

Lost at Sea: The Unheard Cry of Nigeria's Eastern Corridor, Abandoned Seaports

Ekaette Umanah Ekong

Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Uyo, Nigeria.
ORCID : 0000-0002-5110-6484

*Corresponding Author: Ekaette Umanah Ekong

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Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.	<p><i>This research focuses on the travails of Nigeria's Eastern Corridor seaports; Onne, Warri, Calabar and Ibom. For decades, Nigeria's vast maritime sector has been crippled with a vice-grip on its development by vested interests in the South-West and North-West geopolitical zones. While Lagos ports enjoy federal patronage, virtually none of the ports in the Eastern flank are operational; some operate below their installed capacity. Presently, Lagos ports are heavily congested; with long vessel turnaround period, official red tape, over-stretched facilities and exorbitant transportation costs. Meanwhile, Eastern seaports are underutilized, underfunded, underdeveloped and neglected by successive governments. This research adopts the historical analysis approach, states that the situation resulted in loss of job opportunities, economic stagnation and impoverishment of over 100 million people which these ports are supposed to serve. The paper states that Nigeria's maritime potentials can only be unlocked when the Eastern Corridor seaports are revamped.</i></p>
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Introduction

Right from ancient times, till date, one of the indices of power whether military or economic, anywhere in the world is unarguably access to, or control over great bodies of water. A country first has to be a maritime power, before it considers itself powerful. Virtually all international businesses involving massive imports or exports depends primarily on huge ocean liners which can only be conducted through the sea. Landlocked countries without access to or control over seaports depend overwhelmingly on neighbours for their very existence.

It is a fact that wherever there is water, large populations are expected in those areas. The Great Lakes region in East Africa was the earliest human settlements, Mali, Songhai and Ghana empires in Africa, flourished on the banks of the Niger River. The Egyptian civilization was made possible due to the presence of the Nile River, the Chinese civilization

flourished due to the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers, the ancient Greek civilization grew due to the presence of the Aegean Sea and several others.

According to the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), about 90% of world trade (by volume) and 60% (by value) is transported by the sea (Uzoigwe, 2016). Similarly, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development reported that 80% of global trade (by volume) and 70% (by value) is carried out by sea and handled by ports worldwide (Review of Maritime Transport of UNCTAD, 2017).

Seaports are the economic lifeline of any nation. Large scale international businesses are basically conducted on water. Without seaports, there will be no domestic or international business, because trade and commerce of significance has to be conducted through the sea. According to Jaja (2009);



Figure I, shows four of Nigeria's Eastern Corridor seaports including Ibom Deep seaport.

Source: Department of Geography, University of Uyo, Nigeria.

Seaports play a strategic role in the economy of a country. The Nigerian seaports represent the gateways to the nation's economy. With about 1,000 km of navigable waterways coupled with

numerous lagoons and channels with deep-water, the overwhelming importance of maritime transport in the life of Nigeria's economy is of national and international importance. The need

for water transport has been accentuated by the nature of Nigerian economy which is heavily dependent on importation of goods and the exportation of agricultural goods and crude oil. Without seaports, Nigeria's capacity to earn foreign exchange and her ability to import essential commodities would collapse.

White (1971),¹ Ogundana (1980),² Olukoju (1996),³ Badejo and Solaja (2017),⁴ Owoputi and Owolabi (2020),⁵ and Azeru-Ozizi (2022),⁶ have all put forward a thorough analysis of seaports in Nigeria. It can be added that seaports serve several purposes some of which include, provide harbours, provide services such as pilotage, dredging, channels, provision of berths, maintenance of navigable channels, ship to port interface, that is loading and off-loading of goods and transporting goods from the coast to the hinterland and from the hinterland to the coast. The authors pointed out that seaports remain the only avenue where ships and ferries and several activities take place to ensure that goods coming into Nigeria or going out are checked to ensure they meet national and international rules and regulations guiding port activities.

