, and Laolu Akande, ‘Government forecloses dialogue with Boko Haram’, *The Guardian*, 25 January 2012, p. 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> J. Peter Pham, ‘Boko Haram’s Evolving Threat’, *Africa Security Brief*, 2012, No. 20,

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Mc Gregor, ‘Cameroon Rebels Threaten Security in Oil-Rich Gulf of Guinea’, *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 8, Issue 43, 2010,

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.; and *La Nouvelle Expression* (Douala), 18 November 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Chima Ekenyerengozi, ‘In the House of Dogs’, *Sunday Guardian*, 1 January 2012, p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Obi, ‘Oil , US Global Security and the Challenge of Development in West Africa’, loc. cit.

<sup>21</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, ‘September 11<sup>th</sup>, One Year On: How US-African Relations Have Changed’, *Business Africa*, 1-5 September 2002, p. 1.



## TERRORISM: AN ENABLING MILIEU

While assessing bomb blasts in Bauchi (a state in Nigeria), the Nigerian Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Azubuike Ihejirika observed that "... the attack was an act of terrorism ..."<sup>22</sup> This reveals that, in contrast to common belief that the GoG is relatively secured, terrorism and its attendant result, insecurity, are increasingly becoming the norm. For this to be however, "there must be a groundswell that could incite disgruntled persons, as well as engender the continuity of such act."<sup>23</sup> This submission is due to the view that the perpetration of terror acts is entwined to the "interaction of a lack of economic perspectives, social deprivation, a loss of cultural identity, political repression and a dysfunctional state."<sup>24</sup>

The magnitude of terror in the GoG is yet to equal that taking place in the Middle-East. This is because in spite of the prevalence of these factors, "the potential for violence within the zone is (still) being directed, in the form of heightened crime, civil unrest, civil war and attack on installation, against the society."<sup>25</sup> However, this scenario is changing as disgruntled individuals within the zone are increasingly adopting the style of the Middle-Eastern terrorists. On this note therefore, this section chronicles the prevailing situations and/or factors that feed into terrorism within the region. As such, we should note that a complex set of domestic and global factors have created conditions that spur terrorism within the region.

The post-independence characteristic of the GoG countries is chief amongst the factors that engender terrorism within the zone. Really, most citizens of the GoG countries see their states as agents for their empowerment. These states are therefore expected to provide enabling environ that would support the attainment of the citizens varying life goals that are in tune with the constitutional dictum of their countries. However, only an "inclusive, accountable and transparent process assures citizens that policy decisions are based on broad societal interests and that the leadership and administrative infrastructure of the state remain accountable for their decisions and act as neutral arbitrators of competing interests."<sup>26</sup>

These characteristics are needed in order to ensure the Gulfs countries possess the internal dynamics requisite for grooming cohesive political community as well as developing their own administrative capabilities. Flowing from the foregoing therefore is the notion that the establishment of an inclusive political system, which is accountable and equally beneficial to all, is a requisite element for bonding varying entities into a political community, thereby promoting state-building. However, varying ethno-religious actors distance themselves from being incorporated into their different states because they felt that the costs of incorporation might outweigh the benefits. This feeling is hinged upon the view that their states would neither serve as agents for their advancement nor the actualization of their collective interests.

Prior to the 1990s, individual GoG state was successful in managing its diversity and differences. This is even so during times of, according to Ukeje, "breakdown in state-society relations, government deadlock or instability, ensuring that the sub-region was stable for much of first two decades after the wave of independence in 1960."<sup>27</sup> The region was regarded the most stable in Africa. Given the murky economic waters that the states of the

<sup>22</sup> Paul Orude, 'How we escaped death in Bauchi bomb blasts, by survivors', *Daily Sun*, 1 June 2011, p. 16

