Geo-Politics of Maritime Shipping and Sustainable Sea Port Management in Marginalised Region of Nigeria: Case of Ibom Deep Sea, Calabar, Onne and Warri Ports

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https://doi.org/10.62049/jkncu.v5i2.314

Abstract

The study entitled 'Geo-Politics of maritime shipping and sustainable seaport management in marginalised region of Nigeria: Case of Ibom Deep Sea, Calabar, Onne and Warri Ports' explore the complexities and intricacies in the Nigerian shipping industry characterised by ethno-political bigotry, regional marginalisation and individual interest over collective goods. Niger Delta is recognised as one of world's most popular geographic entities due to its abundance natural resources particularly oil and gas, fisheries and navigable water. The paper used narrative and literatures from pre-existing journals and reports in an attempt to understand the rationale for the collapse of shipping industry in Niger Delta as well as the forces opposing sustainable seaport management in the region despite the resources and the yearning of the people. Findings revealed that the Calabar and Warri seaports has been abandoned, the Onne port is dominated by foreign investors while the proposed Ibom deep seaport is fictional and unrealistic for more than a decade. It was also found out that influential entrepreneurs and political figure in the Southwest due to their interest in the Lagos Sea ports, are not in support of seaport decentralisation policy with fears that, such actions would result to the collapse of their shipping investment in the Southwestern Nigeria. The delay in the implementation of seaports in the Niger Delta region is not just economic barrier to the regional itself, it extends beyond Nigeria up to the Gulf of Guinea. Findings shown that the completion of Ibom Deep Sea port which is bounded by six (6) maritime African countries is capable of transforming the economic situation of Nations within the Gulf of Guinea. It was further found out that, the Nigerian Port Authority (NPA) sited in Lagos are dominated by certain ethnic division who have put a stronghold by ensuring that their region controls the shipping industry, thus leaving other region with better shipping potential irrelevant. Following this, it is suggested that decentralisation of seaport in all the six geo-politic regions will bring about an all-encompassing development, inclusive growth, job opportunities and wealth for all Nigerians and Africa by extension.

Keywords: Geo-Politics, Maritime Shipping, Sustainable Sea Port Management, Marginalised Region, Ibom Deep Sea, Calabar, Onne, Warri Ports

Introduction

The Niger Delta boasts of a vast coastline and numerous waterways ideal for the development of seaports that could significantly boost its maritime trade and contribute to regional economic growth. However, over the years, the regions' port infrastructure has faced numerous challenges, particularly in terms of the concentration of port activities around Lagos, the commercial capital of the country (Bassey, 2019). The ports of Calabar, Warri, and the proposed Ibom Deep Sea Port have become symbols of regional neglect and inefficiency. Lagos state dominates Nigeria's seaport activities, and this concentration has led to underdevelopment in other regions, resulting in significant economic, social, and environmental consequences. The idea of trade competitiveness in sea ports likewise regional economic dominance had been responsible for the neglect of maritime shipping in Niger Delta. Meanwhile, other regions of the world have practiced multiple ports management as large as 200 and above without regional discord. In an ideal system, every region should run its port independently and export her produce it has comparative advantage over. The Niger Delta has a strong hold in fisheries, maritime shipping, likewise oil and gas and heavy investment in such sector could easily drive development. Similarly, the development of Niger Delta requires heavy investment in maritime infrastructure and a cluster of agro-industrial production, processing and marketing blocs (Badejo & Solaja 2017).

