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Policy and Politics in Nigerian Maritime Industry: Evidence from Onne, Warri, Ibaka Deep Sea Port and Calabar Port

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study investigates the systemic policy and political factors impeding the performance of Nigeria's maritime industry. Combining a quantitative survey of 400 questionnaires to get key insights into the stakeholders' perceptions of policy, politics, and efficiency at the four selected Nigerian ports: Onne, Warri, Ibaka, and Calabar. Quantitative findings reveal a widespread perception that political interference and regulatory fragmentation are the most significant barriers to port development. A statistical comparison across the four ports highlights that the perception of political interference is most acute at Warri Port. The results showed a statistically significant difference between the ports ($F(3,396)=28.71, p<0.001$). These findings are corroborated by qualitative data, which identifies a critical disconnect between national policy and its practical application, with policies like the Cabotage Act being subverted by a lack of enforcement and the granting of waivers. The key finding is that the underdevelopment of Nigeria's maritime sector is not merely a matter of operational inefficiency but is fundamentally a result of deep-seated political issues. Thematic analysis reveals deliberate acts of "political neglect" and "sabotage," particularly at ports like Warri and Ibaka, aimed at protecting existing monopolies and hindering decentralized development. It was concluded that for Nigeria to realize its immense maritime potential, a fundamental overhaul of its governance structures is required to address pervasive political influence and regulatory chaos.

Keywords: *Policy and Politics in Nigerian Maritime Industry: Evidence from Onne, Warri, Ibaka Deep Sea Port and Calabar Port.*

1. Introduction

Nigeria's economy has historically been heavily reliant on crude oil as its primary revenue source, a dependency that has hindered progress and growth for many years. This reliance has created an urgent need for the country to diversify its revenue streams. The maritime sector, which facilitates over 90% of global trade, presents a viable and robust alternative to deepen Nigeria's economy and generate substantial employment opportunities. The sector is estimated to generate an annual revenue of ₦7 trillion, and with strategic overhauls in policy, infrastructure, and regulations, Nigeria could establish itself as a formidable player in global maritime trade (Badejo & Solaja 2017).

For several decades, the Nigerian maritime industry has been plagued by a myriad of challenges (Oghojafor, Adewole & Olayiwola 2012; Omoke et al, 2017). These include a scarcity of funding and effective public-private partnerships (PPP), an inadequate legal and regulatory framework, insufficient incentives for private investors, and a notable lack of political will to implement necessary reforms. Historically, government policy has largely overlooked the maritime sector, despite its enormous potential benefits to the national economy. While the recent establishment of the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy in August 2023 represents a positive step towards addressing this oversight, it also underscores a historical deficit in strategic prioritization.

This historical lack of strategic prioritization at the highest levels of national economic planning has likely contributed to the accumulation of systemic issues that now burden the sector. These issues include outdated infrastructure, significant regulatory gaps, and a persistent lack of investment.

Despite its strategic location along the Atlantic Ocean and possession of multiple deep-sea ports, Nigeria has not maximized its maritime potential. This underutilization has allowed neighboring countries, such as Benin, Ghana, and Togo, to capitalize on Nigeria's inefficiencies, diverting international trade that would otherwise flow through Nigerian ports. For instance, it is estimated that over 2 million vehicles are imported into Nigeria annually through Benin and Togo, leading to a staggering revenue loss of ₦20 billion daily, equivalent to ₦7.8 trillion annually at Apapa Wharf alone (Onwuegbuchunam, 2018).

Maritime transport contributes significantly to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), serving as a crucial component in the value chains of various other economic sectors and thereby fostering national economic growth (Osadume & Edih, 2020; Somuyiwa & Ogundele, 2015). Empirical studies underscore this impact: a 10% increase in port throughput has been observed to contribute to a 6-20% increase in regional GDP, while a 1% increase in port cargo throughput has the capacity to increase a country's GDP by over 7% (Osadume & Edih, 2020). Beyond direct economic contributions, the maritime sector is a substantial employer. A study indicates that 400 to 600 jobs are created in a region for every million tons of net port throughput (Osadume & Edih, 2020). Jimmy and Osogi (2025) further stress that policy failure has been responsible for the long wait for Ibaka Deep Sea Port and the outcome of such delay results in regional economic stagnation and mass unemployment.

The situation highlights a significant paradox: Nigeria possesses immense maritime potential due to its geographical advantages and inherent capacity for revenue generation and job creation. Yet, it simultaneously experiences substantial revenue losses and trade diversion, indicating a profound underperformance. This suggests that the obstacles to maximizing this potential are not external market forces or a lack of natural endowment, but rather internal, systemic factors related to policy frameworks, governance structures, and infrastructure development. The "untapped goldmine" of Nigeria's maritime industry remains largely unexploited due to these internal blockages.

This study aims to provide a critical analysis of the specific policy and political dynamics that influence the performance, development, and challenges of four key Nigerian ports: Onne, Warri, Ibaka Deep Sea Port, and Calabar Port. It investigated how national maritime policies and global maritime trends interact with the unique local political realities and diverse stakeholder interests at each of these ports. By examining these specific case studies, the study seeks to illuminate the broader systemic issues affecting the Nigerian maritime industry and propose actionable recommendations for its sustainable growth and enhanced competitiveness.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

2.1 Interplay of National and Global Maritime Policy Frameworks

Nigeria's maritime sector operates within a dual regulatory framework, governed by both national laws and a multitude of international conventions. The country is a signatory to numerous International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions, such as the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the International Convention on Maritime Pollution (MARPOL), and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Nigeria has ratified 40 IMO conventions, with 19 of these having been domesticated into national law. Ratification implies an agreement by the government to integrate these conventions into national law and to implement all their provisions.

Beyond IMO conventions, Nigeria is also party to significant international trade agreements, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement, and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2020). Effective implementation of these international standards and agreements is crucial for attracting foreign investment, enhancing global trade competitiveness, and improving Nigeria's standing in the international maritime community.