<sup>23</sup> Survey interview at NIIA, Lagos, on 12 April 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Stefan Mair, 'Terrorism and Africa', *African Security Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Survey interview at NIIA, Lagos, on 19 April 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Kidane Mengisteab, 'Africa's Intrastate Conflicts: Relevance and Limitations of Diplomacy', *African Issues*, Vol. 31, No.1/ 2, 2003/2004, p. 25-39.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Ukeje, 'Globalization to Conflict Management: Reflections on the Security Challenges facing West Africa in the Twenty-First Century', *The African Association Political Science Conference (AAPS)*, 2005.

zone had to wade through in the 1980s however, these countries sauntered down the 1990s as some of the poorest and most conflict-prone states in the entire world. Thus, the region became an intractable security conundrum. This is especially because of the implosion of states like Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire into civil wars. These wars were characterized by atrocious banality and dastard attacks on civilian population.

Also, there were irresponsible conscription and mobilisation of civilian combatants, exploitation of child soldiers, the plundering of natural resources, which provided the requisite fund for the prosecution of the war efforts, and harrowing humanitarian emergencies. Inclusive in this list are "massive internal displacements and refugee outflows, the sheer magnitude of post-war reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation processes, and the reckless subversion of peace processes, to mention a few."<sup>28</sup> Given the emergent state collapse, which was consequent on the civil wars and the growth of shadow economies, Bracking and Harrison submit that "the geography of security and claims to sovereignty have become extremely complex."<sup>29</sup>

Although not intrinsically a trap as Paul Collier<sup>30</sup> puts it, poverty however feeds into how the GoG is growing into a hot spot of terrorism. This is because "security the chief pretence of civilisation, according to Shaw, cannot exist where the worst of dangers, the danger of poverty, hangs over everyones head."<sup>31</sup> Currently, the oil exporting countries of the GoG, which are viewed by the "oil industry as the worlds premier hotspot, soon to become the leading deepwater offshore oil production center"<sup>32</sup>, are amongst the highest earners in Africa, even as "foreign energy companies pour billions of dollars into the region for the exploration and production of petroleum."<sup>33</sup> The revenue is however negatively impacting these countries, which are beset by palpable poverty.

This view is hinged upon the fact that the oil revenues are going into the coffers of governments that are in no way transparent, accountable, nor fair; and that are unwilling to use such petrodollars to reduce poverty within their confines. Thus, oil monies are exacerbating living conditions in the zone. As such, "... promise and opportunity sit side by side with disease, war and desperate poverty"<sup>34</sup> in the GoG. The problem is not the oil money in itself; rather, it is the corrupt leadership, which is equally a contributory factor, and with which these states have been bedeviled since independence. Perhaps juxtaposing the past and the present so as to check on the nexus between poverty and terrorism, Collier went on an excursion of the bottom billion, part of which the GoG states are. He observes that:

During the 1970s their (bottom billion) per capita income rose at 0.5 percent a year, so they were becoming slightly better off in absolute terms but at a rate that was likely to be barely perceptible. ... in the 1980s the performance of the bottom billion got much worse, declining at 0.4 percent a year. In absolute terms, by the end of the 1980s they were back to where they had been in 1970. And then came the 1990s. This is now seen as the golden decade, between the end of the Cold War and 9/11 – the decade of the cloudless sky and booming markets. It wasnt so golden for the

<sup>28</sup> Paul S. Orogun, 'Plunder, Predation and Profiteering: The Political Economy of Armed Conflicts and Economic Violence in Modern Africa', *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2003, p. 283-313.

<sup>29</sup> Sarah Bracking and Graham Harrison, 'Africa, Imperialism and New Forms of Accumulation', *ROAPE*, 95, 2003, p. 5-10.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, Oxford University Press, New York, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> George Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara*, Penguin Books, London, (1905) 2000.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Maidment, 'The Other Gulf', *Forbes*, 10 March 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Ian Gary and Terry Lynn Karl, 'Bottom of the Barrel: Africa's Oil Boom and the Poor', *Catholic Relief Services*, Baltimore, 2003, p. 5. Viewed at [www.catholicrelief.org/africanoil.cfm](http://www.catholicrelief.org/africanoil.cfm) on 16 May 2010.