Badejo and Solaja (2017)⁷ opined that ports create job opportunities, provide alternative mode of transportation generates revenue, accelerates the level of urbanization, promotes peaceful co-existence among countries and generally have a positive influence on the economy of a state. The authors also pointed out that the presence of ports encourages the growth of more economic activities-like trade and commerce in the areas where it is situated. It is pertinent to state here that seaports are clearly an

¹ White, HP and Gleave, MB, (1971), *An Economic Geography of West Africa: An Advanced Economic Geographies*, London: G. Bell and Sons Limited, pp. 245-249

² Ogundana, B (1980), *Seaport Development in Colonial Nigeria*, In: *Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History*, (eds), Akinjogbin, IA and Osoba, SO, Ife History Series, Ile Ife: University Press, pp.159-183

³ Olukoju, A (1996), *Transportation in Colonial West Africa*, In: *An Economic History of West Africa*, (Revised Edition, 2009), eds, Ogunremi, GO and Faluyi, EK, Lagos: Mayodele Ajayi Enterprises, pp. 151-163

⁴ Badejo, BA and Solaja, OM (2017), 'The Nigerian Seaports and Development (1900-2015): Historical Perspectives and Dynamics,' *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, vol. 6 (9), pp. 1007-1024

⁵ Owoputi, EA, and Owolabi, OO, (2020), *Seaport Development as an agent for economic growth and international transportation*, *European Journal Of Logistics, Purchasing and Supply Chain Management*, vol. 8, (1), pp. 19-34

⁶ Azeru-Ozizi, HA (2022), 'Seaports and Economic Development in Nigeria: The Case of the Niger Delta Region,' *Journal of Public Law*, vol. 9 (2), pp. 273-289

⁷ Badejo, BA and Solaja, OM (2017), 'The Nigerian seaports and development (1900-2015): Historical Perspectives and dynamics,' *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, vol. 6 (9), pp. 1007-1024

indication of a country's volume of trade and an indication of its importance in the international community.

Statement of Research Problem

For decades, the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) have concentrated its port development efforts on the two ports in the Lagos area; the TinCan island port and the Apapa port. It is currently working on a third Lagos port. Meanwhile ports in the Eastern flank of the country have been underutilized, underfunded and remain largely underdeveloped.

Objective of Research Problem

This research seeks to do the following:

- a) Examine the present state of the Eastern Corridor Seaports; Warri, Onne, Calabar and Ibom;
- b) Highlight the problems of the Eastern Corridor Seaports and
- c) Identify the politics behind the operational failure of the Eastern Corridor seaports.

Clarification of Key Concepts

Eastern Corridor Ports;

Eastern flank seaports or Eastern Corridor seaports, according to Azeru-Ozizi⁸ refers to ports in the Eastern sections of the Nigerian state. The Eastern Corridor comprises, ports located in the South-South and Niger Delta region. These ports are; Onne, Port Harcourt, Calabar and Warri. The seaports are controlled and managed by the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA). However, there are scores of small ports, jetties and privately owned harbours scattered around the Niger Delta most of which are not controlled by the Nigerian Ports Authority. The Eastern Ports according to Ekong⁹ (2018), are all located in the South-South geopolitical zone, namely; Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta states. The Niger Delta Wetlands is one of the world's iconic regions boasting of an array of aquatic life and fauna unmatched anywhere in the world.

Warri Ports Complex

Located in the heart of the Niger Delta swampy region, Warri port was founded in 1955. The complex includes several smaller ports, harbours and jetties; Burutu,¹⁰ Sapele, Oghara, Koko, Escravos, Forcados and Pennington. As an oil and gas freezone hub with access to the Atlantic ocean, it played host to big industries which soon defined the sector. It is on record that Warri was declared an oil

⁸ Azeru-Ozizi, op, cited

⁹ Ekong, EU, (2018), Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History and International Studies, University of Uyo, Nigeria. pp.