The establishment of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) in 1954 was intended to consolidate port management under a single body. However, the inefficiencies that emerged from centralized control soon led to political friction between various levels of government, the NPA, and private interests. In the 1990s, Nigeria's shipping sector was burdened by inefficiency, corruption, and outdated infrastructure, leading to delays, congestion, and rising costs. By the early 2000s, the Nigerian government began contemplating reforms to improve the industry, which culminated in the Port Concessioning Program of 2006. The policy aimed to privatize port operations, break up the monopoly of the NPA, and encourage competition through the granting of concessions to private companies. These reforms were intended to address the inefficiencies of the state-run ports and improve their capacity to handle the growing volume of cargo. The political framework that governs Nigeria's ports revolves around several policies and regulations that directly affect shipping activities and port investment. - The Port Concessioning Program, launched in 2006, is perhaps the most significant shift in the politics of Nigeria's shipping industry. The program privatized the management of port terminals, thereby allowing private operators to take over the day-to-day running of the facilities. The aim was to reduce the bureaucratic bottlenecks inherent in public administration, foster competition, and attract private investment in port infrastructure. However, the implementation of these reforms has faced several challenges. Critics argue that the process was marred by political influence, lack of transparency, and corruption, which resulted in the concentration of port management in the hands of a few politically connected companies. This has led to concerns about monopolistic practices, high port tariffs, and inefficiencies that continue to plague Nigerian ports (Akinmoladun & Babajide, 2021). The political ramifications of privatizing Nigeria's ports also include power struggles between the federal government, the Nigerian Ports Authority, and state governments. Despite the privatization efforts, the Nigerian government has maintained a significant influence over port management, which has led to tensions regarding revenue sharing and investment priorities. This dynamic often hampers the full realization of the intended benefits of privatization (Akinmoladun & Babajide, 2021). The Port Concessioning Program is never implemented for the benefit of the Niger Delta because of non-

functionality of her port and non-integration in the shipping industry. Port Concessioning Program is not relevant for the Niger Deltans and it is a business specifically designed for the Lagosians. Another policy was the Nigeria's National Transport Policy, formulated in 2008, aims to develop an integrated transport system that connects road, rail, air, and sea transportation to facilitate efficient trade. The policy underscores the strategic role of seaports in Nigeria's economic growth. However, the implementation of the policy has been hindered by political interference, inconsistent funding, and the absence of a long-term vision for port development (Ogunleye, 2019). Moreover, issues related to trade facilitation—such as the bureaucratic inefficiencies in the customs service, security concerns, and corruption—are often politically motivated and negatively impact the efficiency of port operations.

This paper is set out to explore the causes, implications, and the geo-politics of maritime shipping and seaport management, the developmental implications of supporting inter- regional sea port management, and lastly the plight of indigenous people of Niger Delta due to neglect in the implementation and operation of Ibom Deep Sea Port, Onne Port, Calabar Port, and Warri Port.

Conceptual Clarification

Historical Context and Evolution of Nigeria's Seaport Development

The quest to initiate Nigeria's seaport started in the colonial era, with the primary aim of facilitating the export of raw materials, particularly agricultural products like cocoa, groundnuts, and palm oil, to Europe. The major ports in Nigeria were Lagos, Port Harcourt, Calabar, and Warri, each catering to different regions and trade routes. However, after Nigeria's independence in 1960, the country's seaport infrastructure has been largely stagnant, while Lagos continued to dominate as the focal point for maritime activities (Badejo & Solaja, 2017). Meanwhile, as Lagos ports were furnished with facilities for upgrade, the ports in Calabar, Warri, and Port Harcourt were characterised by outdated infrastructure, inefficient management, and inadequate investment. Long before the establishment of ports, study has shown that merchants from European realm precisely in the 15th century opened marine contract and discovered the rich natural resources in the West and Central African region that were needed for their economic and industrial revolution. As a result, the Bight of Benin was opened up by John d'Aveiro, of Portuguese in 1485 and in 1553. Many centuries after, there was need to open route via the Lagos Lagoon in the 1906 (Badejo & Solaja, 2017). From a report by the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA, 2018), Apapa port, four deep-water berths of 548.64 136 metres long, 762 metres of berthage, four berths and about 41 hectares of reclamation behind the wharves were formed to accommodate transit shed, warehouses and other maritime transport needs.