<sup>34</sup> US Government, loc. cit.

bottom billion: their rate of absolute decline accelerated to 0.5 percent a year. By the turn of the millennium they were therefore poorer than they had been in 1970.<sup>35</sup>

During these years discussed by Collier, one notes that many individuals would have lost their jobs, business capital and any other source of livelihood, particularly because the GoG states are lacking in conducive work/cottage business atmosphere, which could guarantee success in such ventures. This at least connotes poverty, and even “citizens of these countries live, as Margaret Désilier puts it, on by far less than the UNDP minimum of \$2 USD per day.”<sup>36</sup> A good instance of this is in Nigeria, which has earned more than “\$300 billion in oil revenues over the last 25 years, (but) per capita income is less than \$1 a day.”<sup>37</sup> This situation leads unemployed youths to search for preferred sources of income. My guess therefore is that some of these young men form a pool of recruits for terrorists and/or militants as the case of Nigeria has shown; whose labour come pretty cheap in an environment of disheartening penury. For instance, the poor and underdeveloped oil producing communities of the Niger Delta have produced “... a large class of young men who have no hope of legitimate work that would fulfill their ambitions, and are easily recruited into violence.”<sup>38</sup> This is more so as Nnamdi Obasi insists that “the aggravation of poverty and chronic youth unemployment in the Niger Delta region in the last two decades seems, to have created a congenial environment for youngsters in the region to engage in various forms of hooliganism and armed robbery as veritable livelihood strategies.”<sup>39</sup>

Really observers like Christopher Clapham<sup>40</sup> are using the argument that most of the perpetrators of the attacks of 11 September 2001 are from the wealthy country of Saudi Arabia and that late Osama bin Laden, the linchpin of the terror acts was from a wealthy background to counter the poverty/terrorism theory. However, this link is obvious to some other observers, such as James Wolfensohn<sup>41</sup>, the former President of the World Bank, and Jeffrey Sachs.<sup>42</sup> There is little need to look too far in order to understand the peculiar link between terrorism and poverty within the region. Part of these can be traced to the drastic cut of expenditures on public services by the states of the zone.

Governmental spending on education, for example, has seriously declined. Thus, many students in public primary and secondary schools in Nigeria for example, study in dilapidated buildings. Such spending on the health sector has equally been reduced, even at a time when “AIDS epidemic and malaria are shredding the economic and social fabric of many African societies. And further submitting, Mengisteab notes that per capita public expenditure on health has ... declined or stagnated since the early 1990s ... (while) budgetary stringency has

<sup>35</sup> Collier, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Margaret Désilier, ‘Capacity Building and Oil Exploitation in the Gulf of Guinea’, in Traub-Merz and Yates, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>37</sup> World Bank, ‘Making Petroleum Revenue Management Work for the Poor: Transparency and Good Governance Dominate Discussion on Petroleum Revenue Management’, *Press Release*, 4 November 2002.

<sup>38</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘The Warri Crisis: Fuelling Violence’, *Human Rights Watch*, Vol. 15, No.18, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Nnamdi Obasi, ‘The State and Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in the Niger Delta’, in *Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Collection in the Niger Delta, Nigeria*, ed. Amadu Sesay and Antonia Simbine, College Press and Publishers Ltd, Ibadan, p. 87-88.

<sup>40</sup> Christopher Clapham, ‘Terrorism in Africa: Problems of Definition, History and Development’, paper presented at the *Conference on Africa after 9/11: Strategies for Engagement and Cooperation*, Alakawyn University, Ifrane, Morocco, 2003.

