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## ASSESSING MARITIME SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THEIR IMPACT ON NIGERIA'S BLUE ECONOMY: LAGOS AREA AS A CASE STUDY

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### Abstract

*This study examines the maritime security challenges and their impact on Nigeria's blue economy, with a focus on the Lagos area. The study highlights the significance of maritime security in safeguarding economic activities and resources within Nigeria's coastal waters. The blue economy, which encompasses economic activities such as fisheries, maritime transport, tourism, and offshore oil and gas, is vulnerable to threats such as piracy, illegal fishing, smuggling, and oil theft. Using the Routine Activity Theory as a theoretical framework, the study explores the convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians in Nigeria's maritime environment. Findings reveal that maritime security challenges significantly hinder economic growth, disrupt trade, and deter investment in the blue economy. The study recommends strengthening law enforcement, improving regional cooperation, and adopting advanced surveillance technologies to mitigate security threats. Enhancing security measures will promote sustainable economic development within Nigeria's maritime sector.*

**Keywords:** Maritime Security, Challenges, Blue Economy, Lagos State, Nigeria

### Introduction

Maritime Security can be seen as the grouping of preventive and responsive actions to guard the maritime sphere against threats and intended illegitimate acts (Feldt, Roell, & Thiele, 2013). The maritime domain, according to the United States Department of Defense, includes all areas and things on, under, relating to, adjacent to, or bordering on a sea, ocean, or other navigable waterways, including all maritime-related activities, infrastructure, people, cargo and vessels, and other conveyances. The domain's worth for states can be designated in terms of its natural assets, its importance for transport and trade, power forecast and defence, and the maritime atmosphere's intrinsic value (Lundqvist, 2013). Thus, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the sea (UNCLOS) was established as a basic legal instrument for oceanic affairs and as an offer of corollary rights

for coastal states to ensure amongst others, sustainable use and defence of the marine environment and to guarantee the security of sea lines of communication (Jesus, 2003).

The oceans have been a source of economic development to mankind due to their resourcefulness. The Global Ocean Commission (GOC, 2014) reveals that ocean resources contribute 5 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), secure jobs for about 3 billion people, and sustain the livelihood of another 350 million. Furthermore, the ocean, which covers 70 percent of the Earth, contains immense harvestable resources and serves as the highway for freighting 80 percent of the international trade (National Ocean Service, 2020). However, the oceans are characterised by numerous maritime threats and vulnerabilities. Some of these threats include piracy and armed robbery at sea, maritime terrorism, crude oil

theft, illegal unregulated and unreported fishing, smuggling, and illicit trafficking in drugs and humans. To mitigate these threats, the international community, through the United Nations (UN), established institutions such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Maritime Bureau (IMB) to regulate activities of the oceans and seas through the enactment of laws, conferences, and publications of Articles and Protocols. The United Nations Conference on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982) and Safety of Lives at Sea (SOLAS) are examples of such laws, conferences, and articles (Lundqvist, 2013).

Regions around the world have constantly reviewed strategies to ameliorate maritime security threats and blue economy vulnerabilities in their domains. In Africa, for example, the African Union Commission (AUC) formulated the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy (African Union, 2012). At the sub-regional level, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) also formulated their maritime strategies for Central and West Africa, respectively. Nigeria, being a member of the ECOWAS, has keyed into the outlined strategies of the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy (EIMS, 2014) and that of the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC, 2013).

The Blue Economy (BE) concept, popularized by Gunther Pauli in 2010, has received global endorsement and is being adopted all around the world. Pauli Gunther espoused this during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, popularly called Rio+20. With the coming of the BE concept, maritime security threats and vulnerabilities are now being viewed with a wider lens, especially as it embraces the preservation of the ecosystem and its sustainability for future generations. With the BE concept, emerging areas such as tourism, aquaculture, deep sea mining, biotechnology, bio prospecting, and climate change considerations are placed on the front burner.

