

## The 'Then' and 'Now' Environmental and Security Obstacles and Prospects of Maritime Industry in Nigeria

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### Article Information

### ABSTRACT

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*The movement of goods and services along inland waterways is one of the oldest means of transporting goods and services from one point to another. However, the inland waterways in Nigeria, including navigable rivers, lakes, creeks, lagoons, and canals, face numerous problems and obstacles, such as sea piracy, terrorism, smuggling, kidnapping, and pollution. These and a host of other issues have truncated the achievements and development of the Nigerian maritime industry. However, to deal with the highlighted issues and excel in the maritime industry, there is a need to guard against environmental pollution through the application of environmental ethics and secure the inland waterways using maritime security operatives and agencies. Hence, inland water transportation offers the most economical, energy-efficient, and environmentally sustainable means of transporting all types of cargo from place to place. In view of this, Africa in general and Nigeria in particular should reflect on the development and management of this sea-borne trade, which is critical and cardinal to the development of international trade with other nations of the world. Since maritime transport is the propelling anchor and evolving force that brings about substantive revenue and helps in the survival of both national economic growth and the exportation of hydrocarbons, we used the hermeneutical method of philosophy to drive home the points of this research.*



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### 1. Introduction

The maritime transportation industry is undeniably essential to the economic growth or development of the nation. Its role can affect the economy positively or can also be a setback to the

economy. "The history, growth, and progress of nations are closely interwoven with the degree of development of the maritime transport industry that can exist or is already in existence" (Alari, 2019). In other words, the

development of a nation is tied to its maritime awareness and the improvement of the maritime transport industry. This is because of the import and impart of transportation in both economic and business transactional exchanges, as well as recreational and transformational linkages (Ephraim, 2019).

Negative vices syndrome narratives, operational abuses, pollution or environmental degradation, crude oil theft, and piratic activities in the waterways or seaways have prevented the full realization of these superlative benefits across African continental borders. This indeed put "maritime transportation, or maritime trade, which ought to play a vital role in the economic development of Nigeria as a nation and Africa as a continent, in a serious mess today. Obviously, Nigeria, which is rated to be one of the major oil-producing and exporting countries, is at a crossroads with little or no signposts due to its dwindling economy, occasioned by environmental and security problems. More so, there is a huge reduction in the shipping, transportation, and exportation of crude oil in Nigeria. This makes it more cumbersome for the economic growth of Nigeria, a nation that depends so much on or remains incomplete without crude oil and its exports. Hence, crude oil accounts for about 95% of the vehicular means of Nigeria's international trade and survival.

Furthermore, maritime transportation, in its capacity, is expected to generate employment opportunities, which will encourage

peace and tranquillity in the nation. As a matter of fact, the maritime transport sector ought to be a large employer of both skilled and unskilled labour in areas such as insurance, customs, haulage, clearance, logistics, sorting out incoming and outgoing cargo, industrial, and other value-added activities. These outlined benefits are lacking due to the incessant environmental and security menaces.

In this research, the history of the Nigerian shipping industry will be discussed, especially the activities that took place around or in the mid-1950s that ushered in Nigeria's first indigenous shipping line called the "Nigerian Line," as this will help in finding out the 'then' and 'now' of the Nigerian maritime transport industry, challenges, and prospects. In the concluding part of this work, that is, after an x-ray of the challenges of the maritime industries in Nigeria, which, of course, include but are not limited to pollution, kidnapping, smuggling, crude oil theft, and sea piracy, we shall come up with a proposal, which is about the institution of the biggest Nigeria's maritime dockyard in Nigeria, Maritime University Okerenkoko, Delta State. This was the original plan of the federal government. The said dockyard was meant to aid students in practical exercises and, by extension, cushion the effects created by the unavailability of efficient and reliable means of maritime industrial transportation. More so, the dockyard intervention by the federal government was "to enhance the development of maritime studies

and also improve manpower development in critical and all-important industries" (Ihenacho, 2010; Ndikom et al., 2017). It is only when the dockyard is repositioned that the operational performance and efficient buoyancy of the industry and the economy at large can be felt.