<sup>41</sup> James D. Wolfensohn, ‘On Fighting Terrorism and Poverty’, 2002. Viewed at <http://www.worldbank.org.cn/English/Content/96m6286227.shtml> on 17 April 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: How We Can Make It Happen In Our Lifetime*, London: Penguin, London, 2005.



severely limited the capacity of governments to attract, train, retain and maintain the morale of professional health workers.”<sup>43</sup>

More so, public utilities are epileptic. An instance of this is in Equatorial Guinea which is awash in financial resources, and has witnessed an “economic growth that averaged around 41 percent per-annum and a building boom has gripped its capital -Malabo and the oil towns of Luba on Bioko and Bata on the mainland.”<sup>44</sup> However, the benefits of development has been limited, even as it remains concentrated in the hands of a very small elite, and with very few trickle-down effects for the masses who still suffer from extreme under-development. Some of the roads are therefore in abysmal condition, and inhibit, to a great extent, the conveyance of people and produces from the rural areas to urban centers. Thus, “most of the money Obiang spends inside the country, according to Peter Maas, goes to seemingly misguided huge projects such as building a new capital, Malabo 2, rather than for roads between villages, new schools, or new hospitals.”<sup>45</sup>

Power supply is worse off. One therefore wonders how small and medium enterprises would survive or thrive in such a situation. Even, the constant power outage in Equatorial Guinea and in Nigeria has driven some foreign businesses out of these countries, thereby feeding into the increasing rate of unemployment. Thus, Ukowa Ukiwo submits that “in the (prevailing) circumstances, private operators are taking over the provision of resources such as water and electricity.”<sup>46</sup> Nigeria in particular has therefore been observed to have “performed worse, in terms of basic social indicators, than sub-Saharan Africa as a whole and much worse than other regions of the developing world.”<sup>47</sup>

Contributory to the endemic poverty is the robust corruption, especially amongst the leaders of the GoG countries. Really, the quasi civilian administrations that have come to replace the military men have failed to deliver the expected dividends of democracy. This failure on the part of politicians is due to high incidence of corruption. An instance of this is in Nigeria where “25 per cent of Nigerias annual budget is spent on National Assembly members allowances and salaries (says) CBN Governor”<sup>48</sup>, while the former House of Representatives leader, Dimeji Bankole is said to have siphoned some monies, part of which \$1 billion traced to his domiciliary account at United Bank for Africa. And on another “₦10 billion, he is said to have ...snub EFCC.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, while submitting the results of an opinion survey, Lewis et al posit that:

post-transition euphoria has given way to political realism among the public. Nigerians are less content with current political circumstances ..., and less enthusiastic about the system of democracy. These changes indicate that many people today are coming to terms with the difficulties of democratic change. ...General dissatisfaction is echoed by negative assessments of government performance on key issues .... The majority of Nigerians do not believe that their representatives are concerned with their problems or work for their interests .... A number of food shortages .... A growing majority believes the government is not

<sup>43</sup> Mengisteab, op. cit., pp. 34

<sup>44</sup> Brendan McSherry, ‘The Political Economy of Oil in Equatorial Guinea’, *African Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 8, Issue 3, Spring 2006.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Maas, ‘A Touch of Crude’, *Mother Jones Journal*, 2005. Viewed at

[http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2005/01/12\\_400.html](http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2005/01/12_400.html) on 13 August 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Ukoha Ukiwo, ‘Politics, Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 2003, p. 130.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Désilier, loc. cit.

<sup>48</sup> [www.ngex.com/news/public/newsinfo.php?nid=9076](http://www.ngex.com/news/public/newsinfo.php?nid=9076) Viewed on 25 May 2011.

