

Indo-Nigeria Relations: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract: *India and Nigeria had a common history of British imperial conquest and domination, despite coming from different continents. India pulled down the Union Jack on 15th August 1947 after a protracted struggle with British imperialists. And Nigeria gained self-rule on 1st October 1960 through dialogue and many constitutional conferences. At the height of the Cold War India and Nigeria belong to the Non Alliance club of State as well as an association of British and her former colonial territories called Commonwealth. The two states officially tied the diplomatic knot in 1958 which gave rise to a series of multifaceted intercourse. Nigeria-India relations have been cordial and characterised by cooperation at international fora and at bi-lateral levels. Indian Direct Foreign Investment in Nigeria runs billions, with a huge 35,000 Indian population in Nigeria. Hundreds of thousands of Nigerian crossed over to India for Medical tourism yearly, making it another phenomenon in the relationship between the two states. There are also a large number of Nigerian students in various universities and degree awarding institutions in India. The relationships between the States are beneficial but on a comparative note, India has a huge advantage over Nigeria because of the level of its technological advancement and economic potency. From all indications the warm affair between the two States shall continue in decades to come. However, recent incidences of drugs related crimes committed by a few Nigerians in India, and Involvement of some Indians in unholy deals and advanced free fraud tagged 419 in Nigeria are serious problems the countries will face in years to come.*

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I. Introduction

Nigeria and India have enjoyed a warm diplomatic relationship from adams, their fraternity has never developed cold feet. Relationships between African and Asian giants dated way before lowering of the Union Jack in Nigeria on 1st October 1960 when Indian first Prime Minister a State visit to Nigeria in September 1962. There were contacts between the two State 1st October 1960: 1) in 1952 Premier of Western Nigeria Chief Obafemi Awolowo visited India after his inauguration; and 2, India opened a small diplomatic office in Lagos on 20th September 1958, the mission office was upgraded when Nigeria got her independence in 1960 (Kura,2009).Incidentally or accidentally, Nigeria and India were products of some historical events that started in Europe but later spilled over to Asia, Africa, South America and the Caribbean. This in several aspects made them share similarities and belong to many global bodies of people with history of colonial conquests and domination.

The two States were colonized by Great Britain and ruled through an indirect system of government that pre-colonial political structures pillared their mission of economic plunder, social emasculation, and political dominance. British colonial rule was terminated in India in 1948 and in Nigeria in 1960(Mehra and Yaruigam,2015). Since they were once under British imperial domination, they belong to Commonwealth of State an umbrella organization of Britain and its former colonial possessions was was formed in 1949 through was is called LONDON DECLARATION OF 1949.

Furthermore , Nigeria and India are members of United Nations and its many specialized bodies and were members of Non Alliance nations during the ideological war between the Capitalist West under the leadership of United States of America (USA) and Socialist East led by the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) codenamed COLD WAR. The two are heavily populous nations and regional economic giants struggling to enter the first 20 top economies of the world. Nigeria and India are also members of World Trade Organization (WTO,South-South Cooperation, G15, and Group of 77.

The two country collaborated actively in supporting nationalists movements in Africa and the fight against the evil racist Apartheid system in South Africa. India was the first country to officially table its complaint against Apartheid in United Nations. Subsequently Nigeria joined the fray and became a permanent Chair of United nations committee against Apartheid. Throughout the years of nationalists movement in Africa, Nigeria and India supported the same liberation movements in South Africa (African National Congress), Zimbabwe (ZANU-PF), Angola (MPLA) and Namibia (SWAPO). They both supported progressive movement with clear vision of total liberation of Africans not ultra conservative groups like UNITA of Dr.

Jonas Savimbi ,NKATA FREEDOM PARTY Chief Mongosotu Buthelezi, and PATRIOTIC FRONT of Rev Joshua Nkomo. They jointly supported those groups until the last evil regime fell in 2004 in Pretoria South Africa.

Apart from cooperation on decolonization and fight against racism, relationship between India and Nigeria was demonstrated in several instances. In 1962 during the Sino-India border conflict, many independent African countries adopted a neutral disposition but the government of Sir. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa openly supported India by tagging the Chinese aggressors. Furthermore in 1971 Nigeria attended a Commonwealth Summit which Pakistan boycotted because of India's role in Bangladesh war of independence. When a war broke out between Pakistan and India and majority of the world condemned India, Nigeria simply adopted a dignified silence on the matter, a clear sign of respect for the friendship existing between the two States.