The dominance of Lagos in maritime activities can be traced to the establishment of the Lagos Port Complex (LPC) and Tin Can Island Port, which handled the majority of the country's imports and exports (Stephens, 2017). This centralized approach in Lagos led to congestion at the ports, environmental degradation, and infrastructural decay. Despite efforts to decentralize port activities and improve the infrastructure in other regions, Lagos remains the primary hub for Nigeria's seaport operations, while other ports like Calabar, Warri, and Ibom have not received the same level of attention and development. Let's take a close examination of Onne sea port:

Onne Sea Port

The Onne sea port is located in Onne town of Port Harcourt. As an urban neighbourhood of Port Harcourt, it has an estimated landmass of about 186 square kilometers within the total area of 462km^2. The Onne Port Complex was established as a 'Free Port Zone' (FPZ) to serve as the focal point for the oil and gas industry in West Africa. This complex which started in 1982 as the Federal Lighter Terminal (FLT) has grown over the years to a very enviable state, due largely to Public/Private Partnership (Ndikom, 2013). Onne Port Complex is situated along Bonny Estuary on Ogu Creek, which is about 25 kilometres South of Port Harcourt, Rivers State of Nigeria. The geographical area of the Port spans between NAFCON (Now NOTORE) Jetty and Bonny Island. It crosses three Local Government Areas of Rivers State including, Eleme, Ogu-Bolo and Bonny. The land area of approximately 2,500 hectares is situated on the soil of Eleme Local Government Area while the channel to the Port along Bonny River and Ogu Creek within Bonny and Ogu-Bolo Local Government Areas.

Critics have pointed out that the major problem of Onne as a maritime hub is stronghold of foreign-based investment. Following this, the wealth from the sector is not resident in the region, rather flowing outward to distant destinations. Government attempted to address the imbalance in foreign-indigenous investment quota through the Cabotage Act in 2003, yet there is still a wide gap yet to be closed. On the indigenous participation in the maritime industry, Usoro (2004) and Biu (2007) stated that despite the fact that Nigeria has about 3,000 kilometres of inland waters, six major ports and ten crude oil terminals, and several inland ports, low participation of indigenous entrepreneurs is responsible for slow development pace. For example, in the year 2000 alone, only 139 indigenous marine vessels (less than 6%), were involved in maritime transport with a cargo throughput of 441, 031 tons; about 1%. Biu (2007) similarly noted that, a subsequent survey conducted in 2004 by National Maritime Authority showed that only 11 out of 245 coastal vessels that operated in the Onne oil and gas free zone axis in 2003 were owned by Nigerians. During the same period, out of 266 tankers that were engaged in coastal trading in the Apapa port, only 44 tankers about 16.5% were Nigerian owned while 222 about 83.5% were foreign owned. The total metric tonnage of petroleum products carried by the Nigerian owned tankers were 97,041 tons amounting 3.4% while the foreign owned tankers carried 2,745,365 metric tons amounting to 96.6% of the entire volume of cargo.

Look For Information on Trade Volume in Onne Port in 2022, 2023, 2024

This confirms the reality of foreign domination in the coastal trade. The survey also showed that West African 138 Offshore (WAOS) chartered 16 vessels, all of which were foreign flagged, except one; and out of 183 crews, only 45 crews about 24.5% were Nigerians. A lot of Nigerians are never aware of the policy and advocacy has been trivialised as a result. Following the opportunities inherent in cabotage policy, Usoro in 2004, asserted that Cabotage could offer ample opportunities to Nigeria through revenue generation from fees for registration, approvals, licenses and fines. If Cabotage is properly handled, it would generate millions of jobs and facilitate the eradication of unemployment and poverty. Multiple sectors will be transforming ranging from the oil and gas, ship ownership, chartering, insurance, brokerage, shipbuilding, trading and fishing.

Ibom Deep Sea Port

Stories behind Ibom Deep Sea port is tantamount to deception, neglect and dirty politics. The Ibom Deep Sea Port, located in Akwa Ibom State in the Niger Delta region, is one of the most promising maritime infrastructural projects in Nigeria. If it is successfully implemented, it has the potential to serve as a major international gateway for goods coming into and out of Nigeria. The Akwa Ibom State Government, in partnership with the Federal Government of Nigeria has shown commitment to the actualisation of Ibom Deep Seaport project and Ibom Industrial City development through a Public Private Partnership arrangement. The deep seaport, although a part of the industrial city, is treated as a separate project. The Ibom Deep Seaport will be owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Nigeria Ports Authority in partnership with Akwa Ibom State Government and private investors. On the other hand, the Ibom Industrial City project will be solely owned by Akwa Ibom State Government. Both projects are expected to boost industrialization in the region and neighbouring countries. According to Paul et al (2015), the Ibom Deep Seaport will occupy about 18% of the total landmass earmarked for Ibom Industrial City Projects (2,565Ha of land area of the 14,517 Ha).