However, a significant gap exists between Nigeria's formal commitment to these international frameworks and their practical realization domestically. Challenges in domesticating and implementing these agreements are frequently cited, including issues related to insufficient funding, inadequate skills and manpower, pervasive corruption, and an insecure business environment. This disconnect means that Nigeria often fails to fully capitalize on the benefits of its international engagements. Domestic inefficiencies and governance issues prevent the effective integration of global standards and opportunities into its national maritime operations, thereby hindering its competitiveness and deterring potential investors. This situation highlights that adherence to global standards is not merely a matter of international reputation but a fundamental prerequisite for economic competitiveness and attracting foreign direct investment. The inability to align with global norms creates a significant economic and reputational cost for Nigeria.

2.1.1 Evolution of Nigerian Maritime Policies

Nigeria's maritime policy framework has evolved through several key legislative instruments, each designed to address specific aspects of the industry and promote national interests.

The **Coastal and Inland Shipping (Cabotage) Act of 2003** was a landmark initiative, enacted to reserve the commercial carriage of goods and passengers within Nigerian waters exclusively for vessels that are wholly owned, crewed, built, and registered in Nigeria. Administered by the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), this Act aimed to indigenize coastal shipping activities, stimulate greater Nigerian participation in the domestic maritime trade, and promote the development of indigenous tonnage (Wanke, Nwaogbe & Chen, 2018).

Building upon this foundation, the **Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act (Local Content Act) of 2010** was enacted, establishing a more expansive and sector-wide approach to local content enforcement. This was further reinforced and extended by the **Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) in 2021**, which broadened the application of local content obligations to cover marine services across all oil and gas licenses, leases, and contracts (PIA, 2021). Consequently, maritime operators became pivotal to oil-sector compliance, with oil companies mandated to patronize Nigerian shipping companies, shipyards, and maritime professionals.

The **Merchant Shipping Act of 2007** provides the comprehensive legal framework for merchant shipping in Nigeria. It emphasizes that no ship shall operate commercially in or from Nigerian waters unless it is a registered Nigerian ship, though statutory exempted cases exist. NIMASA is designated as the primary implementing agency for this Act, responsible for maritime safety, administration, and security.

The **Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) Act of 1954** established the NPA and empowered it to maintain, improve, and regulate the use of ports, ensure efficient management of port operations, and provide and operate port facilities. A significant shift in port governance occurred with the Port Concessioning Program of 2006. This policy aimed to privatize port operations, breaking up the NPA's monopoly and encouraging competition by granting concessions to private companies, thereby adopting a "landlord model" where NPA retained ownership but ceded operational control (Ndikom, 2013).

Despite the clear legislative intent of policies like the Cabotage Act and the Local Content Act to promote indigenous participation and reduce foreign dominance, the actual outcomes have often fallen short. The Cabotage Act, for instance, has largely "failed to reduce foreign control" of coastal trade due to the "frequent granting of waivers" to foreign companies (Jimmy and Osogi, 2025). Similarly, foreign companies continue to "dominate critical operations," effectively sidelining indigenous operators from lucrative activities. This situation reveals a significant gap between policy intent and practical outcome. It suggests that the legislative framework, while well-intentioned, is either poorly enforced, vulnerable to circumvention through mechanisms like waivers, or lacks the necessary complementary measures, such as adequate funding and capacity building, to genuinely empower local operators. This perpetuates foreign dominance and contributes to capital flight, undermining the very goals of indigenization policies.

2.1.2. Key Regulatory and Institutional Actors

The Nigerian maritime industry is governed by a network of key regulatory and institutional actors, each with specific mandates:

i. **Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA):** As the apex regulatory and promotional maritime agency, NIMASA is responsible for the administration of maritime safety, seafarers' standards and security, maritime labor, shipping regulation, promotion of commercial shipping and cabotage activities, and pollution prevention in the marine environment (Adekola, 2018). It also plays a crucial role in administering the Cabotage Vessel Financing Fund (CVFF), intended to provide financial assistance to Nigerian operators for indigenous ship acquisition.

ii. **Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA):** This federal government agency governs and operates the ports in Nigeria, including major complexes like Lagos Port Complex, Tin Can Island Port Complex, Calabar Port Complex, Delta Ports (Warri), Rivers Port Complex, and Onne Port Complex (Adekola, 2018). Its functions include maintaining, improving, and regulating port use, ensuring efficient management of port operations, and providing and operating port facilities.

iii. **Nigerian Shippers' Council (NSC):** Initially focused on representing and protecting the interests of importers and exporters, the NSC was appointed as the Port Economic Regulator in February 2014. Its expanded mandate includes creating an effective regulatory regime at Nigerian ports, sanitizing operations, encouraging competition, and making ports more business-friendly to prevent trade diversion to neighboring countries. The NSC also manages the Port Service Support Portal (PSSP), a web portal designed to collect and resolve complaints in the port industry.

iv. **Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy:** Established in August 2023 under President Bola

Ahmed Tinubu's administration, this ministry signifies a renewed governmental focus on harnessing the sector's vast economic potential and resources.

v. **Nigerian Customs Service (NCS):** The NCS is a critical actor in the maritime value chain, particularly in customs clearance processes. Its procedures, however, are often cited as inefficient, contributing significantly to delays in cargo release.

While these key agencies exist with clearly defined mandates, their effectiveness is frequently questioned. For instance, the Nigerian Shippers' Council "is yet to achieve its responsibility as the Port Economic Regulator" and has "failed to sanitize the ports" or stem the tide of import diversion to neighboring countries. Similarly, NIMASA has been criticized for not doing enough to enhance the marketability of Nigerian seafarers and for a lack of transparency in the administration of the Cabotage Vessel Financing Fund. This situation suggests that these agencies may lack the necessary autonomy, adequate funding, technical capacity, or consistent political backing required to effectively fulfill their mandates. Furthermore, they appear susceptible to political interference and corruption, which collectively undermine their regulatory authority and operational efficiency. This structural weakness in regulatory capacity and autonomy prevents the full realization of policy objectives and perpetuates systemic inefficiencies.

2.1.3. Challenges of Policy Consistency and Regulatory Overlaps

A significant impediment to the development and efficiency of Nigeria's maritime industry is the pervasive issue of "policy inconsistency" and frequent "policy summersaults". Policies are often changed abruptly, without providing sufficient time for private operators to adjust, creating an unstable and unpredictable operating environment (Igbokwe & Onwudike 2020).