There have been different definitions given to the blue economy. The World Bank defines it as the sustainable

use of the ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihood, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem. The UN defines blue economy as a range of economic activities related to oceans, seas, and coastal areas and whether these activities are sustainable and socially equitable. It was given a wider view by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2016) with the definition of the blue economy as a 'green' economy in a blue world that adopts a novel strategy for economically utilising the resources of ocean, seas, lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water. In the blue economy, as the oceans and seas are being exploited, their health and sustainability are taken into consideration. Australia came up with a clear vision to create a blue economy in 2014 (Maritime Executive, 2019). Expectedly, the BE sectors of Australia recorded a substantial increase from USD 29 billion in 2014 to USD 41 billion in 2017. Also, the Australian fishing sector grew by 27 percent in 2018 (Safety4Sea, 2019). The blue economy has gained prominence as a panacea to ameliorating the constant economic flux in the global space, especially with the estimated \$1.5 trillion that it is presently contributing to the global economy (Okunomo, 2023).

The rate of attacks so far has put the number of seafarers kidnapped in the Gulf of Guinea in 2018, 2019, and 2020 at 108, 142, and 154, respectively (CEMLAWS, 2021). Attacks remain more likely closer to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria; the threat has spread to larger parts of the Gulf of Guinea, affecting countries from Ghana to Gabon (Risk Intelligence, 2021). It is on this basis that the study set to examine the maritime security challenges and their impact on Nigeria's blue economy: Lagos area as a case study.

The study comes up with the following questions:

- i. What is the relationship between maritime security and the blue economy in the Lagos area, Nigeria
- ii. How do maritime security challenges affect Nigeria's blue economy in the Lagos area, Nigeria

The following are the objectives of the paper:

- i. To examine the relationship between maritime security and the blue economy in the Lagos area, Nigeria.
- ii. To analyze how maritime security challenges affect the development of Nigeria's blue economy in the Lagos area.

## Conceptual Clarification

### Maritime Security

Security has been on the list of factors influencing the performance of the Nigerian maritime sector over the years (Anozie et al., 2019; Lloyd et al., 2020; Omoju, 2020; Edih, Igemohia & Faghawari, 2022). Others include infrastructure, bureaucracy, laws, corruption, and capital for investment and maintenance of ships, incentives for investors, availability of indigenous carrier vessels, sea worthiness of such indigenous vessels where they are available, etc. (Lloyd et al., 2020).

The term maritime security started gaining prominence after some events that started with the ACHILLE LAURO vessel hijack of 1985, revealing the inherent security challenges in maritime transportation. The next maritime terrorist attack was in the year 2000 when the USS COLE Navy ship was attacked, and 17 sailors lost their lives. Afterwards came the terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre (WTC) and the Pentagon in 2001. This was followed by the attack on the tanker LIMBERG in 2002 (MPS Seminar 2005). All these attacks set the stage for a redefinition of the term 'Maritime Security' and the need to review the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA), which was enacted in 1992 by the IMO. Thus, MS gained currency and became a buzzword in international relations.

Tahir (2005) defines MS as the protection from dangers of maritime activity and business, which involves measures taken to guarantee the safety of vessels, life, cargo, and property involved in maritime transactions, either static or moving, from point to point. As elaborate as this definition was, the Researcher considered it inadequate because it did not address the illegalities of piracy IUU, COT, and other maritime crimes. Importantly, it did not address

emerging threats associated with BE. Heathcote (2009) defines maritime security as 'encompassing a range of measures taken by maritime practitioners to address terrorism, piracy, sea robbery, seizure, pilferages, sabotage, stowaways, illegal immigrants and asylum seekers. Though comprehensive in context, this definition was not specific on the measures to be taken, especially as it concerns the maritime environment.

According to Feldt et al. (2013), Maritime Security is a combination of preventive and responsive actions to guard the maritime space against all maritime threats and intended illegitimate acts. This definition is comprehensive as it entails the protection and safeguarding of the vessels, the marine resources, the marine environment, territorial waters, ports, rivers, and other areas connected to the water bodies (Ezozue, 2019). The definition is significant because it emphasizes preventive and responsive measures in overcoming maritime threats

According to Lamara (2010), maritime security is the security from terrorism, piracy, and similar threats, as well as effective interdiction of all illegal activities at sea such as pollution of the marine environment, illegal exploitation of sea resources, illegal immigration; smuggling of drugs, persons, weapons and other matters that can be used for terrorist activities. A report by a one-time Secretary General of the UN once noted that there is no consensus on the meaning of the term maritime security, but he enumerated further that the seven items that constitute risks to maritime security, as follows:

- i. Armed robbery and piracy at sea.
- ii. Onslaught on maritime installation (vandalism of critical maritime infrastructure).
- iii. Smuggling of arms of any capacity.
- iv. Drug peddling at sea.
- v. Human trafficking via the oceans.
- vi. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.
- vii. Deliberate harming of the marine ecosystem.