<sup>49</sup> ‘₦10 Billion: Bankole Snubs EFCC’, *Daily Sun*, 1 June 2011, p. 6.

effectively handling the problems of inequality, and more than half thinks the gap between the rich and poor has worsened ...<sup>50</sup>

The canvas becomes worsened when the colours of mismanagement in Equatorial Guinea is painted. Brendan McSherry therefore posits that,

Misallocation of oil rents for lavish personal expenditures have grown to ridiculous proportions. Obiang just bought a multimillion dollar mansion outside Washington D.C. His son Teodorin has become a regular in Manhattan, Hollywood and Paris, where he is famous for driving his many fancy cars up and down the Champs-Elysses. He has even begun his own Los Angeles-based music company. A recent corruption scandal involving Washington D.C.s Riggs Bank implicated the bank and Obiang for illegally siphoning off millions of dollars from Equatorial Guineas treasury into personal accounts.<sup>51</sup>

This corrupt leadership is not limited to Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea. In Angola, it is explained that "... God filled the ocean with fish, He buried fabulous diamonds in the soil, and huge oil reserves under the sea. And then, concludes the story, to compensate for this generosity, God peopled Angola with greedy men ..."<sup>52</sup> And though "fashionable to say that we are cursed by our mineral riches, as Raphael Marques submits, thats not true. We are cursed by our leaders."<sup>53</sup>

Really the ineptitude of GoG governments over certain matters, coupled with the transformation of the fortunes of the political elites overnight has engendered disenchantment with these governments. This disenchantment is tainted with the spread of aggressive demeanour, which "always presupposes the existence of frustration ..."<sup>54</sup>; thus, "... the potential for collective violence according to Gurr is a function of the degree to which such shared discontents are blamed on the political system and its agents."<sup>55</sup> Thus, it is hardly surprising that prevailing harsh politico-economy within the region proffers ample opportunity for the germination terrorism.

Another contributory factor is the porous border that majority of the states of the region share. Though an overlay, rather than a major causative factor, the porous borders could be exploited by terrorists, both as highways for actualizing their terror desires, and escape routes for agents, who might desire an exit from any of these countries immediately after a terror operation is concluded. Another dimension to the porous border issue is the ease with which small arms and light weapons (SALW) are trafficked within the region. Thus, it becomes easy to conduct subversive activities within the region. This is because "clandestine government supplies often go to groups in neighbouring countries."<sup>56</sup> As such, the relative ease, with which these arms are trafficked, either incites individuals to perpetrate crimes, instigate conflicts or fuel extant ones. This thereby creates ample room in which to situate

<sup>50</sup> Peter Lewis, Etannibi Alemika, Michael Bratton and Zeric K. Smith, 'Down to Earth: Changes in Attitudes Toward Democracy and Markets in Nigeria', *USAID/ Afro-Barometer*, 2001.

<sup>51</sup> McSherry, loc. cit.

<sup>52</sup> Philippe Le Billon, 'Drilling in deep water: oil, business and war in Angola', in *Oil Wars*, ed. Mary Kaldor, Terry Lynn Karl & Yahia Said, Pluto Press, New York, 2007, p.100.

<sup>53</sup> Cited in Le Billon, Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> See W. Alade Fawole, 'The Military and the Future of Democracy in Africa', in *Democratisation in Africa: African Perspective*, ed. Omo Omoruyi, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Adesina Sambo and Ada Okwuosa, Hima & Hima Ltd, Benin City, p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N. J., 1969, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> Lora Lumpe and Lucy Mathiak, 'Government Gun Running to Guerrillas', quoted in Nicolas Marsh, 'Conflict Specific Capital: The Role of Weapons Acquisition in Civil War', *International Studies Perspectives*, No. 8, 2007, p. 67.

“festering governance crisis (and) insecurity ... in West Africa within the context of the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons, proliferation, availability and use.”<sup>57</sup> Summing these up reveals the well set platform on which terrorists within the zone, in Nigeria in particular have been operating.

### Impacts of Terrorism on the GoG

Realising that the conditions conducive to the growth of terrorism within sub-Saharan Africa -around the GoG particularly- is increasing, extra-African powers, the US especially, have become concerned about the “conditions (of) Islamic fundamentalism ... “failed states”, and the lack of effective territorial control- that can provide high-quality operating social-justice movement.”<sup>58</sup> This realisation become evident after the 9/11 attacks on the US, and the desire of extra-African powers to diversify the sources of their oil supply, the abundant possession of which has accorded geo-strategic significance on the GoG.