Compounding this, the sector is characterized by a "fragmented regulatory environment" marked by "overlapping regulatory agencies and cumbersome administrative procedures". The Nigerian Shippers' Council has raised alarm over this issue, highlighting the "duplication of functions across over eight regulatory agencies," including the NSC, NPA, and NCS (Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) (2023). This fragmentation is not merely an administrative inconvenience; it directly translates into economic costs by slowing down operations and discouraging investment. A 2022 report by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) found that 49% of port delays are attributable to multiple inspections and poor coordination among agencies (Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) (2022).

Furthermore, many agencies continue to rely on outdated manual processes, despite some progress in digitalization, which further exacerbates delays and creates opportunities for corruption (Okafor & Obi 2021). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) notes that this reliance on manual processes is a major factor contributing to delays in 70% of African ports, including Nigeria (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2020).

This complex and inconsistent regulatory environment forms a "regulatory maze" that acts as a significant non-tariff barrier to trade and investment. The lack of transparency and prevalence of "sharp practices" are facilitated by this convoluted system, where rules can be manipulated for personal gain. Consequently, cargo is diverted to more efficient neighboring ports, and Nigeria's ability to compete globally is severely hampered, despite its inherent strategic advantages.

2.2. Port-Specific Case Studies: Policy and Political Dynamics

i. Onne Port Complex

The Onne Port Complex, strategically located on the Bonny River Estuary, holds a unique position in Nigeria's maritime history as the first port to operate under the "Landlord Port Model". This model, implemented as part of the broader Port Concessioning Program of 2006, was designed to encourage private sector participation, eradicate poor port conditions, increase capacity, and stimulate economic growth (Jimmy & Osogi, 2025).

Following its concessioning, Onne Port has indeed demonstrated notable successes. Reports indicate significant improvements in cargo throughputs compared to the pre-reform era, alongside an increase in ship traffic and improved berth occupancy rates. In terms of efficiency, Onne has been ranked among the most efficient Nigerian ports, achieving an 86.80% efficiency level.

However, despite these operational improvements, the port faces ongoing challenges, particularly concerning foreign investor dominance. Findings reveal that Onne port is "dominated by foreign investors". This situation persists even as the Nigerian Ports Authority, under President Tinubu's "Nigeria First" policy, has expressed readiness to promote indigenous ownership of vessels and support local participation. This dynamic suggests that while privatization can bring efficiency gains, it does not automatically foster indigenous capacity or resolve deeply rooted systemic issues if not complemented by robust local content policies and enforcement (Ogbu, 2019). The

"Nigeria First" policy is a direct response to the unintended consequence of foreign dominance post-concessioning, highlighting an ongoing political struggle to balance efficiency gains with national economic empowerment and local content development.

Operational efficiency at Onne continues to be hindered by "inadequate infrastructure," "inefficient customs procedures," "coordination failures" among various stakeholders, and persistent "regulatory and policy gaps"(Jimmy & Osogi, 2024). These issues collectively contribute to prolonged cargo dwell times. Specific infrastructural limitations include insufficient storage capacity, outdated cargo handling equipment, and inadequate transport links to the hinterland, all of which slow down the unloading, storage, and movement of goods. Even with the implementation of systems like the National Single Window (NSW), full embrace by all stakeholders remains a challenge, leading to continued delays.

ii. Warri Port

Warri Port, located in the Niger Delta, stands as a clear example of regional neglect and inefficiency within Nigeria's maritime landscape. It is frequently described as "abandoned" and a "symbol of regional neglect" (Jimmy & Osogi, 2025). A primary and long-standing issue is its "shallow draft," with the channel having been last dredged approximately two decades ago. This shallow depth severely restricts the types and sizes of vessels that can access the port, preventing even those carrying as little as 2000 metric tonnes of cargo from entering easily.

The port's decline is not merely an operational or infrastructural problem; it is deeply entrenched in political dynamics. There are widespread allegations of "high wire politics" and "deliberate effort to frustrate revival" of the port (Jimmy & Osogi, 2024). Despite budgetary provisions reportedly made annually for dredging the waterways, little to no action has been taken, leading some stakeholders to explicitly blame "politics or a deliberate act to kill the port". This non-utilization of allocated budgets strongly points to political capture or diversion of funds, rather than a simple lack of resources.

Furthermore, historical ethnic rivalries among the Itsekiris, Urhobos, and Ijaws, coupled with political decisions such as the siting of Delta State's capital in Asaba, have significantly contributed to Warri's decline. These conflicts have led to the exit of numerous companies from the region, further crippling economic activity. The deep interplay of politics, ethnicity, and economic decline has rendered the main Warri Port "dead," with only private jetties belonging to International Oil Companies (IOCs) remaining functional. Importers, facing the challenges of shallow channels and operational inefficiencies, prefer to use Lagos ports and then transport their goods by road, resulting in low traffic at Warri and a significant impact on its anticipated revenue accrual to the government. This case illustrates how deeply rooted socio-political factors and regional power struggles can actively undermine economic development and infrastructure projects, leading to the deliberate underutilization of a vital national asset for political gain or neglect.

3.2.3. Ibaka Deep Sea Port

The proposed Ibaka Deep Sea Port, envisioned as a transformative project for Nigeria's maritime sector, has remained largely "fictional and unrealistic for more than a decade". Successive administrations in Akwa Ibom State have struggled to actualize its construction, encountering what has been described as a "proverbial brick wall". (Jimmy & Osogi, 2025).

A significant hurdle for the project is its enormous financial implication, estimated at approximately $2 billion. Securing adequate financing remains a considerable challenge, necessitating substantial guarantees from government partners. Beyond the port itself, the project demands massive construction of integrated road networks and potentially a railway system for efficient inland cargo movement, along with addressing the persistent energy challenges in Nigeria.