The paper is divided into three major parts. The first part handles the issue of inland water transportation. Here, efforts are being made to see how inland water transportation can be prioritised for maritime-related businesses. When this is done, the Nigerian economy, which is dwindling due to inland transportation challenges and negligence, will be restored. The second part takes care of the environmental and security challenges in the maritime operation. Environmental and security upsurges in the maritime sector today hinder any significant achievements.

The incessant pipeline vandalism and illegal oil bunkers in the Niger Delta region attest to the above fact. To avert this retrogressive chain that often distorts the progress and smooth running of the maritime industry, the federal government is advised on the need to introduce sophisticated tools for safeguarding and defending the infrastructure in the marine environment. As that is the only way, the maritime industry can boost the nation's economy and create an environment for employment opportunities for the Nigerian populace. Thirdly, we shall demonstrate why the ethics of the environment for environmental and

industrial sustainability ought to be adhered to. Hence, it is through the adherence to environmental ethical principles and job creation that the obstacles occasioned by environmental degradation and terrorist and piratic activities will be addressed.

## **2. Result and Discussion**

### **Inland water transportation in Nigeria**

Beforehand, Nigeria's way of importing and exporting goods was hugely dependent on maritime transport because other modes—air, rail, pipeline, and roads—were either non-existent, less developed, or very expensive. It is on this note that it becomes imperative to delve into the issue of "inland water transport, which plays a vital role in the development of a nation's transport system, serves as interconnecting links among the major seaports, and as ready supplements to land modes of transport to the interior" (Ephraim, 2019).

This notwithstanding, the problem remains that, despite our confused and chaotic transportation situation resulting largely from our heavy dependence on an unbalanced investment in favour of the roads for our intra- and inter-city movements, this great national resource has remained neglected and unexploited (Ephraim, 2019). It is important to determine the extent of optimal development of our waterways in the interest of our overall economic development. Inland water transportation involves the use of boats, canoes, ships, etc. It entails "the movement of goods,

people, and services through rivers, seas, oceans, or large water bodies linking regions together" (David and Gollasch, 2015).

Any attempt to barricade or prevent the smooth running of the inland waterways or transportation harms both the inhabitants and the biodiversity of the region. It is these perceived challenges of inland water transportation in Nigeria that inform this research. In other words, this research is to reposition the mindsets of Nigerians, particularly the government, on how the provision of funds and adequate infrastructural facilities, dredging of rivers, prohibition of throwing of biodegradable elements, and prevention of terrorist activities can help in the eradication of various forms of pollution and insecurity for environmental and industrial sustainability in Nigeria.

This can only be possible when the government collaborates with the stakeholders of different communities in the Niger Delta region (NDR) and provides employment opportunities and grants to cushion the effects of environmental degradation that have pushed a good number of Niger Delta people into illegal oil bunkers, oil-based terrorism, and smuggling. This will help in the protection of maritime infrastructural facilities for effective and efficient operation in generating revenue and boosting Nigerian maritime sectors.

When this becomes the case, the Nigerian inland waterways, which have the capacity for business opportunities, will attract so many potential investors who have

refused to partner with the country due to piratic activities that seem to be ceaseless in Nigeria's seaways.

It is also a result of this that many patronise road transportation over water transportation in Nigeria. Badejo (2014), adhering to the above fact, notes that despite the immense potential and opportunities that Nigerian inland waterways can provide, inland transport is not well recognised when compared with that of road and air means of transportation. This was corroborated by Ekpenyong Nsa (2018), who lamented that desirable support has not been given to inland waterways by the federal government, particularly in the areas of funding and infrastructural development.

He outlined the physical impediments to improved performance in the sector, which include non-channelization and dredging of navigable rivers, inadequate construction and rehabilitation of river ports, limited water transport infrastructure (comfortable boats, jetties, and buoys), and safety and security concerns along the navigable waterways. The difficulties in inland waterways could be summed up to a lack of funding, infrastructural neglect by relevant authorities, and ocean-based terrorism, which scares and discourages people from transporting their goods and services through waterways.