¹⁰ Badejo nad Solaja, (2025), op cited, p. 1016

and gas port way back in 2011. Going down memory lane Awhefeada,¹¹ stated that the colonial period saw the creation of what is known as the 'old Warri' port which was nationalized in 1969. The phenomenal boom of the 1970s saw the creation of the 'new Warri' port in 1979.

Shortly after this period, the port's fortunes began to decline. According to Ebitimi,¹² Warri, ports shortens the distances goods must travel, decongests the Lagos metropole, and spreads the dividends of trade more equitably across the different riverine communities across federation. Here are some of the key features of the Warri ports; an area of 1.53 million sq. metres divided between the new and the old, has a draft depth of 8 metres, quay length of 572 metres, container handling capacity of 333,000 TEUs, average turnaround time is 2.89 days, 20 berths, offers 75% duty rebate and is connected to numerous inland waterways.

Calabar Ports Complex

Historically, Calabar port is the oldest in Nigeria, having been recognized, first as an international seaport and used for the export of slaves in the 15th century and later a palm oil hub in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It was officially commissioned as a Ports Complex by the federal government in 1979. It was listed among the ports concessions of 2006.

According to Azeru-Ozizi,¹³ Calabar port is the nearest port to majority of Nigeria's northern states, especially the North-East and some North Central states. It has a depth of 6 and 7 metres and is located 55 miles up the Cross River. The Calabar port was declared an Export Processing Zone (EPZ), back in 1992 by the Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA). The author pointed out that the port has been underutilized for decades, inspite of having an annual capacity of handling 1.5 million metric tonnes of cargo.

In the opinion of Akintoye¹⁴ *et al*, the port is grossly underutilized. From 1975 to 1976, it utilized 13.95% of its capacity and by 1980 to 1981 it had dropped to 10.8%.

Calabar seaports circumstances remained dire by 1993, with a total throughput of 236,936 metric tons. When traffic dropped to 176,000 metric tons in 1994, this continued to diminish.

¹¹ Awhefeada, S (2025), Why Warri Port Matters, The Independent Newspaper, December 23.

¹² Ebitimi, J (2025), The Atlantic Gambit: How Warri and Koko Ports are Forging a New Trade Frontier for Nigeria, Business Day, Newspaper, November 15.

¹³ Azeru-Ozizi, op. cited, p. 282

¹⁴ Akintoye, OA, Nkpena, CO, Ukata, SU, Harrison, UE, Ajila, TO, Asuquo, EE, Onuoha, E and Omubo, R, (2024), Assessment of Factors Influencing the Patronage of Calabar Seaport, South-East Nigeria, Journal of Geography and Environmental Studies (GOJGES), vol. 4, (1), pp. 52-68

Calabar seaport has persisted in incurring losses from lost revenue and customs charges that could have helped the national government.¹⁵

Some of the port's key features includes the following, industrial area is 40,000 square metres of industrial space, 7.5 metres of depth, quay area is 14,815 square metres, six conventional berths, handles 239,000 tons of general cargo and 10,000 TEUs of containers.

Onne Ports Complex

Located in the heart of Bonny island, Onne ports situated on the Bonny River Estuary along Ogu Creek is reputed to be the first to operate a Landlord Port Model,¹⁶ the first of its kind and noted for oil and gas cargoes. Nestled in the heartland of Nigeria's oil and gas industry, Onne port has fared relatively well compared to other ports in Nigeria's Eastern Corridor.

Onne is a landlord port. A landlord port is a pattern of transfer of basic port infrastructure and services to private companies by means of leasing arrangement or contractual agreement.¹⁷

Some of the key features of the Onne port include the following; its total land area is 2,538.189 hectares, it processes 800,000 TEUs, has a quay length of 5, 172 square metres. The port complex includes, the Federal Lighter Terminal (FLT) with its adjoining Federal Ocean Terminal (FOT) and other auxiliary jetties like the National Fertiliser Company of Nigeria (NAFCON) jetty, Material Off-loading Facility (MOF) jetty,¹⁸ Buoy 53 Bonny Midstream.

