

STATE INTERVENTION IN NIGERIA'S MARITIME SECTOR: CHALLENGES AND POLICY SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the role of the Nigerian state in developing the maritime sector, focusing on the challenges it faces and the way forward. The maritime sector is vital to Nigeria's economy, contributing to trade, job creation, and revenue. However, it is held back by issues such as poor infrastructure, corruption, ineffective regulations, and insecurity. The researcher used secondary data as a method of data collection, and journal articles, books, and conference papers on the maritime sector were utilised. Qualitative analysis was used to analyse the data collected. The work adopted three theoretical frameworks to analyse the role of the state in the maritime sector. First, the Public Goods Theory, Developmental State Theory, and Human Rights Theory frame the discussion. The findings reveal that while some improvements have been made, key challenges such as insufficient funding, regulatory weaknesses, and security threats persist. In the end, the paper recommends strengthening regulatory frameworks, investing in modern infrastructure, and enhancing security measures. It also calls for more international collaboration and the use of technology to improve efficiency.

Keywords: Maritime Sector, Human Rights, State Intervention, Regulatory Frameworks, Security Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's maritime sector is a fundamental pillar of its economy, facilitating over 80% of the country's international trade and creating significant employment opportunities. Strategically located along major global shipping routes, the sector has the potential to drive sustainable economic growth and position Nigeria as a leader in maritime activities across Africa. However, its growth is stifled by numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, regulatory inefficiencies, corruption, and maritime insecurity, such as piracy and armed robbery. These barriers have not only limited the sector's contribution to the national economy but also undermined Nigeria's global competitiveness in maritime trade (Chinedu & Adewale, 2021).

Nigeria's maritime sector is vital to the nation's economic infrastructure and is a key component in facilitating international trade. According to Chidiebere and Eze (2024), the sector supports over 90% of the country's international trade by volume, with the ports of Lagos and Port Harcourt acting as the primary entry points for imports and exports. The nation's ports handle a wide array of cargo, including crude oil, agricultural products, and consumer goods. Nigeria's offshore oil industry, which relies heavily on maritime transport, is a significant contributor to the country's GDP and foreign exchange earnings. The oil and gas sector, located offshore, requires a robust

and efficient maritime network to facilitate the transportation of crude oil and petroleum products, making the maritime sector crucial for the nation's energy exports (Olugbenga & Adebayo, 2025).

Moreover, the maritime sector in Nigeria provides employment opportunities for millions of Nigerians. It is estimated that the sector directly and indirectly employs a substantial portion of the population, including ship owners, dock workers, customs officials, and maritime security personnel. As a result, the maritime industry is not only vital for the country's external trade but also for its internal economy and job creation.

This study critically examines the role of the state in the development of Nigeria's maritime sector, with an emphasis on the challenges facing the industry and potential solutions. Drawing on Public Goods Theory and Developmental State Theory, the research underscores the importance of state-driven reforms, including strategic investments in modern infrastructure, enforcement of effective regulatory frameworks, and prioritisation of maritime security. These interventions are essential to unlocking the sector's full potential and ensuring it contributes meaningfully to Nigeria's economic transformation (Balogun, 2024).

Thesis Statement

Given the central role of the maritime sector in Nigeria's economic development and the numerous challenges it faces, this paper explores the state's intervention in the sector, analysing the key obstacles to its success and proposing actionable policy solutions. By addressing issues such as inadequate infrastructure, piracy, governance inefficiencies, and fragmented regulatory frameworks, the Nigerian government can facilitate the sustainable growth of the maritime industry and enhance its contribution to national development. By analysing these issues, the paper will propose policy solutions aimed at improving the sector's efficiency and contributing to Nigeria's broader economic development. In light of the above, this work poses the following research questions

1. What are the key challenges facing Nigeria's maritime sector in terms of infrastructure, governance, and security?
2. How has state intervention in Nigeria's maritime sector affected its efficiency and growth?
3. What policy solutions can the Nigerian government adopt to improve maritime infrastructure, enhance security, and promote sustainable growth in the sector?

Aims of the study

This study has broad and specific objectives. The broad objective is to investigate the traditional role of the Nigerian state in the development of the maritime sector. However, the specific objectives are to:

1. To look at the importance of the contributions of the maritime sector in the development of the country.
2. To critically investigate the challenges currently faced by the maritime sector

3. Suggest possible ways to improve the activities of the maritime sector and look at its importance in the Nigerian development agenda.