On attaining self rule, these nations had spots of healthy economies due to huge human and material capital in them. They were blessed with so many natural resources and populations that can support short and long terms economic policies. Consequently, economic forecasters predicted that they will surely play a pilot role in their regions and world at large. Even though Indian's population in 1948 was more than that of Africa put together, Nigeria was and still the black world's most populous nation with a large deposit of natural resources. India is living up to expectation despite the creation of Pakistan and later Bangladesh from the original political geography called India that was ruled by Great Britain and the burden of catering for a population of over a billion people.

For Nigeria its a sad story of missed opportunities because of kleptocratic and despotic leadership that emerged from 15th January 1966 to 29th May 1999. Windfalls that the nation got through intermittent hike in crude oil in the global market were squandered in senseless foreign policy agendas and siphoned by the ruling cabal with impunity, thereby making a rich country poor and more than a third of its people living within poverty zone.

Relationships between Nigeria and India has never been that of competition but cooperation for mutual benefits of all and there was no time any encounter ended a zero sum game, it was always a positive sum game where the two benefited greatly. India was better placed in the 60s and had self rule almost 12 years before Nigeria, therefore the Asian giant was more advanced in many aspects than Nigeria. That made India bore the burden of the friendship and rendered selfless social, economic and military services to a new African State that experts and expertise to roll their nation down the track of greatness and meet up with the growing yearning and aspirations of its peoples. The Asian second most populous State who had enough trained personnel dispatched them to Nigeria to bailout especially in education sub-sector, they were large that hardly can you find a government secondary school without many Indians teaching there. A few of them rose to become head teachers or principals of their colleges. The equation was changed in early 80s when the military government introduced decrees outlawing foreigners heading secondary or tertiary schools in the entire country.

No aspect of human endeavour was left in the relationship between Nigeria and India. The tie engineered economic, military, and social activities making India Nigeria's largest trading partner in sub-sahara Africa. In the 60s and 70s the bulk of economic activities was in the textile but crude oil has since overtaking that because Nigeria supply 20 to 25% of India crude requirement which is estimated to be at 10b USD annually (Vasudevan 2010). The two are now cooperating in power, strategic partnership, phamercuetical, real estate, construction, defense, and medical tourism. Areas of cooperation between the two countries are enlarging and growing fast like bush fire, this is supported by globalization which fast condensing the entire globe into a global neighbourhood. Despite this unexpected boom, events are managed properly and unfolding manageable hitches.

II. Defence Cooperation

Defense cooperation between Nigeria and India shot off in 1961 through an official visit of Minister of Defense under Sir AbubakarTafawa regime Alh. Mohammadu Ribadu to India. While there many agreements were reached between the two states. India was given the responsibility of setting up and building Nigeria premier military academy Nigeria DefenseAcademy (NDA) and subsequent Command and Staff College Jaji. India played a principal role in drawing out their training manual and other curriculum. And since then they have been in the centre of other upgrading measures like converting Nigeria Defense Academy to degree awarding institution in the early 80s(Dutta, 2008).

Before establishing of Nigeria Defense Academy, India has trained a cream of Nigeria officers whose list is difficult to know due to secrecy associated with military affairs in Nigeria. Information about some of these officers that received training(s) in India keeps appearing in their memoirs, authobiograpies, and citation of their profiles during conferment of awards, chieftaincy titles or funerals. However it is public knowledge that some of the leaders rose to the peak of their professions and become head of State in a military setting and elected president in a democratic dispensation. Amongst the list of officers that were trained in India are

Gens. Murtala Ramat Mohammed, Olusegun Obasanjo, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, Ahmed Daku, Zamani Lekwot, Gado Nasco and other unknown officers (Kura, 2009). This helped Nigeria greatly in meeting up with challenges of training officers that the country dearly needed for international and external security. No country that has gone through the evil of colonialism will permit colonial masters officers to continue to man sensitive positions in its countries Armed forces. India's offer to train Nigerians despite its need and fewer slots and training facilities is a remarkable show of solidarity to a country that came out of a similar nasty experience of colonial domination.

India was awarded the contract of installing IT equipment in NDA and Command and Staff College Jaji to enable the two colleges meet up with modern means of communications. Some of Nigeria armour and personal carriers are Indian made TATA vehicles which has been tested and proven suitable and reliable (Sahara Reporters 22 February 2010). The Navy also has a sizeable number of Indian patrol boats in the collection of their fleets, as the armor and personnel carriers they are reliable and serving the purpose of which they were acquired.