Other Extraneous Challenges are:

- i. Limited Infrastructure.
- ii. Inadequate Legal Framework.

- iii. Pollution and waste management.
- iv. Lack of skilled workforce.
- v. Climate Change.
- vi. Inadequate funding.
- vii. Limited International collaboration.
- viii. Poor Investment.

Some authors have extended the concept of maritime security to include Maritime Safety, which is the combination of preventive and responsive measures intended to protect the maritime domain against and limit the effect of accidental or natural danger, harm and damage to the environment, risks or loss (Jesugbamil, 2010). Maritime security has therefore changed to accommodate maritime terrorism with focus on port security (Woolsey, 2005), maritime environmental protection and Search and Rescue (SAR), (Wu, 2000), and economy development as observed by (Vrey, 2010) who stated that throughout history, the oceans were always of vital economic importance as majority of trade is conducted through the sea with fishery as a significant industry. Synthesizing all these definitions, this research considers Maritime Security as 'the security and effective interdiction of all illegal activities such as piracy, the maritime domain from threats such as piracy, facilitating environmental sustainability considerations, port facilities, safety concerns, risks and economic management.

### **Blue Economy**

Blue Economy (BE), in broad terms, covers all economic activities that take place on oceans, seas, rivers, and adjoining waters. It entails a traditional maritime economy plus sustainability, with the core of its concept being the concurrent pursuit of economic growth while at the same time maintaining a healthy ecosystem (UNECA, 2019). Hence, this study presumes the blue economy to have the same broad meaning. Although there is some convergence in the understanding of the meaning of BE, various scholars have provided diverse perspectives in the conceptualization of the term. In this regard, the views of M. Mukti, J.N. Busiega, and UNCSD were considered. According to Mukti (2017), BE refers to maritime resources such as fisheries, maritime transport, including new and emerging activities such as aquaculture, seabed extractive activities, and marine

biotechnology with sustainable usage through seamless and integrated spatial planning. This definition identifies various components of BE but does not encompass the economic growth and well-being of a nation. It is, therefore, not considered apt for this study. Busiega (2018) views BE as a system by which people get their living through ecosystems, that is, through preserving the environment, ensuring sustainable development, and overcoming the problems related to climate change and carbon dioxide emissions. This definition stressed the need to use ecosystems to ensure sustainable development.

The Chinese suggested that the BE initiative is more than an institutional investment project. The BE initiative is 'using new biological-economic knowledge and relations in creating new spatial rationalities, which fundamentally change how we perceive sea space and dispose of things and relations in that space' (Choi, 2017). The BE is further viewed as involving the nurturing of sustaining aquaculture and mariculture, tourism, port and transportation, offshore plant engineering, pharmaceuticals, seawater utilization, renewable ocean energy, ecological restoration, and biodiversity conservation (Choi, 2017).

BE is also perceived as an investment - an institutional initiative that opens up sea space for the accumulation of many benefits. BE refers to the products generated from activities taking place at sea (Choi, 2017). However, the BE is more than an economy-making project; but a governmental project through spatial interventions, opening up new governable spaces and justifying particular ways of governing. The BE practices of seeking economical ways to use space have ironically led to the representation of sea space as potential development space and eventually to more intensive and extractive uses of sea space (Choi, 2017). BE, in context, considers the deeper extent of resource exploitation and sustainability visions of ocean management. BE can also be considered through an accumulation of a wider biological and ecological vision and a particular critical cornerstone on investment-institutional projects. BE can be extended to consider bio-economic relations, ethics, and politics (Foley, 2017).

According to UNCSO (2012), BE is an ocean economy that aims at the “improvement of human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. It stressed that ocean economic activities seek to ensure socio-economic development and improve the livelihood of people while ensuring the sustainability of the marine ecosystem. This definition provides a broader meaning and enumerates all the activities of BE. The UNCSO’s definition of BE is considered suitable for this research work as it contained the needed attributes and, therefore, was adopted.