Significance of the study

This paper will serve as a policy document for the government and a valuable tool for the immediate management of the maritime ministry. If properly harnessed, the maritime sector can significantly contribute to the government's revenue.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design, relying on secondary data to examine the role of the state in the development of Nigeria's maritime sector. The justification for the above method is that the topic "State Intervention in Nigeria's Maritime Sector: Challenges and Policy Solutions" deals with complex, multifaceted issues related to governance, policy implementation, infrastructure, security, and economic impact. These issues are best understood through qualitative methods, which allow for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences, expert opinions, and institutional perspectives. By using qualitative research design, we can gain a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by the sector, the effectiveness of state intervention, and the broader impact of maritime policies.

Also, qualitative research design was chosen because is suitable here because it involves investigating deeply rooted systemic challenges, such as corruption, policy failures, and governance issues, which require an exploration of underlying factors and the perspectives of key stakeholders. The maritime sector in Nigeria is influenced by diverse factors, such as the experiences of shipowners, regulatory bodies, port operators, and security personnel.

The use of secondary data sources is appropriate for this research because they provide a wealth of existing information on Nigeria's maritime sector, such as government reports, policy documents, academic papers, industry reports, and news articles. These sources help create a comprehensive understanding of the sector's historical context, policy evolution, and ongoing challenges. Also, it allows for quicker access to information and reduces the costs and time associated with primary data collection, such as conducting fieldwork, interviews, and surveys. Moreover, the availability of historical data such as government reports and academic papers allows for the study of trends over time, such as the effects of state intervention on maritime security, infrastructure, and trade over the years.

To avoid bias that may arise, the use of multiple data sources, theories, or methods to cross-check information and confirm findings was adopted. To avoid bias in interpreting secondary data, we gather information from diverse sources, including government reports, academic articles, industry reports, and credible news outlets. This reduces the risk of relying on one skewed perspective or incomplete data.

Conceptual Clarifications

Maritime Sector

The maritime sector encompasses economic activities related to the transportation of goods and people by sea and waterways. It includes shipping, port operations, inland waterways, and logistics. Key areas such as port infrastructure, maritime security, and offshore oil exploration highlight its importance in facilitating global trade and driving Nigeria's economy.

Development

According to Filani (2000), development can be defined as a process of sustained increase in total and per capita incomes accompanied by structural transformation and modernisation of the socio-economic environment. Development is a process that results in the transformation of socio-cultural, economic, and political structures in a manner that improves the capacity of the society to fulfil its aspirations. According to Ogbu et al. (2017), development refers to changes that result in positive benefits to the generality of the citizens and other residents of a country/community/town. A country/town can improve the standards of living, security, and welfare of its people. Development refers to progress in infrastructure, governance, and economic contributions. It includes building efficient ports, enforcing strong policies, and creating economic opportunities. In Nigeria, development in the maritime sector means addressing challenges, adopting best practices, and enhancing its role in trade and economic growth.

Development is viewed through various lenses based on individual experiences and backgrounds. It fundamentally signifies the reduction of poverty and an enhancement in the standard of living for a larger segment of the population within a community, state, or country. Achieving this means that the majority of individuals in society gain access to essential needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, security, and peace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Comparative Analysis of State Intervention in Nigeria's Maritime Sector

Various scholars and policy experts have analysed the impact of state interventions in the sector, especially concerning challenges and proposed solutions. In this comparative analysis, we examine multiple sources to compare and contrast perspectives on the effectiveness of government intervention in the maritime sector, with particular emphasis on policies like the Cabotage Act and the National Transport Policy.

1. The Impact of the Cabotage Act

The Cabotage Act of 2003 was introduced to foster indigenous ownership of vessels and improve local participation in the maritime industry by limiting foreign vessels to domestic coastal shipping. While it was hailed as a step towards empowering Nigerian maritime operators, the implementation of the Act has faced significant challenges. Scholars like Okafor and Ugwuegbu

(2021) argue that the Cabotage Act has not met its objectives due to issues such as inadequate enforcement, corruption, and insufficient financing for local operators. According to their findings, most Nigerian ship owners still rely on foreign vessels for offshore activities due to a lack of local capacity to meet international standards (Okafor & Ugwuegbu, 2021).

Conversely, Olanrewaju and Ahmed (2022) highlight that while there are enforcement gaps, the Cabotage Act has contributed to the growth of local shipping companies, especially with regard to the development of maritime infrastructure and the increase in local vessel ownership. They argue that despite challenges, the Act has provided a framework that local operators can use to engage with international shipping markets. However, the lack of support in terms of financing and technical training for Nigerian operators remains a significant barrier (Olanrewaju & Ahmed, 2022).

Thus, while the Cabotage Act has had some positive impacts, it has been undercut by systemic issues that continue to hinder its full implementation and effectiveness. This comparative view illustrates the complexity of state interventions, which require both regulatory frameworks and practical support systems for indigenous operators to thrive.