The project site is strategically accessible through major existing and planned transport infrastructure such as airport, railway lines and federal and state road networks (Mbachu et al 2024). The proposed deep seaport is expected to feed about six African neighbouring countries directly and this make it one of the best places to invest. The countries are Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo, Benin Republic, and Togo. The deep seaport can spark up the development of the Gulf of Guinea which according to Awosika & Ibe (1994) is a potential global economic hub. The proposed deep seaport is favourably seated on a natural harbor called Ibaka Bay in Niger Delta axis. From the writings of Ephraim and his colleagues in 2015, Ibaka Bay has an average area of 50 km2 and centers on Latitude 4.65^{o}N and Longitude 8.34^{o}E. The harbor has an average non-dredged draft of 13.5 meters, and the harbor is part of Cross River Estuary, which empties into the northern Gulf of Guinea. In 2003, Akwa Ibom State Government proposed siting a deep seaport in Ibaka. Preliminary investigations by the Akwa Ibom State government, proven that the proposed deep seaport has numerous competitive advantages over existing seaports not only in the country, but could accommodate the largest number of large vessels in West Africa due to its depth. This deep harbor has been locally observed and monitored for over six decades according to a report by Ephraim and his research team (Ephraim et al 2015). The Bay is also connected to Tom Shot Island that offers a natural shield from South-south-west Atlantic swells and other coastal hazards. The completion of Ibom deep seaport is capable of transforming the Gulf of Guinea into a global economic hub. Ibaka as well as over 100 fishing settlements in the coastal region could experience a higher productivity in fishing and aquaculture.

Apart from the oil and gas production and shipments, the port can support the agricultural industry in the export of fisheries and food processing industry. The completion of this seaport will impact upon other dying informal sector including lumbering and boat making.

Calabar Port

Calabar Port, located in Cross River State, is one of Nigeria's oldest ports established in the early 20th century. In the early years of its operation, Calabar port facilitated the trade of palm products and other agricultural produce. However, over the years, Calabar Port has seen a decline in its operational capacity. Despite its strategic location, it has remained underutilized due to various factors, including outdated

infrastructure, shallow draft channels, and insufficient investors. The government has proposed several plans to revitalize it, including dredging the channels and upgrading the infrastructure, but these plans have been slow to materialize. The political dynamics in Nigeria, particularly the centralization of economic power in Lagos, have played a significant role in the marginalization of Calabar Port. Additionally, the absence of strong political advocacy from local stakeholders in Cross River State has further hindered the port's development. Calabar Port's underperformance is also attributed to its inability to compete with the highly efficient Lagos ports. Due to the concentration of maritime activities in Lagos, shipping lines and logistics companies often prefer to use the ports in Lagos, as they are better equipped to handle large volumes of cargo. The lack of a vibrant hinterland infrastructure and the absence of a coordinated port development strategy have further exacerbated the challenges facing Calabar Port. The location of Cross River State as the largest food producer in the Niger Delta and its proximity to states in the Middle-belt could boost her revenue. Cross River State has a large landmass for agriculture and in fact, feed her neighbouring states with food produce all year round. The restoration of the seaport can boost not only the agricultural sector, but solid mineral industry and tourism which are core areas of investment. Siting of sea port in a region most times consider the resources that such a location has comparative advantage over others. For instance, sea port in Akwa Ibom State, Delta, Rivers State can transform the oil and gas sector, likewise many other industries. While the aforementioned oil producing areas focus on petroleum sector, other regions can develop their resources and establish ports for shipment as practice in developed economy.

Warri Port

The struggle for the resuscitation of Warri Port, located in Delta State, started many years ago by concerned Nigerians. Like Calabar Port, Warri Port once served as a vital trade hub, particularly for oil and gas exports. However, in recent years, Warri Port has faced a significant decline in operations, mainly due to infrastructural decay and low financial investment (Bivbere, 2018). In the past, Warri Port was a key player in Nigeria's oil and gas trade, but its inability to handle the modern shipping requirements has caused it to lose its competitive edge. The government's failure to invest in port upgrading has deteriorated the condition of the region's economic life support system, leaving Lagos as the preferred port for both international and domestic trade.