### **Contribution of the Maritime Sector to the Nigerian Economy**

Over the years, the maritime industry has been a harbinger of fortunes and an enabler of capacities for development and growth. The little beginnings of the maritime industry in the hands of the imperial and exploitative colonial administration have turned out to be a veritable source of massive revenue, industrial growth, manpower development, and the door for Nigeria to benefit from global trade and bilateral relationships (Jamoh, 2022). During the post-independence era, when Nigeria operated the regional system of government, agriculture was the main source of foreign earnings for the Country. Agricultural produce such as cocoa, groundnut, and palm oil were exported through maritime transportation. This implies that both oil and agriculture, being the major sectors of the Nigerian economy, could not have thrived without the maritime sector. The Nigerian maritime sector could, therefore, create a link between maritime transportation and economic development as the source provider of logistics (Lloyd et al., 2020). Nigeria’s total annual freight cost, which is estimated at between \$5 billion and \$6 billion annually, places shipping at the heart of the country’s economic growth (Atoyebi, 2022).

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the value of international maritime trade is expected to increase by around 3.4% after a five-year period, which ends in 2024. This growth will primarily be driven by rapid growth rates in containerized and dry bulk cargoes. Their compound annual growth rates over this same five-year period have been projected to be around

4.5% and 3.9%, respectively. As might be expected of such a powerful and thriving industry, the maritime industry is a key driver of economic growth. Seaports and activities that take place within them add significant economic value to the countries in which they are located. These activities include the operation of maritime transport agencies, maritime and coastal water transport, storage of goods in seaports, and several other activities that support maritime transport. Some ships might even have to pay rent, which is charged for the use of the ports as part of transit shipping routes; this rent also comprises part of the economic gain brought about by the maritime industry. The maritime domain, therefore, remains the dominant medium for global shipping and commerce, and it holds the key to unlocking the streams of opportunities in the industry in such areas as renewable energy, fisheries, maritime transport, waste management, tourism, and marine biodiversity (Amechi in NIMASA, 2019). The nation’s maritime industry employs thousands of Nigerians formally and informally. The industry is adjudged as next to oil in terms of revenue generation for the economy. Its annual revenue as of last year (2021) totaled N4 trillion, with the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) leading the way with 2.3 trillion (Ugwoke, 2022). Maritime experts believe that if the potential of the sector is harnessed, the industry could generate as much as N7 trillion for the national economy annually.

### **Empirical Review**

A study by Elisha (2019) revealed that Nigeria faces identical challenges as Ghana with regard to harnessing its blue economy resources. Piracy along the Gulf of Guinea, according to Brume-Eruagbere’s (2017) findings, affects Nigeria more than other West African countries, thus presenting a major maritime security impediment that presents serious challenges and derails the blue economy activity in the region. Theft of oil cargo, kidnappings of seafarers, and disruption of transport along the gulf are just among the piracy issues that continue to be an anguish to the governments in the region because of the effects this vice has on economic activities along the coast. The effect or disruption of activities along the coast by terrorists spills over to the landlocked countries as well.

A study by Wenhai et al. (2019) on China's blue economy indicates just how much pollution of the marine environment can bring the blue economy to its knees. As a result of the threats posed by heavy pollution of the marine environment on the blue economy, the government of China has put in place measures to significantly reduce, and instances where possible to completely prevent, marine pollution. These include pollution control of river distributaries, stern control of industrial pollution by ensuring treatment of effluent, and carrying out comprehensive improvement of fishing port environment, among other measures.

Osuji and Agbakwuru (2024) conducted a comprehensive analysis of oceanic and coastal resources and their role in Nigeria's sustainable development. Their findings revealed that among the ten blue economic components studied, oil/gas exploration, maritime transport/shipping, and fisheries emerge as the dominant contributors, with oil/gas exploration alone accounting for a staggering 90% of the blue economic value in Nigeria. This underscores the necessity for concerted efforts from both the government and private sectors to capitalize on the abundant opportunities, particularly in the non-oil/gas exploration sector, to foster sustainable economic growth and generate substantial employment opportunities for Nigeria's burgeoning population, especially in the Lagos Area.

Alharthi and Hanif (2020) delved into the impact of various factors associated with the blue economy on the economic growth of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries. Their analysis, spanning from 1995 to 2018 across eight nations, highlighted fishing production metrics such as total aquaculture and fisheries production, along with agriculture, forestry, and fishing, as significant contributors. They also identified trade and inflation rates as control variables. Employing the feasible generalized least square technique, their findings underscored the statistically significant role of blue economy factors in driving economic growth across SAARC countries, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 14 aimed at conserving and sustainably utilizing oceans, seas, and marine resources.