Kura (2009) highlighted areas the two States cooperated and still cooperating in below fashion:

- (i) India helped Nigeria build various military institutions, including the Nigerian Defense Academy (NDA) in Kaduna and the Command and Staff College (CSC Jaji in Kaduna)
- (ii) India assisted Nigeria build the physical structures for the institutions mentioned above
- (iii) India has sent officers to the above military institutions to train Nigeria officers
- (iiii) India has provided scholarships for officers in Nigeria Armed Forces to be trained in India military institutions
- (v) India has engaged in consultancy military interactions with Nigeria
- (vi) India has sold defense equipment to Nigeria
- (vii) India and Nigeria have engaged in collaborations regarding military technologies

There are numerous covered by memorandum of understanding on defense cooperation signed in 2007 between the two States.

III. Economic Cooperation

Tally chart of tables shows that Nigeria is Indian second largest trading, investment partner at the global stage and the largest in sub-Saharan Africa. History of economic intercourse between the two States started in 1923 by a conglomerate called K. Challarams who invested in agriculture, retailing, and transport. Challarams were a major conglomerate that competed strongly with other European companies when Nigeria was still a British colony down to the independence and post self-rule eras. At some points in Nigeria, Challarams was a household name when it comes to business and manufacturing of sundry goods and rendering of services. The presence of European companies with a long business tradition and strong capital base in their home countries couldn't slim their chances of competing for the market and recording their presence. Right now, Indian Pharmaceutical companies are dominating in the area of drugs production and importation, projection shows that if they continue to soar, they might take over the market completely by sending companies from other areas out of business in Nigeria. According Nigeria High Commissioner to Singapore His Excellency Okpara who also quoted a source from Indian High Commission in Abuja:

“Nigeria bi-lateral trade turn over in 2010-2011 amounted to over US\$ 13 billion, a growth of 57% and it is expected that the figure for 2011-2012, would be over US\$ 17 billion with crude oil accounting for the bulk of the trading. India export to Nigeria consist of pepper, wood products, textiles, plastics chemicals, machinery, transport equipment, drugs and pharmaceutical”

It has been estimated that about one hundred Indian companies are big players in Nigeria economy. Some of these companies are: Bharti Airtel, NIIT, Aptech, Primus Super Specialist, Bajaj Auto, Birla Group, Kiriosker, Mahindra, Astock Leyland, New India Assurance, Bhushon Steel, DEC and Skipper Electronic, among others. Of the over 100 Indian companies in Nigeria non is not competing favourable with companies from other nations, especially advanced worlds. The operating environment is favourable because of the cordial ties between the two nations and faithfulness of both the parties to their contractual agreements. This is by no means ruling out existence of minor trade disputes, but they are not of great magnitude to warrant a major fracas between India and India. Where such cases arise, they are settled in courts without necessarily appearing before international bodies charged with resolution of trade disputes. Cordial relationship and mutual respect to bi-lateral protocols between the two gave birth to expansion of trade between the two States.

India is a world economic power with an expanding need for energy to continue to move the economy forward. Fortunately a Nigeria that India has a cordial relationship with has enough crude oil to meet-up with its demand. Nigeria oil became Indians target because other oil powers are in the Middle East, countries India

don't have a strong tie with because of their many conflicts with Pakistan. The Muslim world is paying solidarity with Pakistan because of faith, not on any strategic thinking or national interest. India was left with no option than look for a way of getting an inroad into Nigeria oil world to support its growing need. Many Indian oil companies had made inroad into the oil and gas industry and are big players in the oil and gas sub-sector.

Trade in oil and gas is a leading aspect of economic activities between India and Nigeria, different sources suggests that India imports 8% to 12% of its oil from Nigeria(Okpara,2013). If 8% to 12% of Indian oil and gas needs are solve by Nigeria, there is no doubt that revenue accruing to Nigeria through oil and gas will constitutes a bulk of money Nigeria gets through trade with India. Despite Ni embarking on medical tours, thousands of Students crossed over to India to advanced or acquire certificates, and massive importation of military equipment, a combination of them all cannot match what goes into purchase of oil. And because of oil, the balance trade favours Nigeria.

Nigeria is benefitting from other India facilities through multilateral arrangements with either ECOWAS, South South Cooperation.

IV. Socio-Cultural Cooperation

Nigeria –India relationship also generated a horde of socio-cultural intercourse serving national interest of the two States. Nigeria is a beneficiary of Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)in 2010-2011 alone, about 130 Nigerian benefited from this scheme. After Africa-India Forum Summit, the share of Nigerian beneficiaries soared to 190 and 177 slots were used. Record shows that in 2012-2013 slots allocated to Nigeria through this scheme were fully exhausted by Nigerians.