To avert these problems and revitalise waterways for easy transportation or movement of goods and services, there is a need for the Nigerian government to rebuild the dilapidated structures on

the ground and equip the maritime industry with good, effective, and efficient infrastructure, as well as provide security to encourage resourceful engagement and revitalization of the linkages between Nigeria and other parts of the world. When this is done, job opportunities will be created, and terrorism, sea piracy, kidnapping, and pollution, which have mystified and dealt with our environments (atmosphere), ecological systems, and maritime industries, will be eradicated. In all, it is important to note that Nigerian inland waterways are full of potential and can provide several opportunities, unlike the road and air, which are pristine ways of transporting goods and services.

This is not to say that road and air means of transportation should be avoided, but to re-educate us on the importance of inland transportation, especially as it has to do with those goods and services that are best transported through waterways. The impart and import of inland transportation are bound by trade, commerce, interrelationships, and intercultural linkages and bonds. It is our inability to comprehend the above facts that led to the decrease in maritime achievements, sea piracy, oil theft, and smuggling that have defaced and overtaken the maritime industry today.

### **Environmental and Security Challenges in the Maritime Operation**

The increase in cases of environmental issues such as gas flaring, water pollution, soil

pollution, oil spillage, non-degradable elements, and debris, no doubt, has in no minimal way obstructed and hampered the productive efficiency of the Nigerian maritime industry. These environmental decadences have resulted in severe nutrient depletion and obstruction of biodiversity in the region (Bindraban, 2012; Inyang, 2019). They have equally brought about environmental degradation, climate change, flooding, desertification, erosion, etc., which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the maritime industry to thrive (Ezugwu, 2022).

These inflictions on the environment have affected national resources such as the ecosystem, biosphere, wildlife, water, soil, air, and industry. Environmental challenges, though not comparable to security challenges, have clearly caused disintegration and deterioration of the environment by disrupting the ecological or biological order of the inhabitants and, consequently, impacting the productivity of maritime sectors. It is due to this observation that it became expedient not to exonerate environmental decadence; hence, it affects industrialisation and jeopardises national growth and development.

Sea piracy, smuggling, terrorism, illegal bunkering, and unauthorised midstream discharges, among several other criminalities, according to Ezem (2012), constitute a major source of concern to maritime administration in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG), including Nigeria. These acts constitute a security threat to maritime

transport. According to Igbokwe (2001), maritime transport, also called waterborne transport, is one of the modes of transportation of goods and persons that assists the maritime industry in the buying and marketing of its products. This has been made difficult by the robbers who always attack the oil tankers, cargo vessels, fishing trawlers, and speed boats conveying passengers from one destination to another (Onuoha and Hassan, 2009). To corroborate this, Ochai (2013) "reports that speed boats were attacked with passengers onboard along the Nembe waterways in Bayelsa State."

When this happened, many passengers were ordered by the hoodlums to jump into the water after being dispossessed of their cash and other valuables. This scenario paints an ugly picture of maritime business operations and reveals the state of security in Nigerian waterways. These illegal acts of violence and deprivation, often committed for private ends, can be said to be the reason the maritime industry or sector is not thriving. The nation is also facing an economic quagmire, which could be attributed to these illegal acts of violence and deprivation. Given these, there is a need for an uncompromising obligation to safeguard the territorial waters against all forms of threats, including piracy, sea robbery, and poaching, among other criminalities along Nigerian waterways (Essien and Adongoi, 2015:214).

Hence, following the above recommendation will not only have a positive impact on the socio-

economic lives of maritime business operators and sectors but will also significantly contribute to national economic revitalisation and growth. Having known this, it is imperative, therefore, for the federal government to create jobs, establish recycling companies where the unwanted debris that constitutes 45 percent of the environmental problems and degradation can be recycled, in keeping with the ethical rules and codes of the environment, and provide sophisticated instruments to fight terrorism and piracy in the Nigerian seaways. It is only in this mode of operation that the environmental and security challenges that often obstruct the maritime sectors from attending to the needs of the people can be neutralised or curbed, and, if possible, eradicated.