It can be argued that the political and economic centralization in Lagos, coupled with the absence of a national port strategy, has hindered the development of Warri Port. In fact, all the port situated in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, are facing a uniform constraint, basically political instability and security concerns, has discouraged investment in the area. The failure to revitalize Warri Port not only limits the region's economic potential but also contributes to the growing pressure on ports in Lagos State.

Decentralised Port Regime for Expanded Nigeria's Maritime Industry

Nigeria has the potential and capacity of managing over 200 ports across the geo-political regions for trade expansion. To buttress this, a study by Taaffe et al (1963), reveals that Nigeria has close to 100 small, undeveloped ports. Gbadamosi (2004) cited in Onifade (2020) segmented Nigerian ports classification based on generations. He explained that first generation ports in Nigeria were those operational before 1960, which are basically Lagos and Port Harcourt seaports. According to him, the second-generation ports (1970–1976) are Warri, Sapele, Koko, Burutu, and Calabar; the third-generation ports (1975–1980) are Tin

Can Island, New Warri, and New Calabar; and the fourth-generation ports include Federal Ocean Terminal and Federal Lighter Terminal, in 1980. The popular Apapa wharf play a key role in Nigerian maritime industry, and it was developed in Lagos Island due to the challenges of littoral rifts, siltation, and the inability of bigger vessels to enter Lagos harbor during the colonial days. The Calabar seaport has a depth between 6-7 m while the Apapa seaport (in Lagos) has a depth between 12 and 13.5 m (Ogunsanya & Olawepo 2004) Among the many problems facing Nigerian ports is the shallow depth, cost of dredging and insecurity in the littoral waters.

Above all, the proposed Ibom Deep has the highest channel depth up to 18m allowing it to accommodate larger vessels and is situated near major shipping routes making it an ideal hub for international trade. Despite differences in depths, some deeper ports can feed those that are supposedly shallow. In this case, Ibom seaport is deeper in depth or draught compared to Calabar, Ibom will serve as the hub while feeding the Calabar seaport, based on the need. Onifade (2020) in his paper titled ‘’New Seaport Development-Prospects and Challenges: Perspectives from Apapa and Calabar Seaports, Nigeria’’ identified the problems of proposed seaport and associated opportunities. According to him, the major challenges of the proposed seaport in Nigeria is cost of shipment and depth of the water. A critical appraisal of his submission presents that, as a Yoruba descent, Onifade has done no wrong by supporting the centralization of Nigerian ports in logics. There are so many countries in the world that has over 10 and 15 ports as a strategy for regional development, although the ports might vary by size and trade volume. For instance, the United States of America has over 300 sea ports (both public and private) (Burns, 2015), China has over 200 major ports and 2000 minor ports, India (over 200 ports), Brazil (over 120 ports), Singapore (4), United Kingdom (100), Saudi Arabia (More than 10), UAE (more than 10), Germany (over 50), Japan (over 100 ports), Russia (over 60 ports), Australia, South Korea, Indonesia and Mexico with over 60 ports respectively (Yang, 2018). Nearly all the industrialised nations have consciously injected resources into multiple ports investment for expanded international trade. Some of these ports including those found in China, USA, United Kingdom and Singapore are furnished with automated up-to-date facilities and artificial intelligence system to boost efficiency. The port of Shangai being the largest and busiest in China has provided enormous opportunities, while feeding other smaller ports based on needs. The success of Shangai port does not prevent other ports like the Hong Kong port and Shenzhen port from existing. As at today, China manages over 2000 ports using ports clustering and connectivity technique, by strategically positioning ports to one another in order to benefit from the economies of scale and trade network.