Mmom and Chukwu-Okeah (2011) focused on Nigeria's blue economy potential, particularly within the context of its oil and gas industry, while Ebeh (2017) explored the transformative possibilities of marine biotechnology in addressing societal challenges and fostering economic growth, encouraging trends such as increased interest in sustainable practices, technological innovation, renewable energy, circular economy concepts, sustainable tourism, and blue finance point towards a promising future for the blue economy (Marwan, 2023).

Okenwa (2019) carried out a study to establish how Kenya can harness the potential of the Blue Economy for sustainable development. Questionnaires were administered to 35 respondents randomly selected from the state's agencies and departments in charge of the blue economy, of which there was a response from 32. The results after analysis revealed that for blue economy resources to be fully utilized and sustainably exploited to spur economic growth and development in Kenya and also foster understanding within the various state agencies and departments responsible for the blue economy agenda, an Integrated National Maritime Policy should be implemented.

Elisha (2019) carried out a study that focused on the blue economy in Nigeria and the prospects for economic growth of the Niger Delta region. Findings showed that terrorism, piracy, destruction of maritime ecosystems, Illegal arms trafficking, and global climate change are some challenges facing the blue economy. It recommended an improvement in model policy reform situations for a blue economy. Also, Vázquez et al. (2021) carried out a bibliometric analysis of the blue economy, maritime, ocean and marine economies, and Blue Growth to analyze the scientific production of this field of study. The key objective was to investigate if there is a connection between the blue economy and the circular economy, and findings showed a developing and growing trend during the last decade.

Ngwube (2016) noted that security is the capacity of a state to cater to the basic needs of the people while at the same time safeguarding the important interests of the individuals and the state from threats that could be economic, social, military, political, or environmental

in character. The author equally defined security to include human security as well as state security. Human security is individual-centric and involves ensuring health security, social security, food security as well and other components of human security. On the other hand, state security is defined as protection as well as promotion of the safety of the citizens of Nigeria who live in the country or abroad.

In the contribution of Malu (2011), national security in the modern epoch is defined from the perspective of development. National security means promotion of the survival of a state as well as the utilisation of economic power, military power, political power, and diplomacy. The author further defined national security as the safeguarding of the lives of the people and the protection of properties of the people and that of the state. National security is geared towards the protection of national values such as national assets, national interests, and other areas of strength on which the state rests.

Neatu and Ciobanu (2014) noted that development is used to describe the level of improvement in the quality of lives of individuals in the areas of positive changes in housing quality, increase in the standard of living, freedom of expression, and improvement in the access to education, among others. Irrespective of the dimensions of development, individuals are its victims and beneficiaries. Though the author defined development as a positive change, which is needed in this study, the definition did not specifically identify poverty and unemployment levels as indices of development as required in this paper. Therefore, development is defined in this paper as quantitative and qualitative changes involving reduction in unemployment and poverty levels in the coastal areas of Delta and Lagos States arising from mitigation of the nature of international maritime security threats plaguing coastal areas.

Badejo, (2014) in his study “maritime transportation industry in Nigeria: structure, analysis, challenges and prospects” asserted that in recognizing the dynamics of maritime transportation, global changes, technology and socio-economic alterations, there is no doubt that the maritime sector will have to respond to these changes as soon as they occur. He also opined that despite the complexities and dynamics taking place in

the maritime sector/international trade, there is a need to seek adequate conscious and applicable measures through which improved process and implementation could be achieved.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Routine Activity Theory**

The Routine Activity Theory was propounded in 1979 by Cohen and Felson in their work entitled “Social Change and Crime Rate Trends” In the “Routine Activity Approach”, Cohen and Felson proposed that crime is the aftermath of combined result of three indispensable elements: First there must be a motivated offender who is competent of committing an offence. Second, it is not sufficient for the potential offender to be motivated; he must also be capable of executing his criminal intention. According to Cullen and Agnew (2006), the routine activity approach is based on two rather simple ideas. First, for crime to occur, motivated offenders must meet with suitable targets in the absence of qualified guardians. Secondly, they noted that the likelihood of this situation occurring is influenced by their routine activities, including work, family, leisure, and consumption activities. For example, if we spend more time in public places such as bars and on the street, we increase the likelihood that we will come into contact with motivated offenders in the absence of competent guardians.

