

Full Length Research

INDIA-NIGERIA RELATIONS (FROM HISTORICAL FRIENDS TO STRATEGIC PARTNERS)

¹Nidhi Mehra and ²Dr A.S. Yaruingham*

¹Research scholar in the Department of African Studies, University of Delhi. India.

E-mail: sannidhi.leo@gmail.com. Ph.no: 09953827022

²Associate Professor and Former Head of Department & Director for African Studies Centre, University of Delhi, India.

E-mail: awungshi_angam@yahoo.co.in. Ph.no: 09560714373

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The relationship between India and Nigeria is deep-rooted, characterized by inner warmth and generosity. The colonial backdrop of Nigeria and India makes both of them historical friends and thus natural allies. The independent India, having itself gone through the travails of colonialism, stood in solidarity with Nigeria during its colonial struggles and championed the course of decolonization process. This is validated by the fact that India established its diplomatic Mission in 1958, two years before Nigeria's independence. The diplomatic relations over these years has transformed itself into Strategic Partnership. They stand united on international forums and other critical global issues and are strong advocates of South-South cooperation. The friendship is manifested through fruitful political, cultural, economic and defence exchanges. Despite blossoming bonhomie, several constraints need to be addressed to take the bilateral relations to the next higher pedestal. The immense potential in both the countries along various sectors of the economy should be harnessed. Similarly, Indian overtures towards Nigeria must not be interpreted as the scramble for African resource. Rather, it must be defined as the re-branding of a relationship in the context of old historical ties. As India seeks to solidify her relations with Africa, stronger ties with Nigeria as global partner become an imperative. The strategic relations, it is anticipated, will get the needed attention under the stewardship of PM Modi and General Buhari.

Keywords: Shared values of equality, mutual respect, mutual benefit, common understanding of south -south cooperation, closely working together in regional and international organization, strategic partnership Agreement, mutual legal assistance treaty, Bilateral trade agreement, cooperation against trafficking in arms, cultural exchange

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INTRODUCTION

"Of one thing there can be no doubt, and that is the vitality of the people of Africa. Therefore, with the vitality of her people and the great resources available in this great continent, there can be no doubt that the future holds a great promise for the people of Africa." - Pandit Jawaharlal

Nehru, while addressing Nigerian Assembly in 1962.

The relation between Republic of India and Federal Republic of Nigeria has traditionally been friendly and warm. The relations had been based on their shared values of equality, mutual respect, mutual benefit and the

common understanding that South-South cooperation is essential for the economic well-being of developing countries. India and Nigeria are linked by common historical experiences and in the contemporary context, are united in the desire to work towards democratic pluralism, tolerance, economic development and social justice. The relation in recent times has blossomed into a full-fledged strategic partnership.

India and Nigeria are the largest democracies and the largest economies in their respective regions. Both are multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and plural societies. Nigeria became independent on 1st October 1960 and a Republic in 1963. It is the largest democracy in Africa having Presidential system of Government, with an Executive President at the apex. Since her independence, Nigeria has continued to maintain warm and excellent ties with India. Their demography and economy provides immense market opportunities and huge pool of human resources. Nigeria is a leading member of the African Union and exercises immense influence not only in West Africa but in the entire African continent.

Nigeria is both a regional as well as a continental power. Nigeria has the largest population in Africa and its people are industrious and highly educated. It is the largest market in the continent with a growing economy which has become the preferred destination for foreign direct investment. The country is at the forefront in the efforts of maintaining peace and security in the West African region and Africa. Nigeria is one of India's largest suppliers of crude oil. Nigeria is India's largest trading partner in Africa.

India, an emerging developing economy, is also a regional power. India is ranked the second fastest growing economy after China. The *World Economic Outlook* released by IMF on 14th April, 2015 predicts India will hit 7.5% both in 2015 and 2016 thereby eclipsing China whose growth is projected to slow down to 6.8%. IMF Chief Economist Olivier Blanchard points that higher growth rate is the result of India's shift from consumption to investment led growth. Also, the World Bank in its *South Asia Economic Focus Report* argued that on the back of significant acceleration of investment, growth could even reach 8% in 2017-2018 (The Hindu: April 15, 2015). India's rapidly modernising industries and a burgeoning middle class with rising incomes and ever-expanding purchasing power results in a growing demand for investment and resources especially energy (Wapmuk: 2012).