Following the principles of port decentralisation, regions operating on multiple ports investment tends to experience higher productivity in the maritime sector than its counterpart. The Shangai and Ningbho forms the most powerful industrial/maritime cluster along the Yangtze River Delta and through this, intra-port cooperation and regional development is established (Liu & Li u, 2017). United States of America with over 300 ports harnessed substantially from decentralized port system. For instance, the port of Los Angeles and long beach, New York, New Jersey and port of Savannah in Georgia and many others operate under a different management style, different regional market, yet under a decentralized regime. A strong partnership between the government and private sector have produced a world-class port system in the United States of America. The United States of America has strategically positioned ports around the industrial parks particularly the Silicon Valley. The port of Oakland located 30 miles from the industrial hub plays a key role in the shipment of goods entering and leaving the USA specifically Tech-related goods

like semiconductors, hardware and electronics. Though the Silicon Valley is not sited on the coast, nevertheless its proximity to the coast and adoption of decentralised port regime is one of the key development strategies for its productivity.

The Niger Delta region can learn lessons from this viable maritime transformative strategy and develop her region. Port decentralisation can create a multiplier effect on surrounding regions. A typical example of decentralised ports and multiplier effect is the level of trade volume oozing out from Oakland port into Asia, with infrastructure like railway that link the port to industrial parks, warehouse and distribution centres in Northern California. Apart from the port of Oakland, the USA also opened the port of San Francisco to support the silicon valley's trade. Meanwhile, other seaports have long been strategically positioned to boost industrial parks including the port of Los Angeles and long beach, these ports have been the strength of Americans multi-nationals like Apple, Tesla and other high-tech companies. While the port of New Jersey serves the industrial zones in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York, the port of Savannah has served the industrial parks in Georgia.

Linking Onifade submission with the decentralised port model, the cost of shipment and water depth are hindrances to some extent, however, the depth of water can be altered using sophisticated dredgers likewise cost of shipment especially if many ports exist which can influence shipping cost differentials.

From the lens of environment and development, every port has its unique comparative advantage. The Ibom deep seaport is naturally deeper than the entire seaport in Nigeria and it is closer to six neighbouring maritime countries and can accommodate larger vessels. Nevertheless, the Lagos port has its advantage by having direct connection to international shipping routes particularly Asia and Europe (Onifade 2020). While the Niger Delta ports are significant in oil and gas shipments, it can help to decongest the Lagos Sea port and reduce the inefficiencies in cargo handling.

There are several factors that contribute to port centralization in Lagos and among such include stronghold of political elites and top business executives whose over-riding interest keep the city's ports in perpetual dominance. The political elites in Lagos have successfully lobbied for policies that benefit the state's ports, often sidelining the needs of other regions. Political actors in states like Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Delta are not too influential to mobilize the necessary political prowess so as to cause a reform. Secondly, Lagos has received the lion's share of infrastructure development for many decades, including the expansion of the Lagos Port Complex, Tin Can Island Port, and the construction of the Lekki Deep Sea Port. These investments have reinforced Lagos' position as the dominant maritime hub in Nigeria, while other ports in Calabar, Warri, and Ibom have struggled to attract similar investments.

In addition, the regulatory bodies responsible for Nigeria's port operations, such as the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), have traditionally been based in Lagos, creating an institutional bias towards the city. This institutional concentration of power in Lagos has made it difficult for other ports to thrive.

Sea/River Port Decentralization

Decentralization of sea or river port constitute the process of redistributing port functions and activities from major, heavily congested ports to smaller, strategically located ports or terminals in different regions. This decentralization allows for the development of new industrial hubs in different parts of the country and promotes more efficient logistics and distribution networks (Rodrigue, 2017). The global logistics and