Indian films are very popular in all the nooks and crannies of northern Nigeria, the popularity is the high that even teenagers knows names of most of top Indian actors. Local television and radio stations show in Indian films and Frequency Modulation (FM stations) play Indian music for hour on air for millions of their listeners. India has been participating in Abuja carnival and their active participation has added glamour and internationalized the young carnival tradition. The troupe that came to Abuja also made time and performed in Lagos and other cities in the country. On another lane Indian Council of World Affairs and Nigerian Institute of Foreign Affairs jointly organised India-Africa Academic Conference in Lagos in 2012.

Statistic from Indian High Commission indicated that there are approximately 35,000 Indian national living and pursuing legitimate businesses in Nigeria. It is a known reality that Indians in Nigeria are enjoying a non-controversial status in Nigeria .They have two temples in lagos and a school with over 2000 kids studying in India language in Lagos.

Similarly the number of Nigerians visiting India is soaring each year. Sources from India High Commission in Abuja said over 40,000 Nigerians obtained visas annually. Majority of such visas are for medical tourism and education. According to Osahon Enabulele President of Nigeria Medical Association ,over 5000 Nigerian citizens fly out on a monthly basis seeking medical treatment in India. Nigerians spent over 500m USD annually and out of that whopping amount, 260m USD goes to India (BUSINESSDAY 18TH March 2013). Long before recent boom in Medical tourism between India and Nigeria, Indian medicine have been present in Nigeria and was said to be traditionally been the largest source of medicines in Nigeria, and covered over a third of the market. This is prevailed because of their relative cheapness and high level of efficiency. There are over 30 Indian Pharmaceutical companies in Lagos and most of them are not only engage in production but importation of drugs from their parent companies at home (BUSINESSDAY 18th May 2013).

Nigerians students are enrolling in Indians tertiary institutions for diploma, degree and other professional courses. This is all because of the quality of education Indian colleges and universities are providing and their relative cheapness compared to other countries in Asia or Europe. Long ago India has showed desire to help educational development in the black world by starting a scholarship scheme for African students. It was argued that the scheme could not record the desired result because of preference by many young African then to study in United kingdom , United States, Canada and other advanced worlds not a third world nation like India. And because scholarships were easy to come by at that time, the one by India was not fully utilised.

Prospects

The Indo-Nigeria relations will continue to grow because of the huge potentials and shared values between the Asia giant and one of the Africa's biggest market. Absence of a serious trading dispute and stable diplomatic relations is sinking deeper the taproot of mutually beneficial activities between the two nations.

India is the largest market of Nigeria crude oil. Nigeria crude accounts for 10-12 percent of Indian crude market for a while now. Before now the U.S. was the largest consumer of Nigeria crude oil. The chief reason behind this is existence of a smooth relationship between India and Nigeria which indirectly encourages

growth in trade of essential commodity like oil. Annual oil export from Nigeria to India has been estimated to 12USD (Punch of 19th April 2019).

Medical tourism is another area generating a gargantuan annual revenue .Thousands of very wealthy and average wealthy Nigerian embark on medical tourism to India. This is because of world class medical facilities,highly professional practitioners and moderate prices of services rendered by Indian medical industries. Medical tourism will continue to expand because of continued deterioration of Nigeria medical system and inability of local hospitals to charter for medical needs of Nigerians(wapmuk and Agatha,2012).

Indian Pharmaceuticals are big time players in Nigeria,most data shows that they are controlling a third of the market. This is because of their high quality and moderate cost compared to products of companies from other countries. Both private and public health centres heavily rely on Indian drugs and allied products. Growth in population in Nigeria and trust in their quality will keep expanding their market dominance for an unforeseeable period(Vanguard of 28th March 2019).

The transport sub-sector is increasing economic growth India and Nigeria. Nigeria is next to India in using Bajaj and tricycle(Called Keke). Because of the preponderance of need in Nigeria they have established assembly plants in Nigeria. Lack of good road networks and unplanned transport system has made reliance on them a most. Reliance on Bajaj and keke are not only in rural areas of Nigeria, they are operating in all urban and semi urban areas in Nigeria. They are playing a role in transporting goods and persons right inside the capital territory of the federal Republic of Nigeria, Abuja(Business Hilight of 7th February 2019).

India is one of the leading ICT country in the world and software developer. Equally Nigeria has millions of young ICT enthusiasm across the thirty six states of the federation and the federal capital. Love for ICT and computer related matters led to establishment of what is called "Computer Village" in most cities in Nigeria . This is a barren field desiring investment of Indian hightech giants. The share size of Nigeria can lead to a market worth billions of United States dollars a year(Vanguard of 5th April 2019).