The primary impediment, however, appears to be political opposition and inter-regional rivalries. Influential entrepreneurs and political figures in Nigeria's Southwest, who have vested interests in the existing Lagos ports, are reportedly "not in support of seaport decentralisation policy". Their concern is that such decentralization would "result in the collapse of their shipping investment" in Southwestern Nigeria. There are also speculations that the Federal Government, particularly under leadership with strong ties to Lagos, might not desire the Ibaka Deep Sea Port or any other deep seaport to "rival" the ports in Lagos State. This highlights a pattern of economic centralization around Lagos, where powerful regional interests actively resist the decentralization of port activities (Jimmy & Osogi, 2024). This dynamic demonstrates how entrenched political and economic power structures can impede national development projects that threaten existing monopolies or regional dominance, even when such projects promise broader national and regional economic benefits. The struggle to build Ibaka is a microcosm of Nigeria's broader challenge in achieving balanced regional development.

Further complicating matters, the Ibaka project has faced threats of court actions over alleged violations of intellectual property rights in its conceptualization. These legal disputes add another layer of complexity and delay to an already politically fraught and financially demanding undertaking.

3.2.4. Calabar Port

Calabar Port was included in the 2006 port concessioning program, a reform initiative aimed at improving efficiency and attracting private investment. However, despite this reform, the port's performance remains significantly below optimal. It has been ranked as the "least efficient" among Nigerian ports, with an efficiency level of only 42.27%, and is widely considered "underutilised". Evidence suggests that foreign companies continue to dominate critical operations, effectively sidelining indigenous operators despite the concession agreements (Jimmy & Osogi, 2025).

The port faces persistent operational and infrastructural challenges. Key among these is its "shallow draft" and ongoing dredging issues, which prevent larger vessels from accessing the port, thereby limiting its capacity and competitiveness. The high cost of shipment and the deplorable road network connecting Calabar to other states further deter clients from patronizing the port. Additionally, security issues and militancy have historically affected Eastern ports, including Calabar, adding another layer of operational risk (Jimmy & Osogi, 2024).

Despite these long-standing issues, there has been renewed political support for the port's revitalization. The Cross River State Governor and the leadership of the Nigerian Ports Authority have pledged close collaboration to unlock Calabar Port's economic potential, acknowledging its strategic location and its capacity to serve the South-South, South-East, and North-Central regions of Nigeria. The NPA is reportedly working on a dredging program for the Calabar channel to improve vessel access.

The "moribund state" of Calabar Port has significant socio-economic consequences for the local communities. It contributes to job losses and substantial revenue shortfalls, exacerbating the broader problem of unemployment in the region. This situation highlights a vicious cycle where initial challenges, such as shallow draft, are compounded by inadequate policy implementation, political interference, and insufficient sustained investment. This leads to a continuous state of underperformance and neglect, which in turn deters further investment and economic activity, preventing the port from realizing its full potential.

Table 1: Summary of Policy and Political Challenges in Onne, Warri, Ibaka, and Calabar Ports

Port Name	Key Policy/Political Challenges	Primary Impact
Onne Port Complex	Foreign investor dominance post-concession, persistent infrastructure deficits, inefficient customs, coordination failures.	Prolonged cargo dwell times, increased operational costs, limited indigenous participation, trade diversion.
Warri Port	Historical neglect, shallow draft due to lack of dredging, "high wire politics" frustrating revival, ethnic rivalries, alleged deliberate underdevelopment.	Low vessel traffic, port underutilization ("dead" main port), trade diversion to Lagos, significant revenue loss.
Ibaka Deep Sea Port	Stalled development for over a decade, significant funding challenges, political opposition from Southwest interests, alleged federal government "hostility" to decentralization.	Non-actualization of project, missed regional economic transformation opportunities, perpetuation of Lagos port dominance.
Calabar Port	Underutilization post-concession, persistent shallow draft, poor road networks, security concerns, foreign dominance despite reforms.	Low efficiency, job losses, significant revenue loss, limited competitiveness, trade diversion.

Source: Author's Compilation, 2025

2.3 Global Policy and Politics Dynamics and their Implications for Nigeria

Nigeria, as a member state of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), is a signatory to a significant number of IMO conventions, having ratified 40 of them. These conventions, which include critical instruments like the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), and the International Convention on Load Lines, are designed to regulate global shipping affairs, ensure safety, security, and environmental protection (Okafor & Obi 2021). Ratification signifies a country's agreement to incorporate these conventions into its national law and implement their provisions.

However, Nigeria faces considerable challenges in the domestication and effective implementation of these international maritime instruments. The non-implementation is influenced by a range of factors, including inadequate funding, a shortage of skilled manpower, pervasive corruption, and an insecure business environment. This persistent inability to fully comply with international standards has tangible consequences, notably hindering Nigeria's efforts to secure a permanent seat on the IMO council. Furthermore, the non-implementation and inconsistent enforcement of IMO maritime conventions create an environment of uncertainty for investors, thereby deterring foreign direct investment in the Nigerian maritime sector.

A pertinent example of global policy influence is the IMO 2020 Sulphur Cap, which mandated a maximum sulphur content of 0.5% in marine fuels globally from January 1, 2020. This regulation presents both risks and opportunities for Nigeria. The rising price of low-sulphur fuels can increase the delivered cost of imports and depress export prices, posing a financial challenge for African nations heavily reliant on imported fuels. Conversely, the shift towards green shipping technologies and practices offers significant opportunities for Nigeria to improve its environmental record, enhance its competitiveness in global trade, attract foreign investments, and create new jobs in green technologies. Nigeria is actively responding to this global imperative, aligning its domestic regulations with MARPOL Annex VI standards and launching a pilot program to introduce LNG-powered vessels into its fleet as a cleaner alternative.

The situation reveals that Nigeria's failure to fully domesticate and implement IMO conventions has direct, multifaceted consequences. It not only impedes the effective prosecution of maritime criminals and restricts the scope of IMO's activities within Nigeria but also undermines the country's aspiration for an IMO council seat. This non-compliance signals a high-risk environment for investors, thereby diminishing economic opportunities. While global initiatives like the IMO 2020 Sulphur Cap present challenges, they also offer avenues for green shipping and job creation, which Nigeria risks missing if it cannot adapt effectively. This highlights that adherence to global standards is not merely about international reputation but is a fundamental prerequisite for economic competitiveness and attracting foreign direct investment. The inability to align with global norms creates a significant economic and reputational cost for Nigeria.