transportation network is crucial for the economic wellbeing of any nation. One of the central elements in this network is the seaport, which facilitates the movement of goods across national and international borders. Seaports play an instrumental role in trade, contributing to the growth and development of both regional and global economies. As such, the idea of decentralizing seaports and linking them to industrial parks has gained traction in many developed countries, with significant implications for regional development, industrialization, and economic growth. The decentralization of seaports is typically linked with creating specialized industrial parks near these ports, forming a network of transport hubs that connect various sectors of the economy. This model contrasts with a more centralized approach, where major seaports handle all industrial activities. By decentralizing port operations and integrating them with industrial parks, countries aim to streamline the flow of goods, reduce transportation costs, improve local economic development, and attract foreign direct investment (FDI). The linkage between decentralized seaports and industrial parks can be understood through the concept of "port-centric logistics." Industrial parks are specialized zones designed to host businesses related to manufacturing, distribution, and other services (D'Este & Smith, 2018). By locating these parks near decentralized seaports, companies can reduce their logistics costs, speed up the supply chain, and take advantage of economies of scale. Industrial parks located near seaports benefit from better transportation infrastructure, including direct access to port facilities, which makes importing raw materials and exporting finished goods more efficient. Industrial parks can specialize in certain industries, such as technology or automotive, which can take advantage of a seaport's connectivity to global markets. For example, ports specializing in handling automotive products can attract automotive companies to the surrounding industrial parks. The decentralization of ports typically leads to the development of infrastructure in the surrounding region, including roads, railways, and warehousing facilities, all of which benefit industrial parks and attract investment. By linking industrial parks to decentralized ports, countries can diversify their economies, reduce regional economic disparity, and increase employment opportunities. When seaports are decentralized, regions with industrial parks have increased accessibility to global markets, which can attract international investors. The presence of industrial parks close to ports allows businesses to reduce shipping costs, making the area more attractive for foreign companies looking to set up operations (D'Este & Smith, 2018). In South Korea, the development of the Busan Port as a decentralized trade hub attracted a considerable amount of FDI, particularly in the high-tech and automobile sectors. The nearby Busan National Industrial Complex became a strategic location for global businesses due to the port's world-class infrastructure and connectivity.

Additionally, such parks can foster industrialization by offering a conducive environment for various industries to thrive. These industries can benefit from proximity to ports for the smooth flow of goods and materials. A primary benefit of decentralization is the alleviation of congestion in major ports (Hesse & Rodrigue, 2004). Large ports like those in Rotterdam, Singapore, or Los Angeles often face significant bottlenecks due to high volumes of cargo. By decentralizing operations, the flow of goods has been more evenly distributed across a network of regional ports, reducing delays and improving efficiency. For instance, the Port of Hamburg in Germany, once was one of the busiest ports in Europe, by decentralised regime, some of its operations has shifted to nearby ports like Cuxhaven . This helped streamline traffic and led to an overall improvement in logistics efficiency for businesses located in the region.

Industrial parks in China have played a central role in the decentralization of seaport activities (China's National Development and Reform Commission, 2016). These parks often serve as integrated hubs for manufacturing, logistics, and warehousing, designed to make the most efficient use of available land and infrastructure. By positioning industrial parks near smaller, strategically located ports, the Chinese government has fostered a more distributed model of industrial development that aligns with the decentralization of port functions. The development of the Bohai Bay Area, which includes cities like Tianjin, Qingdao, and Dalian, has emerged as a key industrial region in China (Zhang, 2019). Tianjin Port has expanded its container-handling capacity in recent years and serves as a critical gateway for goods coming into the northern part of China. The development of industrial parks around the port, such as the Tianjin Economic Technological Development Area (TEDA), has fostered an environment of regional industrial growth. These parks are linked to the port through modern transportation networks, including highways and railways, allowing for efficient movement of goods to and from the port. Moreover, the Yangtze River Basin has long been an industrial hub in China, with cities like Nanjing and Wuhan playing a major role in manufacturing and logistics. The decentralization of port activities in this region has been promoted by the expansion of smaller ports along the Yangtze River, including Nanjing Port. Nanjing is strategically positioned to serve the central and eastern parts of China and is connected to the national railway network. The Nanjing Economic and Technological Development Zone (NETDZ) has attracted foreign investment and advanced manufacturing industries. By developing industrial parks near Nanjing Port, China has been able to decentralize trade operations and support local industries while relieving pressure on more congested ports like Shanghai. One of the most ambitious efforts to decentralize port operations is seen in the development of ports and industrial parks in the western provinces, particularly in Xinjiang. Although Xinjiang is far from the sea, the development of dry ports and railway connections, such as the Lianyungang Port-Xinjiang railway, has made it possible for inland regions to handle greater volumes of trade. Industrial parks in Xinjiang, such as the Urumqi Economic and Technological Development Zone, are increasingly becoming key players in China's western development strategy (Zhang, 2020). These areas are linked to the rest of China's major seaports via rail networks, facilitating the movement of goods and promoting economic growth in underdeveloped areas. Decentralizing port activities has helped create jobs and stimulate economic growth in less-developed regions of China.