The movie industry is another sector that the two nations can benefit from. Indian Bollywood has a long track record of dominating Nigerian market. In the last two decades Nigerian Nollywood has made an inroad into the global movie world. Bollywood and Nollywood are ranked second and third in the global film industry. However,Indian industry is more advanced than that of Nigeria. There is a need for collaboration between the two to enable exchange ideas on the various aspects of filmmaking. That will certainly hike the quality of Nigerian films to make it measure up with qualities of films produced in Europe or Americas. Collaboration will also expand the global market of Nigerian films which are only popular in African markets(France24 of 20th July,2016).

Construction is other areas Indian companies and their Nigerian counterparts are engage in. Many Indian companies have picked up contracts in many states of the federation. That is providing desperately needed infrastructures in Nigeria. They are competing with European construction giants like Julius Berger, Salini,as well as local companies like Dantata and Sawea etc.

CHALLENGES

Generally Indo-Nigeria relations is quite stable without serious areas of disagreements. That has been the pattern right from the time the two countries officially opened diplomatic channels in the 60s. Nevertheless, there are challenges that are likely create problems that could result to engagements or lead to serious fracas.

One of the areas that is creating challenges in the relationship is drugs trafficking and other criminalities perpetrated by young Nigerians that went to India to study or involved in businesses. The students have been recruited by Indian and other national drug barons as traffickers. Some others are into cybercrimes. This is posing a serious problem to ties between the India and Nigeria(Premium Times of 4th December 2018).

Another serious challenge is corruption in the public and private sectors. The two countries are suffering from this cancer. This has made conduct of businesses extremely risky and delicate. Government officials and their regulatory bodies milk millions of dollars from businesses and public treasury. This is placing insurmountable hurdles on investment and made doing business extremely difficult. Open stealing by workers has triggered closure of companies and also stalled growth(Taiwo,1998).

The justice system in Nigeria is yet another challenge to Indo-Nigeria ties. The courts operates on a snail pace thereby defeating one of their dictum that said "justice delayed is justice denied". This along with corruption in the judiciary is making companies intending to initiate businesses to steer clear for fear of falling victims of a slow and corrupt judicial system. If a serious effort is not made to totally overhaul the judiciary people willing to invest will develop cold feet. And those with investment in the country will find ways to tactically withdraw their investment(Habeeb,2018)

Insecurity in Nigeria has degenerated to an unprecedented height. The entire northern part of the country which has the highest number of states and population has been converted to a theatre of kidnapers,armed banditry, Fulani herdsman,and Boko Haram insurgents. These criminal elements have been operating with impunity for a protracted period. Governments at the centre and states have demonstrated gross

incapacity to protect lives and property. A recent report by the Inspector General of Police suggest that an average of 16 people are being kidnapped daily in Nigeria. With this uncontrollable and hyperactive insecurity, it will be difficult for investors to bring in capital and men in Nigeria. When physical security is a challenge in a country, such a climate knows that very few foreign investors will dare make an attempt to invest there (Punch of 4th May, 2019)

The menace of intellectual property right is another problem that might ginger a trade war between India and Nigeria. The laws protecting intellectual property rights are there but the capacity to enforce them are zero. This has been a major problem in Nigeria for long. Nollywood and the music industry have been recounting billions of Naira they are losing to thieves of their intellectual property. This is an area that will surely spark off dispute or hinder collaboration between Indian and Nigerian companies or actors (Mary, 2014).

Poor infrastructures and power supply are other serious challenges to economic activities between the two nations. Lack of or poor power supply was responsible for the closure of many companies especially textile industries that Indians were key investors and players in. The situation is making heavy plants to run on diesel generators for twenty four hours. That is making production cost outrageously high and creeping into their profit. Until a permanent solution to power supply is found, many businesses will not stand let alone attracting new ones. Similarly, poor infrastructure in the country is a huge palaver frustrating businesses and investment in the country. The railway system is dead, the roads are dead traps, the airports are unsafe, the Rivers are also bad. This is affecting smooth delivering of services in the country. Many businesses cannot operate without effective and efficient infrastructures on ground (Olufemi, 2015).

V. Conclusion

India and Nigeria will continue to enjoy a stable and productive relationship for a long time to come. It will be very hard to have a major diplomatic dispute or trade war because of shared history and interests at the global level. Areas of engagements will keep expanding because of ease in channels of interactions and transportation. The balance of trade will continue to favour India, but on the overall, the relationship will be mutually beneficial. As India's prosperity and breakthroughs in sundry fields are increasing their activities in Nigeria will simultaneously enlarge because of the share population of the nation and its abundant natural resources.

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