2. Piracy and Maritime Insecurity

Piracy has been a persistent challenge in Nigeria's maritime sector, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, where the country holds a critical position. The state's efforts to combat piracy have been significant, with the introduction of several initiatives, including the establishment of the Joint Maritime Operations Coordinating Centre (JMOCC) and the collaboration with international partners like the International Maritime Organization (IMO). However, scholars have questioned the success of these interventions. Chukwuma (2023) argues that despite significant investments in maritime security, piracy continues to thrive, primarily due to the lack of coordination between security agencies and persistent corruption within the maritime security apparatus.

In contrast, Akintoye and Bamidele (2024) argue that recent improvements in the Nigerian Navy's capabilities and the establishment of maritime security partnerships have led to a decline in pirate attacks in some regions. They acknowledge that while challenges remain, the Nigerian government's increasing focus on maritime security is gradually yielding positive results, especially in reducing attacks on oil tankers (Akintoye & Bamidele, 2024). However, they stress that the underlying socio-economic issues, such as youth unemployment and regional instability, continue to feed the cycle of piracy.

This comparative analysis demonstrates that while the state has made significant efforts to address maritime insecurity, piracy remains a complex issue that requires both improved security measures and long-term socio-economic solutions. The differences in perspectives highlight the need for a more coordinated and integrated approach to maritime security that involves not just the state but also the private sector and local communities.

3. Challenges in Infrastructure and Governance

Another critical challenge facing the Nigerian maritime sector is inadequate infrastructure, particularly at key ports like the Lagos Port Complex and Port Harcourt Port. Scholars such as Adeniji and Adedeji (2021) argue that the poor state of port infrastructure is a major barrier to improving the efficiency of the maritime sector, citing long delays, inadequate cargo handling, and insufficient modern equipment as key issues. They suggest that state intervention is necessary to overhaul the existing infrastructure, enhance operational efficiency, and reduce the costs associated with port congestion (Adeniji & Adedeji, 2021).

However, Ifeanyi and Tayo (2022) offer a different perspective, suggesting that the problem of inadequate infrastructure is not solely a result of poor state investment but also of mismanagement and corruption within port authorities. They argue that while the government has allocated funds for infrastructure development, the lack of proper oversight and accountability has resulted in delayed projects and underused facilities (Ifeanyi & Tayo, 2022). According to this perspective, improving governance structures within port management agencies is just as important as investing in physical infrastructure.

Both sources agree that infrastructure challenges are a critical impediment to the development of Nigeria's maritime sector. However, the distinction lies in whether the primary issue is related to the lack of state investment or whether corruption and inefficiency in governance are at the root of the problem. This suggests that state intervention should not only focus on infrastructure development but also on strengthening institutional frameworks to ensure accountability and effective governance.

4. Policy Solutions and Recommendations

Various scholars have recommended solutions to address the persistent challenges in Nigeria's maritime sector. Olawale and Ige (2021) argue that greater policy coherence and coordination among government agencies, including the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), and the Ministry of Transportation, is essential for overcoming the fragmented approach to maritime governance. They suggest that a national maritime policy that aligns with international standards could provide a more structured framework for sectoral development (Olawale & Ige, 2021).

Similarly, Ibrahim and Oyetunde (2023) suggest that improving public-private partnerships (PPPs) could drive efficiency and attract investment to improve the sector's infrastructure. They highlight the success of such partnerships in other regions and argue that fostering collaboration between the Nigerian government and private investors could help bridge the gap in infrastructure development and operational efficiency (Ibrahim & Oyetunde, 2023).

Importance of the Maritime Sector in Nigeria

The maritime sector plays a pivotal role in Nigeria's economy, acting as a cornerstone for trade facilitation, job creation, and revenue generation. As a country with an extensive coastline and

strategically located ports, Nigeria relies heavily on its maritime industry to drive economic activity. The sector facilitates over 80% of Nigeria's international trade, ensuring the efficient import and export of goods. This not only supports the country's economic growth but also enhances its integration into the global economy (Ibrahim & Adekunle, 2022). Additionally, the maritime industry contributes significantly to government revenue through port duties, taxes, and other related charges, which form a crucial part of the national budget (Chukwu & Ayodeji, 2023).

Another critical aspect of the sector's importance is its ability to generate employment. Ports, shipping lines, logistics companies, and other maritime-related businesses provide jobs for thousands of Nigerians, reducing unemployment rates and supporting livelihoods. Beyond direct employment, the industry also indirectly supports related sectors such as insurance, banking, and logistics, creating a multiplier effect that extends across the economy (Adebayo & Adeyemi, 2021).