The complex, particularly the Federal Lighter and the Federal Ocean Terminals are expected to have a capacity of eighteen (18) berths. The Onne port was expected to serve countries in the West African sub region, including Cameroon and the Central African Republic. The federal government made the port - Onne/Ikpokiri an Oil and Gas Free Zone in 1996. Currently, Onne processed approximately 65%¹⁹ of Nigeria's export cargo, relating to oil and gas.

Ibom Ports Complex

Ibom Deep seaport was conceived in 1999 and received the approval of the federal government of Nigeria in 2015.

¹⁵ Akintoye, et al, op, cited, p. 53

¹⁶ Ikunze, KC and Ihunwo CK, (2024), Appraising the Operational Performance of Onne Port (A Case Study), Scholarly Journal of Science and Technology Research and Development, vol.n3 (8), pp. 44-50

¹⁷ Pinwa, TN, (1999), The assessment of the performance of the landlord port of Nigeria (Onne Port Complex, Onne), An Msc Dissertation,World Maritime University, p. 16

¹⁸ Pinwa, op, cited, p. 17

¹⁹ Ikunze and Ihunwo op, cited

Located in Akwa Ibom State, one of the states in heartland the Niger Delta, the port held a lot of promises for the state. The actualization of this huge project was expected to boost Nigeria's non-oil sector, the maritime sector in the South-East, North-Central, North-Eastern zones of Nigeria and also service the West African sub-region, including Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

One of the major constraints against the project is its huge financial requirement; its first phase was expected to cost a USD 2 million²⁰, while the second phase is to cost 2.3 million USD. Next, was petty squabbles over its name, while the government preferred 'Ibom,' the locals preferred 'Ibaka' to give it a clear ethnic identity. Besides, there was the issue of sourcing for funds or sponsors to bankroll the project. According to Jimmy²¹ *et al*;

The primary impediment, however, appears to be political opposition and inter-regional rivalries. Influential entrepreneurs and political figures in Nigeria's South-West, who have vested interests in the existing Lagos ports, are reportedly "not in support of seaport decentralisation policy." Their concern is that such decentralisation would "result in the collapse of their shipping investment in South-West Nigeria.

In the view of the authors, this present state of affairs demonstrates how vested personal interests in Nigeria can become a hindrance to the socio-economic development of the country. Some key features of Ibom Deep Seaport include the following; a channel depth of 18.24 metres, and a berth depth of 16.72 metres, making it the deepest seaport in West Africa, it is suitable for giant vessels, including neo-Panamax vessels with a minimum capacity of 80,000 DWT, it is 20km long, 450m wide approach, it has specialized terminals for dry bulk, liquid cargo, including crude oil and LNG.

Political interests hindering the reactivation of Eastern ports

A major problem confronting the maritime industry is the gross politicization of port establishment and operations in Nigeria. It is inconceivable that the Niger Delta with its natural harbours, creeks, swamps and waterways does not have seaports to service the area. Edmund,²² who quoted

Nseodo, stated that the over-concentration of ports in Lagos was part of some long-standing policies of the Northern-controlled federal government which discriminated against the southeast and the Niger Delta regions as one of the fallout of the Nigerian civil war. (1967-1970)

Jimmy²³ *et al* echoed a similar opinion when he stated that, political opposition and inter-regional rivalries are the primary hindrance to Eastern ports development and reactivation. The authors elaborated that influential entrepreneurs and political figures in Nigeria's South-West, with vested interests in the Lagos ports, are not in support of seaport decentralisation policy, pointing out that such an arrangement would collapse their shipping investment. (Jimmy and Osogi, 2024), quoted in Jimmy,²⁴ added that the current federal government with special ties to Lagos may not desire the Ibom Deep Seaport to 'rival' the Lagos ports.

Azeru-Ozizi²⁵ stated that the Niger Delta region, blessed with natural harbours devoid of human input should have federal government attention, instead of the congested and gridlocked Lagos ports. The Ibom Deep seaport project in Akwa Ibom state has been on the drawing board since 2015 and it is still marred in political intrigues and machinations. These ports would have over the years developed into port cities if the Nigerian authorities had taken up the challenge to improve infrastructure in these ports and diverted cargo meant for Lagos and Port Harcourt to these ports and this would have aided the rapid development of these areas.