Decentralization of ports has played a key role in the economic growth of Netherland, and via this approach, new opportunities for other regions have been opened up. For instance, the Port of Rotterdam which was congested and was one of the busiest ports in the world. The Botlek Industrial Park and the Moerdijk Port are examples where regional decentralization has helped reduce congestion in Rotterdam while fostering regional industrial growth. By decentralizing, these regions became more accessible to industries in sectors such as chemicals, manufacturing, and logistics, thus creating new employment opportunities and attracting international investments (Baird, 2010). The Port of Los Angeles, one of the busiest ports in the United States, faced severe congestion issues in the early 2000s. To alleviate the pressure, the state of California focused on developing the Inland Empire industrial zone, which is strategically located near key transport hubs. The proximity of the Inland Empire to the port allowed companies to relocate their warehousing and distribution operations, reducing congestion in the Port of Los Angeles. This decentralized approach promoted regional industrialization and job creation, particularly in the logistics sector, which is one of the largest in the area.

Decentralization facilitates the development of secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. Smaller ports can act as focal points for industrial complexes, which in turn stimulate local economies by providing jobs, attracting investments, and promoting regional innovation. By developing smaller ports into specialized trade hubs, countries can incentivize companies to locate their manufacturing and distribution activities near these ports (Baird, 2010). A notable example is the Suzhou Industrial complexes in China, which benefited from the decentralization of Shanghai's port operations. The development of Suzhou as an industrial hub for high-tech and manufacturing industries was directly linked to its access to the decentralized port of Shanghai. The regional economic boom in Suzhou led to an increase in FDI and industrial output (China's National Development and Reform Commission, 2016). Another example is the Klaipėda Free Economic Zone in Lithuania, located near the Port of Klaipėda. The port's decentralization from larger Baltic Sea hubs enabled the development of industrial hubs in the region. As a result, Klaipėda saw an increase in manufacturing activity, foreign investment, and job creation.

Decentralization can also contribute to more sustainable economic growth. By spreading industrial activities across various locations, rather than concentrating them in one area, the environmental pressures on major cities can be reduced. Additionally, decentralized ports may be able to implement more efficient and environmentally friendly technologies and practices, which are more easily adopted in smaller, specialized settings. For instance, Norway's Port of Drammen, which underwent decentralization in the early 2000s, emphasized sustainability in its industrial park development by using green technologies and ensuring that logistics systems minimized environmental impact. This allowed businesses in the industrial park to benefit from cost savings while contributing to the country's environmental goals. In conclusion, the decentralization of seaports and the development of linkages to industrial parks have proven to be a successful model in many developed countries. By alleviating congestion in major ports, promoting regional development, and fostering industrial growth, this strategy has had significant economic impacts.

Conclusion

The politics of maritime shipping and seaport investment in Nigeria is laced with complexities and ever clashing interest. Government policies like port concessioning and the development of new seaports have faced numerous challenges, ranging from corruption and political interference to infrastructural inadequacies and security concerns. While the privatization of port operations has introduced a level of efficiency, the management of Nigeria's ports remains politically charged, with elite interests often hindering the full potential of the country's maritime sector, and a result, driving the maritime wealth into a unilateral geo-political zone. It can be seen from this illustrations and case studies that the politics of seaport concentration in Lagos state, Nigeria, has had profound implications for the country's port development. While Lagos continues to dominate, the neglect of Ibom Deep Sea Port, Calabar Port, and Warri Port highlights the inequities and inefficiencies that arise from this centralization. The underutilization of these ports represents a missed opportunity for regional development and economic diversification. To address this imbalance, Nigeria must adopt a more inclusive port development strategy that ensures equitable investments in other regions. This will require political will, coordinated efforts between federal and state governments, and the creation of a more favorable environment for private investments. The revitalization of Calabar, Warri, and Ibom ports could ease the pressure on Lagos, stimulate economic growth in underdeveloped regions, and enhance Nigeria's position as a leading

maritime nation in Africa. Until this is achieved, the politics of seaport concentration in Lagos will continue to hinder Nigeria's maritime potential.

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