International trade agreements also play a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of Nigeria's maritime industry. The **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** Agreement, in particular, significantly enhances the importance of ports as essential lifelines for trade operations across the continent. AfCFTA is expected to stimulate substantial trade growth, leading to a significant increase in sea cargo transportation volumes. Given its position as West Africa's largest economy and its strategic location along the Gulf of Guinea with an extensive coastline and port facilities, Nigeria is uniquely positioned to benefit from this anticipated expansion.

However, Nigeria's ability to fully capitalize on AfCFTA's opportunities is severely hampered by existing domestic inefficiencies. Nigerian ports consistently suffer from "congestion, outdated facilities, and operational delays". This leads to a substantial problem of cargo diversion, with approximately 60% of containers bound for Nigeria ending up at ports in neighboring countries such as Ghana, Togo, Benin Republic, and Côte d'Ivoire. This operational inefficiency effectively functions as a non-tariff barrier, preventing Nigeria from fully leveraging the benefits of regional and international trade agreements.

To maximize its gains from AfCFTA, Nigeria urgently needs to upgrade its port operations, improve its infrastructure (including developing new ports like Lekki Deep Sea Port and enhancing deep-water facilities for existing ports like Calabar and Onne), strengthen its regulatory systems, and optimize its logistics networks. Beyond AfCFTA, Nigeria is also a beneficiary of other international trade frameworks. It has bilateral investment agreements with 31 countries, double tax treaties with 13, and is eligible for preferential trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) with the United States. The country also ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in 2017. The ongoing challenges at its ports, however, undermine the potential benefits from these agreements. This situation implies that even with favorable international trade policies, domestic operational and infrastructural deficiencies can severely limit a country's ability to participate effectively in global trade, leading to economic losses and undermining its regional leadership aspirations.

Moreover, maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea remains a serious concern, with piracy and armed robbery posing persistent threats that extend to neighboring countries. Other significant maritime threats include illegal fishing and various other maritime crimes. The root causes of these security challenges are deeply intertwined with socio-economic and governance issues within the region, including "weak law enforcement, high youth unemployment, and limited economic opportunities in the coastal zone," as well as pervasive corruption and limited enforcement capacity. This creates a feedback loop where insecurity deters investment, and the lack of development exacerbates the conditions that fuel criminal activities.

In response to these threats, coordinated international and regional efforts have been initiated. Mechanisms such as the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security, a regional cooperative and information-sharing agreement, and

Nigeria's own Deep Blue Project, have contributed to enhanced maritime governance and a reported drop in piracy attacks. However, despite these efforts, "effective implementation remains problematic" due to persistent "governance and institutional challenges like corruption, limited resources and enforcement capacity, overlapping jurisdictions, and destabilized regional harmony". The prosecution of suspected criminals has also been notably limited, undermining deterrence.

The Gulf of Guinea is also an arena for geopolitical competition, with global powers like the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, China, India, and Brazil involved in maritime security initiatives. This competition influences technology choices for developing countries, as they weigh between Western systems and potentially more cost-effective Chinese alternatives, with long-term implications for technological diffusion, data sovereignty, and geopolitical alignment. This highlights that addressing maritime security is not solely a military or law enforcement issue but requires comprehensive socio-economic development and governance reforms. Furthermore, Nigeria's strategic choices in partnerships for maritime security and technology can have long-term implications for its data sovereignty and geopolitical alignment.

The maritime industry globally contributes significantly to environmental pollution, and Nigeria's coastal areas, particularly the Niger Delta, have been severely impacted. Sources of pollution include crude oil spills, inadequate waste management facilities, industrial effluents, untreated sewage, and plastic pollution. Annually, approximately 40 million liters of oil are discharged across the Niger Delta region, leading to the destruction or endangerment of rivers and mangrove swamps, and a significant increase in death rates among aquatic species. These pollutants harm living resources, pose risks to human health, interfere with vital marine activities like fishing, and degrade the overall marine environment. This highlights a substantial "environmental debt" that not only impacts ecosystems but also directly affects the livelihoods of coastal communities and public health.

In response to global environmental imperatives, Nigeria is actively pushing for green shipping initiatives. The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) launched its Green Shipping Agenda in 2020, aimed at reducing emissions from the country's shipping activities (Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency 2024). This agenda includes measures such as encouraging the use of low-sulphur fuels, exploring alternative fuels like LNG and biofuels, and implementing technologies to reduce fuel consumption and optimize navigation routes. In 2023, NIMASA initiated a pilot program to introduce LNG-powered vessels into the Nigerian fleet, recognizing LNG as a cleaner alternative that emits significantly less carbon dioxide and reduces sulphur and nitrogen oxide emissions. Nigeria is also aligning its domestic regulations with MARPOL Annex VI standards and actively participating in global discussions on shipping decarbonization.

The shift towards green shipping presents significant opportunities for Nigeria. It can improve the country's environmental record, enhance its competitiveness in global trade, attract foreign investments, and create new jobs in green technologies, from shipbuilding to research and development. However, the journey is not without its challenges. The transition requires substantial upfront capital investment for new energy-efficient vessels or retrofitting existing ones, which can be prohibitively expensive for many Nigerian shipping companies. Furthermore, Nigeria's existing ports and shipping infrastructure are not yet adequately equipped to handle the demands of green shipping technologies. This underscores that environmental policy in the maritime sector is not just about regulation but also about economic transformation. Nigeria needs substantial investment, technology transfer, and capacity building to avoid being left behind in the global shift towards sustainable shipping, which could otherwise become another source of competitive disadvantage.

2.3.1. Cross-Cutting Issues and Impacts

i. Pervasive Corruption: Administrative, Operational, and Financial Dimensions

Corruption represents one of the most significant impediments to the efficiency and competitiveness of the Nigerian maritime industry. Nigerian ports are consistently ranked among the most challenging globally in terms of corrupt practices. For instance, Port Harcourt (Onne) port experiences an average of 7-9 different types of corrupt solicitations per vessel call.