Problems of the Eastern Corridor seaports

Most ports have general problems that are common to all of them, but some ports like the Calabar and Ibom Deep Seaports have peculiar challenges, that need mention. This section will however analyse both general and peculiar challenges.

a) Weak industrial base

It is important to point out that the effectiveness and efficiency of a port to a large extent depends on the strength of the areas industrial base and a thriving hinterland market. In the case of Akwa Ibom state, the collapse of virtually all the companies that existed when the state was created 38 years, ago created an economic vacuum that has remained unfilled till date. Chief among

²⁰ The Punch Newspaper, (2020), Ibom Deep Seaport First Phase to gulp 2 billion USD, by Commssioner.

²¹ Imikan, AM, Jimmy, UJ, Abia, EM, Udofia, U, Isikong, SS and Mgbemena, UL (2025), Policy and Politics in Nigerian Maritime Industry: Evidence from Onne, Warri, Ibaka Deep Seaport and Calabar Port, UKR Journal of Economics, Business and Management (UKRJEBM), vol.1, (5), pp. 18-31

²² Edmund, op, cited, p. 546

²³ Jimmy et al, op, cited, p. 22

²⁴ Jimmy et al, op, cited p. 22

²⁵ Azeru-Ozizi, HA, Seaports and Economic Development in Nigeria: The Case of the Niger Delta Region, Journal of Public Law, vol. 9, (2), 2022, p. 287

the collapsed industries²⁶ are; Syringe manufacturing company, Ibom Flour Mills, Ibom Coconut oil, Palmol (Oil palm products), this is besides, the fact that agricultural production in the state has declined considerably.

Apart from crude oil, for which Akwa Ibom state is the largest producer at (504,000mbpd),²⁷ is directly under the control of the federal government, and Champion Breweries, the only surviving factory is under Chinese management. According to Akintoye²⁸ *et al.* same problem applies to the Cross River state;

Historically, the region focused on cash crops like oil palm, rubber and timber in the south-east. The north-east had grains, groundnut and cotton. During the colonial era, plantation agriculture, timber extraction, and government owned farming estates flourished in the Cross River Plains. For years, Calabar port relied on heavily on local industries; CALCEMCO, Seronwood, Flour Mill, Paint and Biscuit Factory, Cross River Breweries, and several others.

These industries have since collapsed with Dangote Cement now in charge of CALCEMCO. Having lost Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon and some oil wells to Akwa Ibom state, the fortunes of Cross River state, has dipped considerably. The purchasing power of the residents of these states is limited compared to Lagos, Port Harcourt and Abuja. These are problems are cyclical in nature and tend to exacerbate the problems of unemployment and the drift to major cities.

Poor infrastructural development of the states

Poor infrastructure affects all the ports in Nigeria, but the situation is worse in the Cross River state, where the Calabar-Itu road is a nightmare for transporters and commuters alike. The Ikom-Calabar route has witnessed long articulated TEU bearing vehicles over- turn. Akwa Ibom state have significantly, improved its road network, but problem still persists in neighbouring states of Abia, Imo, Enugu, Anambra and Ebonyi.

According to Edmund,²⁹ importers usually chose the destination of their cargoes, which in his view is largely based on the location of the consumers of such products and secondly, a large population. But the problem is all

over the country, long container bearing articulated vehicles have reportedly tipped over Lagos bridges on several occasions and sometimes run into commuter buses on the highway, both accidents resulting in scores of loss of lives. Virtually, all the ports do not have adequate warehouses to store imports.