As such, it is believed that extra-territorial powers parading the GoG “... cant allow areas like that to be ungoverned, to become a haven for terrorists.”<sup>59</sup> Thus the GoG was made one of the sites for the global war on terror; with the US and its G8 allies co-opting the governments of the region and ECOWAS in a counter-terrorism partnership. An act that Rita Abrahamsen explains as “drawing Africa (GoG) into the debate about security in this way may help to legitimate the war on terrorism”<sup>60</sup> This lend credence to Jacques Chirac submission that “it is not the West against terrorism. It is the world against terrorism.”<sup>61</sup>

Going by the apocalyptic statement traced to bin Laden that “kill (me) and a hundred Osamas will rise to take (my) place”<sup>62</sup>, the call by bin Laden in 2003, on all terrorists to focus their attention on Nigeria, and the threat of retaliation by his lieutenants; the “new challenges, according to a respondent, “become more obvious and even robust.”<sup>63</sup> Really the US and the G8 counter-terrorism initiatives have been greatly successful; however, such initiatives might negatively impact on the GoG. This is because oil and gas resources of the region are the major factors that lured the US and its Western friends to the region; and not terrorism. This position is better appreciated when one realizes that sequel to the demise of the Cold War, Africa was said to have fallen off the global map; and even former US President George W. Bush insisted that Africa (the GoG inclusive) “does not fit into the national strategic interest as far as I can see.”<sup>64</sup>

However, the manner that the US made a *volte face* from Bushs insistence to vie for the oil resources of the region along with China and other global powers becomes particularly instructive. Thus, in order to partake of the determination of the quantity of the oil produced and who gets what quantity, the US and its allies real hegemonic interests in the region, which has a predominance of fragile and/or weak states that they can easily lure into their hegemonic drag-net, prevail over the acclaimed desire to stop terrorism. This notion is underlie by US perception of the intensification of Chinas interests in Africa and its entrance into the zones oil scramble in particular, as a challenge. A critical consideration of this oil

<sup>57</sup> Ukeje, op.cit, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Padraig Carmody, ‘Transforming Globalization and Security: Africa and America Post 9/11’, *Africa Today*, Vol. 52, No. 1, 2005, p. 106.

<sup>59</sup> General C. Wald, Deputy Commander US European Command, quoted in A. Koch, ‘US to Bolster Counter-Terrorism Assistance to Africa’, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 2004. Visited at [www.janes.com/defence/news/jdw/](http://www.janes.com/defence/news/jdw/) on 19 June 2008.

<sup>60</sup> Rita Abrahamsen, op. cit., p. 682.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Perspectives’, *Newsweek*, October 1, 2001.

<sup>62</sup> ‘The New Gulf Oil States’, *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 2003. p.1.

<sup>63</sup> ‘The Allies Who made Our Foes’, *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>64</sup> ‘The Battle Ahead’, *Newsweek*, op. cit. p. 25.

scramble thus reveals that extra-regional powers interests transcend the extirpation of terrorism.

More than the hegemonic tussle that terrorism/ counter-terrorism have brought to bear on the GoG is the challenge of terrorism. It is a known fact that “capturing or killing one individual will not rid ... the world of the scourge”<sup>65</sup> of terrorism; and that late bin Laden led “a movement that cannot, according to former President Bush, be silenced by simply silencing its leader.”<sup>66</sup> Going by the afore mentioned 2003 admonition of bin Laden that terrorists should concentrate on Nigeria and the imminent retaliation of his extermination, the form that the attack would take and the region where it would be perpetrated provoke crucial thoughts. If the GoG is chosen, then extra-regional interests in oil and gas might become the targets of such attacks. If this be, one wonders what would become of the regions citizens, environment, security and development. This is because the region has some of the densest population in Africa. Nigeria for example, boasts of about 150 million citizens. If this population is added to that of the remaining states of the region, the scenario then becomes gloomier.