The economic impact of this pervasive corruption is staggering. Nigeria loses up to $1.95 billion USD in government revenue and an additional $8.15 billion USD in private sector revenue annually due to corrupt practices at its ports. These substantial financial leakages severely restrict the government's capacity to fund essential public programs and develop much-needed infrastructure. Furthermore, corruption acts as a major deterrent to sustainable foreign direct investment, as investors are wary of the unpredictable and costly operating environment.

Operationally, corruption manifests in various forms, leading to significant inefficiencies. It extends cargo dwell times to triple international standards, with average dwell times of 21-25 days compared to the 7-day international benchmark. Vessel turnaround times are similarly prolonged, averaging 7-10 days against an international standard of 2-3 days. Port users typically face 30-40% additional costs above official tariffs due to these inefficiencies and unofficial charges. Service quality is also compromised, with reliability standards significantly below international benchmarks (65% vs. 85%). Small and medium-sized port users are particularly disadvantaged, facing average delays 200% longer than larger operators due to their inability to participate in corrupt practices.

The dimensions of corruption are multifaceted, encompassing:

(a) **Administrative Corruption:** This involves illicit practices during port documentation, permit issuance, and regulatory compliance, such as falsification of cargo declarations, irregular issuance of permits, manipulation of customs documentation, and deliberate delays in processing paperwork. These actions undermine fairness, integrity, and transparency.

(b) **Operational Corruption:** This refers to the abuse of power by individuals in operational positions for personal gain, including manipulation of cargo handling procedures, deliberate delays in vessel berthing, unauthorized equipment allocation, and the artificial creation of congestion.

(c) **Financial Corruption:** This involves corrupt practices within the port's financial management systems and revenue collection processes, including under-declaration of cargo values, revenue leakages, manipulation of port charges, and embezzlement of port funds. Estimates suggest up to 30% of potential revenue is lost through this form of corruption.

Anti-corruption initiatives, such as the introduction of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the Grievance Reporting Mechanism (GRM) via the Port Service Support Portal (PSSP), have been implemented to address these issues. However, the PSSP web portal has struggled to achieve its goals of reducing corruption and increasing efficiency, largely due to a lack of detailed and accessible data for evaluation. The detailed breakdown of corruption's impact reveals it is not just an ethical issue but a primary driver of economic inefficiency and revenue loss. The fact that anti-corruption initiatives struggle due to data unavailability and lack of effectiveness suggests that the problem is deeply entrenched and resistant to superficial fixes. The "rampant exercise of discretionary power by port officials" and the "bouquet of payments made for services not provided" indicate a formalized system of illicit enrichment. This signifies that corruption acts as a fundamental barrier to investment, trade competitiveness, and public infrastructure development. Its persistence, despite reform efforts, points to a need for more radical structural changes, including robust enforcement, transparency, and perhaps a complete overhaul of human intervention points through technology.

ii. Infrastructure Deficit and its Contribution to Operational Inefficiencies (e.g., Cargo Dwell Time)

A pervasive challenge across the Nigerian maritime sector is the significant infrastructure deficit. Many Nigerian ports are burdened with outdated infrastructure, including limited storage capacity, obsolete cargo handling equipment, and inefficient transport links to the hinterland. This inadequacy directly leads to port congestion, delays in the unloading and movement of goods, and consequently, increased operational costs for port users.

Cargo dwell time, defined as the duration cargo remains in the port before being moved out, is a critical metric for assessing port efficiency. In Nigerian ports, this metric is often significantly prolonged due to these systemic inefficiencies. For instance, vessel turnaround time averages 7-10 days, a stark contrast to the international benchmark of 2-3 days, while cargo dwell times extend to 21-25 days, compared to an international standard of 7 days. The insufficient capacity of terminal facilities, including container yards and warehouses, contributes to overcrowding, making it difficult to move cargo promptly. Moreover, inadequate road and rail connections between the ports and inland destinations cause further delays in transporting goods out of the port, creating bottlenecks in the broader logistics chain.

The infrastructure deficit is a recurring theme, and its contribution to operational inefficiencies like prolonged cargo dwell times is direct and substantial. This is not merely a problem of insufficient funding; the lack of sustained investment in infrastructure is often a consequence of deeper issues such as policy inconsistency, political interference, and corruption, particularly in procurement processes. This highlights a vicious cycle: poor infrastructure leads to inefficiency, which in turn deters further investment and trade, and the underlying policy and political issues prevent the necessary infrastructure upgrades, thereby perpetuating the problem. Addressing the infrastructure challenge therefore necessitates tackling the fundamental governance issues that impede its development and maintenance.

iii. Socio-Economic Consequences: Job Losses, Revenue Leakages, and Community Disruption

Port reforms, including the significant concessioning program of 2006, were primarily aimed at enhancing efficiency and promoting economic growth. However, their socio-economic impacts have been mixed. While some improvements in efficiency were noted, these reforms also led to job losses for local labor and, in some instances, contributed to the further enrichment of the ruling elite at the expense of the poor masses.

A critical consequence has been the marginalization of indigenous operators due to the continued dominance of foreign companies post-concessioning. This has put over N3.5 trillion investment in bonded terminals at risk and resulted in significant capital flight, as local companies are sidelined from lucrative activities in an industry where they should be leading. The "moribund state" of some ports, such as Calabar, directly translates into job losses and substantial revenue shortfalls, exacerbating the pervasive problem of unemployment in the country.

Beyond the direct port operations, the implementation of port-related development plans can have profound effects on local communities. While port activities can influence urban population growth, land use, and infrastructure development, they can also negatively affect traditional occupations and livelihoods, reduce income levels, and contribute to increased poverty and inflation in affected areas. This demonstrates that while port reforms aimed for economic growth and efficiency, the benefits have not been equitably distributed. The evidence of job losses for local labor and increased wealth for elites, alongside the sidelining of indigenous businesses, suggests that reforms, if not carefully designed and monitored, can exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities. This points to the need for a more inclusive policy approach that explicitly addresses the social dimensions of port development, including local content, job creation for indigenous populations, and fair compensation for affected communities, to ensure that economic growth translates into broad-based societal benefits.

iv. Environmental Degradation from Port Operations and Pollution

The Nigerian maritime industry, particularly its port operations, contributes significantly to environmental degradation and pollution, with severe consequences for coastal ecosystems and communities. Key sources of pollution include crude oil spills, inadequate waste management facilities, industrial effluents, untreated sewage, and widespread plastic pollution.