On the global stage, Nigeria's maritime sector holds a strategic position in regional and international trade. The country's ports serve as key gateways for landlocked countries in West Africa, such as Chad and Niger, making Nigeria a central hub for intra-regional trade. Furthermore, the nation's location along major shipping routes enhances its relevance in global trade networks, allowing for increased opportunities for foreign direct investment in port infrastructure and shipping services. This strategic role underscores the need for robust policies and investments to further develop the maritime sector and maximize its economic potential (Okon & Eze, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The Nigerian maritime sector is vital to the country's development and the platform it creates for the exchange of trade between Nigeria and other nations. To aid our discussion of the Nigerian maritime sector, we have adopted three theoretical frameworks: the public goods theory, the developmental state theory, and the human rights theory.

Public Goods Theory

Public goods theory examines the state's role in providing services that are essential for society, such as maritime infrastructure and security. These goods are non-excludable, meaning they are available to all, and non-rivalrous, meaning one person's use doesn't diminish the ability of others to access the same service. public goods theory explains the nature and provision of public goods, focusing on how certain goods and services are non-excludable and non-rivalrous, which means they are available to everyone, and one person's use does not reduce the availability for others. This theory addresses the challenges related to the supply, consumption, and funding of public goods. Two main characteristics define public goods:

1. **Non-excludability:** No one can be excluded from using the good or service, even if they do not contribute to its provision (Samuelson, 1954). For instance, national defense or clean air cannot be restricted to individuals who pay for them.

2. Non-rivalry: One person's consumption of the good does not reduce its availability for others (Musgrave, 1959). An example is public parks, where many people can enjoy the park simultaneously without diminishing others' enjoyment.

Market Failure and the Need for Government Intervention

Public goods often lead to market failures due to their unique characteristics. In a free market, providers may not have the incentive to supply goods that are non-excludable and non-rivalrous, as individuals can benefit from them without paying, leading to the free-rider problem (Olson, 1965). For example, if a company were to build a dam for flood control, everyone would benefit regardless of whether they contribute financially, making private provision inefficient. The theory suggests that the government must intervene to ensure the provision of these goods, as markets alone are unlikely to provide them in sufficient quantities.

Types of Public Goods

1. Pure Public Goods: These goods are both non-excludable and non-rivalrous (e.g., street lighting, clean air).
2. Imperfect Public Goods: These goods may have some level of excludability or rivalry but are still treated as public due to their collective benefits (e.g., public health services).

The Role of Government in Public Goods Provision

The government typically steps in to provide public goods to overcome the free rider problem. This is done through taxation, ensuring that the necessary funding is available to provide the good to all, regardless of individual contributions (Musgrave, 1959). Public goods, being beneficial to society as a whole, justify government intervention for equitable and efficient allocation.

This theory emphasises the government's responsibility to invest in and regulate critical services like ports, shipping lanes, and maritime safety in the maritime sector. These services contribute significantly to the global economy, and without state involvement, there may be gaps in service provision. By ensuring the accessibility and maintenance of these public goods, the state plays an indispensable role in promoting global trade and economic stability (Adams & Oni, 2021).

Developmental State Theory

Developmental state theory is an approach to state-led development that emphasizes the role of the state in actively guiding and promoting economic growth and development. It presents a model of state intervention where the government plays a critical, autonomous role in orchestrating the economic transformation of a nation, often through strategic planning, industrial policy, and support for key sectors. This theory primarily emerges from the study of East Asian countries, particularly the "Asian Tigers" (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong) and later China, which exhibited rapid industrialisation and economic growth in the latter half of the 20th century.

At the heart of developmental state theory is the argument that a strong, interventionist state is necessary for rapid economic development, particularly in the context of late industrializers. The state's role is not just to regulate or maintain order but also to direct the economy's structural transformation through long-term planning, investment in key industries, and control over financial and institutional frameworks. Several key elements define the developmental state:

1. **Autonomy of the State:** The state must be independent of both domestic and international forces that could undermine its development goals. This autonomy enables the state to pursue long-term, strategic goals without undue interference from elite or foreign interests (Evans, 1995). A developmental state needs to act in the interests of national development, even when these interests are opposed to short-term profit-seeking behaviours by local or international businesses.
2. **Bureaucratic Capacity:** The state must have a competent and professional bureaucracy that can effectively implement its development agenda. The bureaucrats should be insulated from political interference and should possess the technical skills required to design and execute development policies (Johnson, 1982). The bureaucratic apparatus often plays a pivotal role in industrial planning, setting goals for key sectors, and ensuring that economic activities align with broader national goals.
3. **Strategic Industrial Policy:** A developmental state implements strategic policies that prioritize specific sectors of the economy for development. These policies are not limited to broad market-friendly policies but include targeted interventions, such as subsidies, tax incentives, and favourable credit conditions for particular industries (Amsden, 1989). This often leads to the development of high-tech, export-oriented industries and heavy industries that form the backbone of national economic growth.
4. **State and Market Synergy:** Unlike neoliberal models that advocate minimal state interference in the economy, developmental state theory suggests that markets need a strong state presence to be successful. The state provides the direction and framework within which market forces operate, helping the private sector thrive in a structured, managed economy (Leftwich, 1995).
5. **Export-Oriented Growth:** The developmental state typically focuses on creating a competitive export sector as a means of economic growth. Export-oriented industrialization (EOI) is a cornerstone of developmental state strategies, as demonstrated in the experience of the East Asian Tigers. By focusing on global markets, these states could achieve rapid industrialization and foreign exchange earnings, which then fuelled further development (World Bank, 1993).

Human Rights Framework

The Human Rights Framework is a broad and critical concept that encompasses various international laws, conventions, and declarations designed to promote and protect human dignity, equality, and freedom. It is grounded in the recognition that all individuals, by virtue of their humanity, are entitled to certain fundamental rights and freedoms, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or religion (Donnelly, 2013). This framework is centred on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, which serves as a

foundational document setting forth a broad range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

The UDHR is not legally binding, but it has inspired numerous legally binding treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (Henkin, 2014). These treaties form the backbone of the international human rights legal system and set forth detailed obligations for states to ensure the protection and realization of human rights for all individuals within their jurisdictions. The Human Rights Framework also includes regional systems, such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which offer additional mechanisms for enforcing human rights protections (Alston & Goodman, 2013).

An essential feature of the Human Rights Framework is its commitment to universality, which asserts that all human beings are entitled to equal rights and protections regardless of cultural, political, or religious differences. However, the application of human rights in practice is often contested, particularly regarding cultural relativism. Some argue that certain human rights standards are Western-centric and do not adequately reflect local customs or traditions (Mutua, 2002). Nevertheless, the global consensus surrounding the core principles of human dignity, equality, and non-discrimination has largely overshadowed these concerns.

The Human Rights Framework applies to the maritime sector by ensuring that workers within the industry receive fair treatment, safety, and dignity. This theory highlights the need for workers to have access to safe working conditions, appropriate wages, and the right to protest exploitation. The application of this framework is critical in assessing how well the state enforces international conventions such as the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). By guaranteeing these basic rights, the state plays a crucial role in protecting workers from potential exploitation within an often vulnerable industry (Adebayo & Otieno, 2023).

Application of Theories

Public Goods Theory focuses on the government's role in providing essential services that benefit society as a whole. In the maritime sector, this means ensuring that ports, shipping lanes, and safety regulations are well-maintained and accessible to everyone. These services are vital because they support economic activity and global trade while being non-excludable and non-rivalrous—meaning their benefits are shared by all without being depleted. In Nigeria, however, challenges like underfunded infrastructure and regulatory inefficiencies have hampered the maritime sector's growth. By prioritizing investments in these public goods, the Nigerian government can create a robust foundation for trade and commerce, improving both domestic and international economic prospects. This highlights how the proper management of public goods ensures maritime safety, supports businesses, and fosters long-term stability (Ibrahim & Olayinka, 2023).

Applying the Developmental State Theory to this work sheds light on how governments can take an active role in driving economic growth through well-targeted policies and investments. For Nigeria's maritime sector, this involves modernizing ports, enhancing logistics, and providing

incentives for private-sector participation. A developmental state approach might also include partnerships between the public and private sectors to increase efficiency and reduce trade barriers. By fostering such collaboration, the government could transform Nigeria's maritime industry into a competitive player on the global stage. This approach has proven effective in other emerging markets, where state-led initiatives have significantly enhanced economic performance. For Nigeria, a developmental state strategy represents not just a pathway to growth but also a means to reduce reliance on imports and strengthen its position in international trade (Nkem & Chinedu, 2022).

The application of the Human Rights Framework emphasizes the need to protect the dignity, safety, and welfare of workers in the maritime industry. Seafarers and other maritime workers are often vulnerable to exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and inadequate wages. International conventions like the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provide guidelines for ensuring fair treatment, but enforcing these standards remains a challenge in Nigeria. By aligning domestic policies with these international frameworks, the Nigerian government can guarantee better working conditions, fair pay, and the right for workers to voice their concerns without fear of reprisal. This is not only a matter of ethical responsibility but also an essential step toward building a resilient and motivated workforce that can contribute to the industry's success (Okafor & Bamidele, 2021).