### **Toward an Ethics of the Environment for Environmental and Industrial Sustainability**

It is imperative at this point, when the maritime industry in Nigeria is faced with environmental and security problems, to employ environmental ethics as a viable tool for environmental sustainability and industrial development. This will help in redirection and retraining the minds of pirates, terrorists, and legal oil bunkers in the Niger Delta Region (NDR) to be human-centric, animal-centric, bio-centric, and ecologically protective. It is only when they are conscious of these ethical roadmaps that they can desist from all kinds of things that can destroy the maritime environment (Ezugwu, 2022: 348). However, the Nigerian maritime

industry is failing or being profitable, as a good number of people do not obey the ethics of the environment. Even the government, which is supposed to be human-centric or centred, is often insensitive to the cries and worries of its citizens.

The government that should make provision for jobs or employment opportunities is nonchalant in dealing with the stated issues. This mentality and insensitivity have resulted in social vices such as Boko Haram, banditry, kidnapping, child trafficking, sea piracy, and illegal oil bunkers (Adeleja et al., 2018; Ezugwu et al., 2022: 72). This attests to the fact that poverty has a way of pushing people into terrorism. No wonder why Big-Alabo and Ezugwu (2022: 38) argued that "the formation of the Boko Haram group was a key reason for the majority of people living in poverty and abject poverty." Be that as it may, it is essential to encode environmental and ethical principles in all sundries as guiding norms to avert the untold disaster that environmental and insecurity issues can cause.

When this is achieved, we mean when the government creates job opportunities and security infrastructure and equipment, those who have formed different terrorist and dreadful gangs, as a way of making both ends meet or survival, will reconsider the need for serenity of the environment in achieving national and individual targets. It is only in view of this that our mesmerised maritime industry can be restored. Moreover, we can only claim to be humans when we exhibit, at every point in time,

various human traits or hallmarks that are innate and inbuilt in all human creatures. Anything short of this dehumanises and projects us as inhuman creatures. In other words, our humanness is appreciated when we are guided by common traits and have the capacity to obey the laws of nature, nurture, and environment. It is under this ambience that the insecurity, which torments both the maritime operators and industry, can be checked and the environment protected, sustained, and conserved for the wellbeing of man and industrial sustainability.

### **3. Conclusion**

This research was informed by the need to revitalise the dying potential of the Nigerian maritime industry. The research shows that pummelling environmental issues such as soil pollution, water pollution, oil spillage, gas flaring, and other related piratic activities are reasoning the maritime industry is unproductive and jeopardised. To address the highlighted obstacles, the paper x-rayed how inland water transportation in Nigeria can be handled for optimal development. There, it was stated that reviving the usage of inland waterways for transportation of goods and services will enhance national economic growth and boost the productive efficiency of the maritime sector in and beyond Nigeria. Secondly, the paper took a position on how to alleviate environmental and security challenges in maritime operations.

The rising upsurges of environmental degradation and insecurity can be taken care of

when the government learns to be sensitive to the outcry of the masses in providing jobs and maintaining the environment. To achieve this, we bring ethics into the discourse under discussion. Hence, ethics deals with human behaviour or conduct; it was expedient to employ ethics for environmental and industrial sustainability. It is assumed that no matter how hardened a man's heart is or could be, sticking to the ethical roles and norms of the environment will go a long way in salvaging the already truncated maritime sector or environment.

Consequently, the paper encourages the Nigerian government to improve the inland waterways and, by extension, the inland transports through funding and provision of maritime infrastructural facilities for socio-economic growth and aversion of maritime enemies and threats, which include but are not limited to sea piracy, oil theft, kidnapping, smuggling, and human trafficking. Adhering to the above recommendation will bring about interrelationships and cultural linkages, which will in turn give rise to national building. It will also serve as an eye-opener to those who have potential and would want to engage themselves in inland seaways and protect the Nigerian populace from undue attacks and molestation. In all, this research will bring about speedy growth in the Nigerian maritime industry if its recommendations are adhered to by seafarers and stakeholders in dealing with inland waterways, inland transportation, and the

transaction of goods and services; and create a serene and sustainable environment for industrial and national development.

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