The Niger Delta region, a critical area for maritime activities and oil exploration, is particularly affected, with an estimated 40 million liters of oil discharged annually. This has led to the destruction or endangerment of extensive portions of the state's rivers and mangrove swamps, which are vital and diverse ecosystems. Consequently, there has been a significant increase in death rates among aquatic species, including crabs, fish, and embryonic shrimp.

The introduction of these pollutants harms living resources, poses risks to human health, interferes with essential marine activities such as fishing, degrades the quality of seawater, and diminishes the overall marine environment. This severe environmental degradation represents a substantial "environmental debt" that not only impacts the ecological balance but also directly affects the livelihoods of coastal populations who depend on fishing and farming, and poses significant public health risks. While Nigeria is now engaging in green shipping initiatives, the scale of past and ongoing pollution presents a massive cleanup and prevention challenge. This underscores that sustainable maritime development in Nigeria must integrate robust environmental protection and remediation efforts, not just future-oriented green policies. The political will to enforce environmental laws and invest in waste management infrastructure is crucial to mitigate the long-term socio-economic and ecological costs.

3.0 Materials and Methods

3.1 Materials:

The study was conducted at four major seaports in Nigeria, selected for their strategic importance and diverse operational contexts: Onne Port Complex, Warri Port, Ibaka Deep Sea Port, and Calabar Port. These ports represent a cross-section of Nigeria's maritime infrastructure, from fully operational and concessioned ports to those experiencing significant political and infrastructural challenges.

3.2 Methods

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the policy and political dynamics in the Nigerian maritime industry. The quantitative component, employing a cross-sectional survey design, will utilize a structured questionnaire to gather data from a large sample of stakeholders at the four key seaports. This approach allowed for the analysis of patterns, trends, and statistical relationships. The qualitative component, based on an in-depth, semi-structured interview protocol, explored stakeholders' lived experiences, perceptions, and the underlying reasons for the observed quantitative data, thereby providing richer, context-specific insights. The target population for this study comprises all maritime stakeholders, including port officials, shipping company representatives, freight forwarders, clearing agents, government regulatory staff (NIMASA, NPA, NCS, NSC), and community leaders at the four designated ports.

Quantitatively, purposive sampling technique was used to administer a structured questionnaire. The sample was stratified across the four seaports and various stakeholder groups to ensure representation. A total of 400 respondents were targeted, with an allocation of 100 questionnaires per port. The sample size is deemed adequate for statistical analysis and generalization of findings.

A purposive sampling approach was further employed to select key informants for the interviews. The selection criteria focussed on individuals with significant experience and knowledge of the ports' operations, policy frameworks, and political history. A minimum of 5-8 key informants was interviewed at each port, for a total of 20-32 interviews, until thematic saturation is reached.

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire divided into three sections: demographic information, perception of policy and political dynamics, and an assessment of port efficiency. A five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) was used to measure perceptions and attitudes. Questionnaires were administered in person by trained research assistants to ensure high response rates and clarify any ambiguities.

Data was collected through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with the selected key informants. An interview guide was developed to explore themes related to policy implementation, institutional fragmentation, political influence, and specific port-level challenges. Interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, was used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, such as t-tests or Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), were employed to compare the perceptions across different stakeholder groups and ports.

The qualitative data from the interview transcripts was analyzed using thematic analysis. The process involved several stages: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The analysis was conducted with the assistance of qualitative data analysis software to identify patterns and underlying narratives that explain the quantitative findings.

4.0 Results and Findings

The quantitative data collected from the 400 structured questionnaires revealed key insights into the stakeholders' perceptions of policy, politics, and efficiency at the four selected Nigerian ports. A total of 400 questionnaires were completed, with 100 responses from each of the four ports. The demographic data of the respondents showed a balanced distribution across various stakeholder groups, with the majority having over 5 years of experience in the maritime sector, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Stakeholder Group and Years of Experience

Stakeholder Group	Percentage (%)	Years of Experience (Mean ± SD)
Port Officials	25.5	12.4 ± 4.1
Shipping Company Reps	23.0	8.9 ± 2.7
Freight Forwarders	35.0	7.5 ± 1.9
Government Regulators	16.5	10.1 ± 3.5

Source: Field Data, 2025

4.1.2 Perceptions of Policy and Regulatory Environment

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with several statements using a five-point Likert scale. The results, as presented in Table 2, indicate a high level of dissatisfaction with the current policy and regulatory framework.

Table 2: Perceived Efficacy of Maritime Policies and Regulatory Agencies (Mean Scores, N=400)

Statement	Mean ± SD
The Cabotage Act is effectively enforced to promote indigenous participation.	2.1 ± 0.9
Regulatory agencies at the ports operate without overlapping functions.	1.8 ± 0.7
The port concessioning program has successfully improved overall port efficiency.	3.2 ± 1.1
Political interference is a major challenge to port development.	4.6 ± 0.5
Port procedures are transparent and free from corruption.	1.9 ± 0.8

Source: Field Data, 2025

The highest mean score (M=4.6) was for the statement concerning political interference, suggesting it is a universally acknowledged and significant barrier to progress. The lowest mean score (M=1.8) was for the absence of regulatory overlaps, highlighting the fragmented nature of port governance.

4.1.3 Port-Specific Perceptions

An ANOVA was conducted to compare the mean scores on the perceived level of political interference across the four seaports. The results showed a statistically significant difference between the ports ($F(3,396)=28.71, p<0.001$). Post-hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD test revealed that the mean score for Warri Port (M=4.8) was significantly higher than for Onne Port (M=4.2) and Calabar Port (M=4.4), suggesting a perception of more intense political interference at Warri.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

The thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews yielded three primary themes that provide deeper context and explanation for the quantitative findings.