Absence of a national maritime policy:

One of the major problems facing the development of maritime development in Nigeria is the absence of a national maritime policy. Maritime activities are subjected to the whims and caprices of some agencies and their officials. Mistakes of the colonial administrators of Nigeria, as it concerns the concentration of ports in two areas Lagos and Port Harcourt continued more than sixty five years after Nigeria's independence. Nigerian political rulers perpetuated the mistakes of their British predecessors. They failed to take cognisance of the fact that ports by their very nature are functional units of development.

Haphazard development of some ports:

Another problem facing the development of maritime industry in Nigeria is the absence of a long-term development plan as it concerns land use and port expansion programmes. Early in 1900s, Nigeria had no Land Use Decree which would have significantly regulated the use of land, particularly land needed for development purposes. Consequently, Lagos and Port Harcourt were allowed to develop haphazardly without some form of control. In Lagos area vast stretches of land that would have been ear-marked for expansion of port facilities were quickly acquired by hotels, commercial companies and foreign embassies hoping to effectively exploit the recreational advantage of having properties on the water front.

These prime properties would have been adequate for the expansion of port facilities. This same scenario was re-enacted in Port Harcourt area. It is on record that, had the Apapa Industrial estate been located farther away from the port area, the water-front linking Badagry creek to Apapa Wharf would have been of great value for future port expansion purposes. (Ogundana, 1980)³⁰ It is pertinent to point out here that the ports in the Eastern Corridor do not have this problem, as large hectares of land have been set aside for expansion.

Insecurity on Nigeria's waterways and government neglect:

Insecurity on Nigeria's waterways have been a major impediment to the effective development of the maritime industry in Nigeria. The activities of sea pirates, militants,

²⁶ Ekong, EU, Industrialisation in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, 38 years On: A Critical Analysis, 1987-2023, International Journal of Development and Economic Sustainability, vol. 13, (3), p. 101

²⁷ Ekong, EU, op. cited, p. 99

²⁸ Akintoye *et al.* op. cited, p. 57

²⁹ Edmund, C. (2022), River Port and Deep Sea Port Developments in Nigeria: Implications for West African Gateways and Hinterland Markets, American Journal of Industrial and Business Management. 12, 531-561

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ajibm.2022.124029>

³⁰ Ogundana, BO, (1980), Seaport Development in Colonial Nigeria, In: *Topics on Nigeria Economic and Social History: Ife History Series*, Ife: University Press, pp. 159-181

and other illegal non-state actors on the waterways, rivers and creeks have made the maritime business a very risky one. This situation is not peculiar to the Eastern ports; it takes place in Lagos, and indeed in different parts of the world.

‘Wharf rats’ as they are known in Lagos ports do irreparable damage to shippers’ cargo and the ports authorities are yet to effectively contain the menace. Ezekiel,³¹ in his article noted that attacks on vessels have witnessed an astronomical increase in the last decade. Ufia³² *et al* are of the opinion that attacks on vessels have increased. Before the concession, 1994-2006, there 166 reported attacks on vessels; after the concession, 2007-2018, there were 348 attacks. This shows that port concession have not made significant difference. It is pertinent to add that attacks on vessels are not limited to the Eastern Corridor or South-west, Nigeria; there is a general pandemic of attacks on vessels in the maritime industry, everywhere in the world.

Proliferation of federal government agencies at ports:

Inconsistent government policies have been a major source of concern to importers and exporters and other users of Nigerian ports. Government’s incoherent and inconsistent policies have resulted in chaotic situations at the two main ports in the country, particularly the Lagos ports. Scores of personnel from different government agencies descend on the ports such as; Immigration, Navy, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Customs, Ministry of Health, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), and these crowd have contributed to make import and export a herculean task. Cargo spends as much as eight weeks or more at the ports before they are shipped off or before distribution in the case of imports. (Azeru-Ozizi, 2022)³³

One of the outcomes of the proliferation of government agencies at the ports is that keeping the goods longer than necessary expose it to thieves and pilfering. In all, it makes the cost of shipping astronomical.