Justification for the Selected Theories

The combination of Public Goods Theory, Developmental State Theory, and the Human Rights Framework provides a well-rounded approach to addressing the challenges in Nigeria's maritime sector. Public Goods Theory underscores the critical importance of state-provided infrastructure and services, which are foundational to the sector's operations. Developmental State Theory highlights how targeted government action can spur economic growth and create opportunities for both public and private investment. Meanwhile, the Human Rights Framework ensures that the welfare and dignity of workers are not overlooked, emphasizing ethical practices alongside economic development. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens for understanding and addressing the diverse needs of Nigeria's maritime sector while promoting sustainable growth and equitable practices.

Role of the State in Maritime Development

The role of the state in maritime development in Nigeria is multi-faceted, involving various dimensions that include policy formulation, regulation, infrastructure development, capacity building, and the promotion of national and international trade. Nigeria, with its extensive coastline and significant maritime potential, requires robust state intervention to harness the full economic, social, and strategic advantages that maritime development offers. In discussing the role of the state in this sector, several key aspects emerge, each underpinned by the policies and strategies enacted by the government.

1. Policy Formulation and Legal Framework

The Nigerian government plays a central role in the development of maritime policies and regulations that govern the sector. Key to this is the formulation of policies aimed at ensuring safety, security, and sustainable development in the maritime domain. The government has developed numerous legal frameworks to guide the activities of maritime stakeholders. One of the most critical legal instruments is the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) Act, which empowers the agency to regulate shipping activities, enforce maritime safety standards, and protect the environment. The agency works closely with other stakeholders to ensure that the maritime domain remains safe and navigable for international and domestic shipping (Adegbite, 2016).

Another important development is the Cabotage Act of 2003, which restricts certain maritime activities to Nigerian-owned vessels and aims to promote local participation in maritime activities. The Act is an example of the government's focus on enhancing the country's shipping capacity, reducing foreign dependency, and creating employment within the maritime industry (Agbontaen, 2018). This legislative framework also includes measures to foster capacity-building in Nigerian maritime personnel and vessels, thus stimulating local industries.

2. Infrastructure Development

The state's involvement in maritime infrastructure development is essential for the overall growth of the sector. The Nigerian government invests in ports, roads, and other transportation infrastructure to facilitate smooth cargo movement and improve port efficiency. The state has embarked on projects to modernize existing ports such as the Apapa Port, Tin Can Island Port, and the Onne Port, and to develop new ones. These ports serve as key entry points for the country's imports and exports, and they are integral to the nation's economic activities.

Moreover, the government has invested in the construction of rail lines and highways to link ports to inland areas. The Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) has been instrumental in this development. Its role includes overseeing the management of port operations, ensuring effective cargo handling, and enhancing Nigeria's competitiveness in the global maritime sector (Akinyemi, 2017).

3. Capacity Building and Skill Development

Another critical aspect of the state's role in maritime development is fostering the necessary skills and human resources. Maritime development requires a skilled workforce, particularly in areas such as navigation, logistics, shipbuilding, and maritime law. The Nigerian government has made efforts to enhance the capacity of the workforce through various programs and institutions, such as the Nigerian Maritime University (NMU) in Okerenkoko, which was established to train and provide the necessary technical expertise for the maritime industry.

Furthermore, the government collaborates with international bodies and organizations like the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to ensure that the country's maritime personnel are trained according to global standards (Ogunsanwo, 2019). These training initiatives help in

addressing the manpower shortage in the maritime sector and in improving safety, efficiency, and competitiveness.

4. National Security and Safety

The security of Nigeria's maritime domain is another significant area where the state plays an essential role. The government has the responsibility of ensuring the safety and security of the nation's maritime space, both for domestic and international trade. In this regard, the government established the Nigerian Navy and the Joint Task Force (JTF), which are tasked with protecting the country's territorial waters from illegal activities such as piracy, oil bunkering, and smuggling (Aniebonam, 2020). Furthermore, NIMASA has been given a mandate to oversee the implementation of maritime security regulations, such as the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code.

In addition to these security measures, the Nigerian government has also focused on improving navigation safety through the provision of navigational aids and other related infrastructure that assist both domestic and international vessels in safely accessing Nigerian ports.

5. Promotion of National and International Trade

The state plays a pivotal role in promoting international trade by ensuring that Nigeria's maritime sector remains a competitive and attractive destination for global shipping activities. One of the core ways the state achieves this is by negotiating international treaties and trade agreements that facilitate the movement of goods between Nigeria and other countries. For example, Nigeria is a signatory to various international conventions and treaties related to shipping, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides the legal framework for maritime activities (Ogundele, 2018).