Brown & Okorie (2015a) noted that for a crime to occur, a motivated offender must also identify and engage a suitable target. Suitable targets can take several forms depending on the nature of the crime (i.e., the particular intent of the offender) and the situational context (i.e., the available opportunities). A suitable target might be an object, such as a piece of valuable property to steal, or a home to burglarize. Routine activities theory suggests that the existence of these agents might avert a crime from happening. Many potential offenders, despite being motivated to commit a crime, would be hesitant to engage in criminal behaviour with a police officer.

The routine activity theory is relevant to the study on sea robbery and tourism development because it assists to explain the existence of crime in the littoral states of the Niger Delta Region. First, unemployed youths in

the region are a pool of persons who are ready and capable of committing crimes of the nature of sea robbery. Vulnerable targets are in the form of international and domestic tourists, oil tankers, fishing crafts, trawlers, speedboat operators, passengers, and local businessmen and women who ply the waterways.

Most of these targets are not always well guarded. The numerous mazes of creeks in the littoral states of Niger Delta provide hiding places for suspects or offenders who usually lay ambush for their targets in waterways that are not well protected. The absence of protection for these targets exposes the latter to incessant attacks by these motivated offenders. Besides, when faced with a threat to life, such a target usually panics enough to promise their assailants instant wealth reward. Such offers are quite appealing to sea robber and fuel their appetite for maritime criminality. However, the routine activities theory does not explain why an offender is motivated to commit a crime but instead assumes that motivation is constant.

Routine Activity Theory (RAT) by Cohen and Felson (1979) is relevant in assessing maritime security challenges and their impact on Nigeria's blue economy, as it explains crime occurrence through the convergence of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. In the maritime domain, motivated offenders include pirates, oil thieves, illegal fishers, human traffickers, and smugglers operating within Nigeria's coastal waters. Suitable targets encompass cargo vessels, oil tankers, fishing trawlers, and offshore installations, which hold significant economic value and are often vulnerable due to inadequate security measures. The absence of capable guardians is reflected in weak maritime law enforcement, limited surveillance technology, corruption, and jurisdictional conflicts that hinder effective security governance. The persistence of these security threats disrupts maritime trade, reduces investor confidence, and limits the economic potential of Nigeria's blue economy. Therefore, applying RAT underscores the need for enhanced security frameworks, increased patrols, regional cooperation, and improved governance to mitigate maritime crime and safeguard economic activities in Nigeria's waters.

## Conclusion

The study has established that maritime security challenges pose significant threats to Nigeria's blue economy, particularly in the Lagos area. The persistence of piracy, oil theft, illegal fishing, and smuggling undermines economic activities and discourages investment in the maritime sector. The findings highlight the need for effective security strategies to safeguard Nigeria's coastal waters and ensure the sustainability of the blue economy. By addressing maritime security threats, Nigeria can unlock the full potential of its blue economy, boost economic growth, and enhance national security.

Furthermore, the study underscores that a secure maritime environment is essential for trade facilitation, job creation, and environmental sustainability. Without adequate security measures, the blue economy will continue to suffer setbacks, affecting national development. Nigeria must, therefore, adopt a holistic approach that integrates legal, economic, and technological solutions to combat maritime security threats. By implementing these measures, the nation will foster confidence among investors, promote sustainable ocean resource management, and strengthen its position in the global maritime industry.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- i. The government should strengthen maritime security agencies by providing advanced surveillance technologies, modern patrol vessels, and enhanced intelligence capabilities to combat piracy and other maritime crimes. Also, regional and international cooperation should be enhanced to improve information sharing and joint operations in securing Nigeria's coastal waters.
- ii. The government should implement stricter regulations and policies to deter illegal activities, such as unreported fishing, oil theft, and smuggling, with stringent penalties for offenders. Further, investment in maritime infrastructure should be prioritized to promote safe and efficient maritime trade and transportation.
- iii. Private sector participation should be encouraged in maritime security efforts

through public-private partnerships aimed at funding and implementing security initiatives. Moreso, Awareness programs should be initiated to educate local coastal communities

on the economic importance of the blue economy and their role in protecting maritime resources.

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