The fearsome aspect of this is the terrorist’s wanton desires for nuclear weapons. This concern about nuclear terrorism keeps growing to new heights because A.Q. Khan, the revered father of Pakistans nuclear bomb, confessed in a not too distant past, to peddling nuclear weapons technology to Libya and other rogue states; and that “... terrorist groups bent on destroying the United States –like Osama bin Ladens al-Qaeda network- may be closer than anyone had realized to acquiring nuclear weapons.”<sup>67</sup>

This situation is compounded by Bushs revelation that “another crisis could hit us, more terrible than this one ... It could be more terrible –biological, chemical or plutonium. I dont have direct evidence, but I have enough evidence.”<sup>68</sup> Though the extra-regional powers parading this zone (and thereby making the region a target of terrorism) might have prepared themselves for such an attack. However, a region that is predominated by states, whose citizens continuously witness the paradox of plenty, and where there is some level of distasteful unconcern about security, proffers only gloomy picture. This stance becomes important because two A-bombs, dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the World War II altered the history of Japan, and “... within weeks of bombings, the death toll had climbed to more than 100,000 people –mainly civilians.”<sup>69</sup>

Though as Matthew Burn has argued “the essential ingredients of nuclear weapons are very hard to make and dont occur in nature”<sup>70</sup>, however the secret of making it is what Khans network has been peddling. These terrorists may not have the delivery device; they can still stage full scale nuclear attack through the use of conventional explosive device containing radioactive waste –a so called dirty bomb. This becomes dangerous for the states of the GoG because dirty bombs are meant to poison “targets rather than destroying them with blast and heat.”<sup>71</sup> Thus the detonation of a dirty bomb around urban centers might “contaminate dozens of city blocks, fomenting panic and costing tens of billions of dollars in lost revenues and devalued real estate, even if it claimed no human lives.”<sup>72</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Mary H. Cooper, ‘Nuclear Proliferation and Terrorism’, *CQ Researcher*, Vol. 14, No. 13, 2004, p. 299.

<sup>67</sup> *Newsweek*, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>68</sup> Cooper, op. cit., p. 308.

<sup>69</sup> See Michael A. Levy and Henry C. Kelly, ‘Weapons of Mass Disruption’, *Scientific American*, 2002, p. 76-81.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Nuclear War: Who are the threats?’, *Awake*, 8 March 2004, p.7.

<sup>71</sup> Levy and Kelly, loc. cit.

<sup>72</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*, Pantheon Books, New York, 2004, p. 230.

What makes this situation worrisome is the growing poverty within the states of the region. Thus, a wealthy terrorist could easily recruit and/or train some of the inhabitants of the region [for monetary gain] for unleashing attacks against US and/or Western interests within the zone. This might attract serious reprisals from the extra-regional powers, who will not mind who and what would be destroyed within the zone. This is particularly so because “if the perpetrators of (terror attacks) refuse to distinguish between official America (and/or other extra-African powers) and the American people (and other extra-regional powers citizens), target and victim, “the war on terror (will proceed) by dishing out collective punishment with callous disregard for either “collateral damage” or “legitimate grievances.”<sup>73</sup>

What flows from the foregoing is the readiness of the US to “... direct every resource at our command –every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence and every necessary weapon of war- to the defeat of the global terror network- our response involves ... a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have seen.”<sup>74</sup> The situation becomes worsened by the porosity of the borders within the region, which might be explored by the perpetrators; thereby presenting the whole region as a zone for war. This will, in the long run, lead to the haemorrhage of Foreign Direct Investment [FDI] in the region. Security is highly important for any investment to thrive, and investors are mostly concerned about profit. An unsecured region is considered not good enough for investment. As such, there will be both dearths of FDI as well as capital flight. If these happen, unemployment will become robust, thus leading to frustration.