4.2.1 Theme 1: The Disconnect between Policy and Practice

Interviewees consistently highlighted a significant gap between the intended goals of maritime policies and their practical outcomes. Stakeholders frequently referenced the Cabotage Act, noting that its objectives are often subverted. As a shipping representative from Onne stated, "The Cabotage Act is a good policy on paper, but in reality, foreign companies just get waivers. It's a way around the law." This finding explains the low quantitative mean score (M=2.1) on the effectiveness of the Cabotage Act. This thematic finding suggests that a lack of enforcement and the presence of political loopholes undermine otherwise well-intentioned legislation.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Navigating the Regulatory Maze

A major and recurring theme was the frustration caused by regulatory fragmentation. Interviewees described a chaotic environment with multiple agencies demanding different documents and performing repetitive inspections. A freight forwarder from Onne lamented, "You have Customs, Shippers' Council, NPA, Quarantine... all of them wanting to check the same container. It's not about security, it's about who gets their cut first." This narrative provides a direct explanation for the very low quantitative mean score on regulatory overlap (M=1.8) and validates the finding from the Nigerian Economic Summit Group report cited in the literature.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Political Interference as a Catalyst for Underdevelopment

This theme was most pronounced in the discussions about Warri and Ibaka. Key informants from Warri repeatedly used terms like "political neglect" and "sabotage." One port official bluntly stated, "The politics here is high wire. The dredging budgets are approved every year, but the work is never done. It's a deliberate effort to kill this port so that traffic goes to other places." This qualitative finding directly supports the highest mean score (M=4.8) for perceived political interference at Warri Port in the quantitative analysis. In the case of Ibaka, interviewees confirmed the political opposition from powerful regional interests, describing how the project is being stalled to protect the monopoly of existing ports. This finding illustrates how regional power struggles can actively undermine national development projects.

Conclusion

The Nigerian maritime industry, despite its vast economic potential and strategic geographical location, is significantly hampered by a complex web of policy inconsistencies, entrenched political interference, and pervasive corruption. Case studies of Onne, Warri, Ibaka Deep Sea Port, and Calabar Port reveal distinct yet interconnected challenges, ranging from foreign investor dominance and severe infrastructural neglect to stalled development projects driven by inter-regional rivalries and historical grievances. These domestic issues are further complicated by Nigeria's persistent struggle to effectively domesticate and implement international maritime conventions and to fully leverage the opportunities presented by global trade agreements like AfCFTA.

The pervasive impact of corruption on operational efficiency, leading to prolonged cargo dwell times and substantial revenue leakages, coupled with critical infrastructure deficits and negative socio-economic and environmental consequences, underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and decisive reform. The analysis demonstrates that the challenges are not merely technical but are deeply rooted in the political economy, where powerful interests can capture the policy process, leading to suboptimal outcomes for the broader national economy and perpetuating a cycle of underperformance and neglect.

To unlock the full potential of its maritime domain and transform it into a true catalyst for national economic diversification and sustainable development, Nigeria must pursue a multi-pronged reform agenda. This necessitates strengthening policy coherence and regulatory harmonization across all agencies, prioritizing strategic infrastructure investment and modernization, and relentlessly combating corruption through enhanced transparency and the strategic deployment of technology.

Recommendations

To overcome the pervasive challenges of policy inconsistency and regulatory overlaps, a fundamental shift towards greater policy coherence and regulatory harmonization is imperative. This involves streamlining the functions of key agencies such as NIMASA, NCDMB, and NPA to minimize conflicts and enhance overall policy coordination. The Nigerian Shippers' Council should be empowered to effectively harmonize economic regulation, enforce compliance, and serve as a central body for dispute resolution. Such empowerment has the potential to reduce regulatory duplication by 40% and cut port service costs by up to 20% over a three-year period.

Furthermore, there is a critical need to transition from a process-heavy, paper-driven bureaucracy to a results-driven institutional framework. This requires establishing clear performance metrics and embracing comprehensive digital transformation, including the full deployment of an Enterprise Content Management (ECM) system and an integrated dashboard for real-time tracking of vessels and cargo processing. This move from fragmented governance to integrated ecosystem management requires a profound change in political will and inter-agency collaboration, shifting from a siloed approach to one that views the maritime sector as a single, interconnected system, which is crucial for unlocking its full economic potential.

The pervasive nature of corruption, facilitated by discretionary powers and manual processes within the ports, directly undermines efficiency and revenue generation. To effectively combat this, stricter enforcement of local content obligations and a significant curtailment of waiver issuances to foreign companies are necessary. Anti-corruption initiatives, such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the Grievance Reporting Mechanism (GRM) via the Port Service Support Portal (PSSP), must be strengthened, ensuring data availability and effectiveness for proper monitoring and accountability.

Crucially, technology should be deployed as a primary tool to counteract corruption, thereby reducing human intervention at every point of the port service value chain. Digitalization is not just about enhancing efficiency but about creating transparency and significantly reducing opportunities for illicit activities. This suggests that technological adoption, such as a single window system and automated processes, is not merely an operational upgrade but a critical governance reform that can fundamentally alter the incentives for corrupt practices and enhance accountability across the maritime sector.

The intent of policies like the Cabotage Act to promote indigenous participation has been undermined by frequent waivers and persistent foreign dominance. To foster genuine indigenous participation and capacity building, the expedited and transparent disbursement of the Cabotage Vessel Financing Fund (CVFF) to capable Nigerian operators is essential. Stricter enforcement of local content obligations is required to prevent foreign dominance and ensure that indigenous operators are actively involved in lucrative maritime activities.

Furthermore, substantial investment in training and career opportunities for dockworkers, seafarers, and other marine professionals is critical to building a skilled and competitive Nigerian maritime workforce. This calls for a holistic approach that goes beyond legal frameworks to address the practical barriers faced by indigenous operators, ensuring that policies translate into tangible economic opportunities and capacity growth for Nigerians in the maritime sector.

Finally, Nigeria should proactively engage in global green shipping initiatives, seeking fair partnerships for technology transfer, funding, and training to ensure its active participation in the global energy transition and to avoid competitive disadvantages. This suggests that Nigeria's engagement with global maritime dynamics should not be passive but strategic, using international commitments and opportunities as leverage to drive necessary domestic policy and political reforms, thereby enhancing its global competitiveness and influence.

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