The government also supports the growth of maritime logistics companies, ensuring that Nigeria can compete favourably in the global shipping industry. The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and other state-owned entities actively engage in the shipping of petroleum products, further promoting the country's trade relations with other oil-producing nations and customers globally.

6. Sustainability and Environmental Protection

Environmental sustainability is increasingly becoming a priority in maritime development. The Nigerian government has been involved in initiatives to protect the maritime environment, including addressing oil spills and waste management in the maritime domain. The government has enacted various environmental protection laws such as the Oil Spill Detection and Response Act, to ensure that the ecological balance of Nigeria's coastline is maintained. Through agencies like NIMASA and the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), the government has strengthened its efforts to enforce environmental standards and hold polluters accountable (Akintoye & Igbalajobi, 2019). The state's role in maritime development in Nigeria is pivotal to the growth of the economy, national security, and environmental sustainability. By

formulating appropriate policies, developing infrastructure, building human capacity, ensuring security, and engaging in international trade agreements, the government can enhance Nigeria's position as a global maritime player. The challenges in the sector, such as piracy, infrastructure deficits, and capacity constraints, require continued state intervention and effective governance to unlock the full potential of Nigeria's maritime industry.

Challenges Facing the Maritime Sector in Nigeria

Despite its significant contributions to the economy, Nigeria's maritime sector faces a range of challenges that hinder its growth and development. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort from the government, private stakeholders, and international partners.

1. *Poor Infrastructure and Limited Technological Advancements*

Nigeria's maritime infrastructure has struggled to keep pace with global standards, limiting the sector's efficiency and capacity. Outdated port facilities, congested terminals, and poorly maintained waterways create delays and increase operational costs. Furthermore, the limited adoption of advanced technologies, such as automated cargo-handling systems and digital port management, has reduced competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global trade environment (Nwachukwu & Idris, 2022). Without modernisation, Nigeria risks falling behind in the competitive maritime landscape.

2. *Corruption and Inefficiency in Maritime Governance*

Corruption remains a persistent issue that undermines the effective governance of the maritime sector. Bribery, nepotism, and fraudulent practices within regulatory institutions have created inefficiencies, discouraging investment and eroding stakeholder confidence. For instance, port delays are often exacerbated by bureaucratic bottlenecks and illicit demands, which increase the cost of doing business (Akindele & Okafor, 2023). Combatting corruption is essential to fostering a transparent and accountable maritime administration.

3. *Weak Regulatory Frameworks and Inconsistent Policies*

The regulatory environment for the maritime sector in Nigeria is often characterized by inconsistencies and a lack of enforcement. The absence of clear and harmonized policies has led to overlapping responsibilities among regulatory agencies, resulting in inefficiencies. Additionally, weak enforcement of international maritime standards, such as the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, compromises Nigeria's reputation as a reliable trade partner (Eze & Adetola, 2023). A robust and well-implemented regulatory framework is crucial for sustainable sectoral development.

4. *Security Concerns as Piracy and Illegal Activities*

Maritime security remains a pressing challenge, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, which has been identified as a global hotspot for piracy, armed robbery, and other illicit activities. These security

threats disrupt shipping operations, increase insurance premiums, and deter investment. While recent efforts, such as the Deep Blue Project, have shown promise in addressing these challenges, sustained investment in maritime security infrastructure and international cooperation is required to ensure long-term safety (Abiodun & Musa, 2023).

5. *Inadequate Funding for Sectoral Development*

The lack of adequate funding remains a significant obstacle to the development of Nigeria's maritime sector. Limited financial resources hinder the government's ability to invest in critical infrastructure, support regulatory agencies, and implement sector-wide reforms. Moreover, insufficient funding impacts the ability of maritime institutions to attract and retain skilled professionals, further exacerbating operational inefficiencies (Osagie & Uche, 2022). Increased public and private sector investment is essential to unlocking the sector's full potential the maritime sector remains competitive in the global economy.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the depth and relevance of this study on state intervention in Nigeria's maritime sector, several limitations should be acknowledged. These limitations are important in understanding the scope of the study and guiding future research efforts. One of the major limitations is that this study relies primarily on secondary data sources, including academic articles, government reports, and other published materials. While these sources provide valuable insights, secondary data may not fully reflect the most current developments in Nigeria's maritime sector. Changes in policies, enforcement mechanisms, or technological advancements may not be captured in older reports, which could limit the study's ability to provide an up-to-date analysis of the sector (Snyder, 2019). Additionally, the available data may sometimes be incomplete, inconsistent, or biased, depending on the source.