Much more, the authoritarian rulers of the region might be tempted to brand their political rivals as terrorists. Thus using it as the reason to run the opposition out of the state or into the gulag. In other words, the GoG governments might exploit such opportunity in order to “crackdown on opposition, sometimes terming them to be terrorists.”<sup>75</sup> If this is done, it might create fear, thus inhibiting freedom of speech as well as any constructive criticism that might help the administration in leading the regions states into development. If all these agglutinate to become the order of the day within the region, the military might become a preferred option for the power throne, thereby re-assuming such, and putting an end to the few years of tortured democratic experience within the zone. As such, “the fate of the emerging democracy”, according to Fawole, “is hanging in the balance as long as African armies are yet to divest themselves of the propensity for political violence at the slightest pretext.”<sup>76</sup>

Given the foregoing, the neo bridal status of the GoG, which is caused by its becoming the hotspot of the oil industry, might soon come to an end. This study is not to paint a canvas of doom. Rather, it is meant to serve as a clarion call to all the states of the region on one hand, and to let extra-regional powers have fore knowledge of what might happen to their interests.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

What can be done to curb the growing threat of terrorism in the GoG? Though the greatest possibilities might come at a time when terrorism would have caused so much discomfort that people, most likely those that can cause tangible change locally would have been haemorrhage from the zone. Such time may not be the only moment when successful policies would preclude such threat to life and property. In conclusion therefore, I contend

<sup>73</sup> US Government, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, US Government, Washington D. C., September 2002, p.5.

<sup>74</sup> See Sunday A. Ochoche, ‘Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: The African Experience’, in ed. T.A. Imobighe and A. N. T. Eguavoen, op. cit, p. 173.

<sup>75</sup> Fawole, ‘The Military and the Future of Democracy in Africa’, loc. cit.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Finally the terror hall of infamy’, *The Nation*, 17 June 2011, p. 64.



that it is possible to make policies that could tackle every phase of terrorism in the Gulf, particularly Nigeria. The first way to go becomes the examination of the linkage between terrorism and poverty within the zone.

A society where we have too many unemployed/underemployed persons, who find it difficult to satisfy the basic needs of life (feeding, clothing and housing), is going through the throes of poverty; which is a veritable driver for resentment. In as much as people have been encouraged to get some bit of education or non-formal training, the best thing that could happen to such persons is getting commensurate jobs. A country that has too many unemployed persons, and who are living in abject denial of the needs of life, is only planning to self destruct.

Rather than thinking of military solution alone, the way to go should be to tinker the causative factors of the challenge. I am by no means suggesting that a mono causal explanation of the spate of terror attacks in the GoG exist. Rather in resolving the snowballing challenge, the governments of the zone would do well in tackling the festering poverty that has eaten deep into the foundational principles of their countries, even to the extent of being able to incite majority of the citizens against the governments. Thus, irrespective of the military alternative that might be taken, if the poverty factor is not well handled, then the alternative might be a cosmetic measure.

In lieu of an all out military approach, the government should try a mixture of curbing poverty and military solution. Really it could be hard to get the government to deal with this challenge in an environment that is living on rent. All the countries of the GoG are rentier states; this explains their making no contribution to the production of the oil. Since the ruling elites are in no way reliant on tax of their citizens in administering the regions states, they (ruling elites) would feel no compunction in misusing the funds. This is hinged on the mindset that any revenue not worked for could be frittered away. And since politics in these countries have assumed the level of patronage, political elites would always be free to protect their interests. On this note, the destructive cycle of corruption may continue until certain philosopher kings are able to assume the political mantle of these countries.

Finally, the major powers and oil multinationals in the zone should work towards assisting these countries out of the engulfing vortex that is sweeping them away. This is because if the extra-regional powers would not mind sacrificing their interests for once, they would be able to call the greedy political elites to order. This may be a task impossible, particularly when access to international resources is important in states survival in the systemic power struggle. A good way to go therefore would be, rather than the supply of arms and ammunition and military training; to ensure that the countries of the region adhere strictly to workable policies.

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