Obsolete Port Facilities:

Apart from Lagos, most Nigerian ports facilities are relatively rudimentary, though over the last decade, attempts have been made to improve facilities. According to the Nigerian Port Authority³⁴ reports, in the second

quarter of 2017, Apapa processed 123,297 twenty-eight equivalent units (containers the Tin Can handled was 475,714 TEUs. In 2023, Lagos ports (Apapa and Tin Can Island) handled a combined 1.56 million TEUs, while Port Harcourt (Onne port) handled over one million TEU during the same period.

These figures are relatively lower than what obtains at Cotonou port, which is a smaller port, but handles more cargoes. Apart from Lagos, Lekki and Port Harcourt ports, it is relatively difficult for ships to navigate in and out of harbours, particularly at night. Navigational aids such as tug boats, to help small ships navigate through dangerous waters, narrow channels, congested ports, strong currents and tides are none existence in small ports and most times no electricity.

Recommendations

It is pertinent to make some recommendations based on the findings of this research that would be of importance in attempts to reactivate the Eastern Corridor seaports.

- It is important to offer incentives in the form of tax rebate on harbour dues, this will lower costs for shippers and encourage them to opt for Eastern seaports.
- Imports meant for the south-south, south-east, north-central and north-east should be routed through Eastern ports instead of using Lagos ports, since the distance is shorter and its cost effective.
- Inadequate infrastructure at Eastern seaports is a major problem. The Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) need to provide the facilities needed at the ports; dredging harbours, berths, cranes, forklifts, ship building and repairs, technology should also be deployed in all aspects of port operations for efficiency, and shorter turnaround time.
- State governments on their part, need to improve the infrastructure in their areas to make it attractive to shippers, encourage their citizens to produce goods for export and also revamp ailing or dead factories to improve their industrial base.

Conclusion

With over 30% of total imports from Lagos ports being re-transported to the South-south and South-east of Nigeria, it is apparent that the NPA and the federal government of Nigeria need to revamp the Eastern Corridor seaports. This move would be in line with the government’s Blue Economy initiatives. Besides, the reactivation of the Eastern seaports would according to Onyenucheya,³⁵ create over two million jobs.

³¹ Ezekiel, PS, (2023), Effect of Port Infrastructure on Performance of Eastern Ports, (2000-2020), International Journal of Research and Innovation in the Social Sciences (IJRISS), vol. VII, (IX), pp. 1867-1891

<https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.71052>

³² Ufia FM, Emeinke GC, and Otto, G (2021), A Comparative Analysis of State of Security in Eastern Ports of Nigeria Before and After Concession, International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies, vol. 9, (4), pp. 250-255. DOI No.: 10.24940/theijhss/2021/v9/i4/HS2104-040

³³ Azeru-Ozizi, op. cited, p. 289

³⁴ Ewuzie AA, ‘Container traffic at Nigeria ports hits 1-56m TEUs in 2023’ Business Day Nigeria Newspaper. Retrieved 13/03/2025 <https://businessday.ng/>, January 31, 2024

³⁵ Onyenucheya, A, (2025), Eastern Ports and the making of a new maritime hub, The Guardian Newspaper, August 29.

Presently, some marginal improvements in Eastern port facilities have begun. The paper believes that the ports have the capacity to handle 35% of Nigeria's maritime business. The Ibom Deep seaport which is yet to come on stream is reported to have the capacity to handle neo-Panamax vessels,³⁶ with its 18.24 metres channel depth and 16.72 metres berth depth. Presently Nigeria loses millions of USD to port congestion in Lagos, as shippers prefer to use Cotonou, Douala and Tema ports due to less congestion. The goods from these ports are subsequently transported to Nigeria by road.

It is on record that Lagos is already too congested; operating a port serving more than 230 million people is a herculean task by any standard. It is time to revamp all the Eastern Corridor seaports and distribute traffic among the six seaports in the country and later Ibom Deep seaport. This would not only make the ports competitive, but it would give shippers a choice, and reduce cost. Nigeria is supposed to be a federation, each of the six geo-political zones, particularly the ones with seaports should not be held back for the interest of the other.

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