The study primarily focuses on the national level, mainly analysing policies and their impacts on the Nigerian maritime sector. While this offers important insights, it may overlook regional dynamics that affect maritime trade in different parts of the country. For instance, local governance issues, regional security challenges, and port-specific problems (e.g., in Lagos or Port Harcourt) may vary significantly. Furthermore, the experiences and challenges faced by small-scale operators or coastal communities may not be fully represented in national-level data (Williams, 2021).

Given the qualitative nature of the study and the reliance on published materials, there is a potential lack of direct input from key stakeholders involved in the Nigerian maritime sector. This includes operators, ship owners, regulatory authorities, port workers, and local communities who may have first-hand knowledge of the implementation challenges and impacts of policies. Interviews, surveys, or focus group discussions with these groups could have provided more rich and diverse perspectives, but such qualitative methods were outside the scope of this research.

Areas for Future Research

To address the limitations outlined above and provide a more comprehensive understanding of state intervention in Nigeria's maritime sector, future studies could incorporate primary research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys to collect data directly from key stakeholders in Nigeria's maritime sector. This would provide more nuanced and diverse perspectives on the challenges of state intervention and policy implementation, including insights from local operators, security agencies, and maritime workers who are directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the sector.

Conclusion

In summary, the maritime sector holds immense potential as a cornerstone of Nigeria's economic development, underscoring the critical role of the state in driving its growth. Findings from this research highlight that the state's active involvement in formulating and enforcing policies, developing infrastructure, and fostering public-private partnerships is indispensable to the sector's progress. Theories such as Public Goods Theory, Developmental State Theory, and the Human Rights Framework provide compelling insights into how the state can effectively regulate, invest in, and protect this vital industry.

However, addressing the persistent challenges—such as poor infrastructure, corruption, weak regulatory frameworks, security threats, and inadequate funding—is imperative to unlock the sector's full potential. Without targeted and sustained interventions, these issues will continue to hinder the maritime industry's capacity to facilitate trade, create jobs, and contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's economic growth. By prioritizing strategic investments, combating inefficiencies, and fostering a transparent and secure operational environment, the state can transform the maritime sector into a globally competitive and sustainable driver of economic development. Ultimately, a concerted effort to address these challenges will not only revitalize Nigeria's maritime sector but also solidify its position as a key player in regional and global trade, ensuring long-term economic stability and prosperity.

Recommendations

Unlocking the full potential of Nigeria's maritime sector calls for a well-thought-out, practical approach that prioritizes both immediate and long-term goals. The following steps provide a roadmap for sustainable development:

1. Policy Recommendations

A stronger regulatory framework is crucial for improving the governance of Nigeria's maritime sector. This means creating policies that align with global standards set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) while ensuring these rules are effectively enforced. By establishing consistency in regulations and closing enforcement gaps, the sector can become more efficient and trustworthy.

2. *Infrastructure Development*

Investing in the modernization of ports, shipyards, and inland waterways is non-negotiable. Advanced technologies, such as automation and digital systems, should be integrated to streamline operations, reduce delays, and improve overall efficiency. Upgrading maritime infrastructure not only attracts more trade but also enhances Nigeria's competitiveness on the global stage.

3. *Combating Corruption*

Corruption remains a significant obstacle, but it can be addressed by promoting transparency and accountability. Digital platforms for tracking transactions and sector activities can minimize opportunities for corrupt practices. Equally important is the enforcement of strict penalties for misconduct to rebuild trust in maritime governance and operations.

4. *Improving Security*

Ensuring the safety of Nigeria's waterways is vital for trade and investment. Enhancing maritime surveillance with tools such as satellite technology, drones, and radar systems will help monitor and secure these waters. Partnerships with international organizations and neighbouring countries can also strengthen efforts to combat piracy, illegal fishing, and other threats to maritime security.

5. *Encouraging Investments*

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are essential for attracting much-needed funding and expertise. The government can encourage investments by providing incentives like tax breaks, guaranteeing a stable policy environment, and demonstrating a commitment to supporting investors. Bringing in private and foreign investments will help close infrastructure gaps and introduce global best practices.

6. *Capacity Building*

The maritime sector thrives on skilled professionals. Investing in the training and development of the workforce is critical. Programs such as vocational training, maritime academies, and international exchange opportunities should be prioritized to build a strong pipeline of qualified personnel who can meet the sector's evolving demands.

7. *Collaboration*

Collaboration among various stakeholders is key to sustainable growth. The government should foster partnerships between public agencies, private sector players, civil society groups, and international bodies. Open communication and shared resources among these groups can drive innovation, resolve challenges, and ensure that development benefits everyone involved.

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