HISTORICAL RELATIONS

Diplomatic relations between the two countries predate Nigeria's own independence in 1960. India established its diplomatic Mission on the 20th November, 1958, in Lagos,

which was the then headquarters of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, two years prior to Nigeria's independence. To further cement what was to become a substantive relationship, the India Mission was eventually upgraded to the status of a High Commission after Nigeria became a politically Sovereign State. Nigeria reciprocated the gesture two years after independence in 1962 (Okpara: 2013).

Relations between Nigeria and India have their roots in colonialism. Both had shared colonial experiences having been former colonies of Britain. During the period of British rule, some five million Indians migrated to the different colonies of the British Empire, including Nigeria, mostly under the system of indentured labour. This marked the beginning of an informal interaction between India and Nigeria (Anirudha:1979). Nigeria and India were at the forefront of the anti-colonial struggles. It was on the grounds of having suffered colonial onslaught that India championed the course of decolonisation and eradication of racial discrimination. Prime Minister Nehru demonstrated the commitment of India in support of the decolonisation process when he stressed that we are particularly interested in the emancipation of colonial and dependent countries in the recognition of the theory and practice of equal opportunities of all races. Coincidentally, this was and has been one of the central aspects of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives in which the restoration of human dignity to black men and women all over the world and the eradication of colonialism and white minority rule (or apartheid) from the face of Africa was emphasized. India has indeed served as a great inspiration not only to Nigeria, but also to all developing countries located in the same geopolitical axis (Kura: 2009).

India and Nigeria have a history and tradition of working closely together in regional and international organizations. The two countries are members of the Commonwealth, World Trade Organization (WTO), Non-Aligned Movement, G-15, Group of 77, the United Nations (UN) and also believe in South-South co-operation. Cooperation between our two countries at the United Nations has always been close. Both provide the bulk of their troops for UN Peace Keeping Operations all over the world (Okpara: 2013). They share similar views on reform of the UN Security Council and international financial institutions namely IMF and the World Bank. Equally, they stand united on other critical issues of the global agenda such as climate change, the fight against international terrorism, reform the Doha Development Round and issues pertaining to development and international peace and security.

The visit to Nigeria by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1962 opened an important chapter in a long-lasting friendship between Nigeria and India. Today, the political and diplomatic relations have fruitfully blossomed (Kura: 2009). There had been frequent visits by high

government officials of both countries.

Nigeria-India relations entered a new era with the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999. Nigeria has had its democratic experiment truncated several times by military regimes, only returning to democratic rule in 1999. In 2000, President Olusegun Obasanjo undertook a State Visit to India as Chief Guest of India's 50th Republic Day celebrations. In March 2000, the External Affairs Minister of India Jaswant Singh visited Nigeria to co-chair the Third Session of India-Nigeria Joint Commission (INJC) (Wapmuk: 2012). In May 2003, the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry visited Nigeria to chair the Conference of Commercial Representatives of Western Sub-Saharan Africa. And in October 2003, the Nigerian Minister of External Affairs visited India to co-chair the Fourth Session of the two countries' Joint Commission. In December 2003, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (CHOGM) in Abuja (Okpara: 2013).

In 2007, Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh became the first Indian leader to visit Nigeria in 45 years and addressed a joint session of the Parliament of Nigeria. It culminated in the signing of *Abuja Declaration on Strategic Partnership Agreement* to further enhance bilateral cooperation and collaboration between Nigeria and India. The Abuja Declaration enunciates an all-embracing vision of India-Nigeria *Strategic Partnership* with an emphasis on closer energy co-operation, taking into account the commonalities and complementarities between the two countries. The follow-up agreements scheduled for 2008 included those on Double Taxation Avoidance, Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection, Science and Technology, Air Services, the renewal of the 1976 Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, an Extradition Treaty, a Bilateral Trade Agreement, Co-operation against Trafficking in Arms, and finally, a Cultural Exchange Programme for the period 2008–2010 (Wapmuk: 2012).

There has also been a series of visits at various governmental and commercial levels between the two countries. Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo visited India in March 2012 mainly for encouraging economic ties. A delegation led by Minister of State of Defence of Nigeria Hon'ble Mrs. Erelu Olusola Obada visited Delhi on a 4 day official visit in April 2012 to participate in the Def-Expo India 2012. Governor of Lagos attended India-Africa Conclave in New Delhi in March 2013. A 6 member delegation led by Nigerian Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Dele Joseph Ezeoba visited India from December 9-13, 2013 on an official visit.

A 20 member delegation from Nigeria came to attend the 10th CII-Exim Bank conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership held in New Delhi from March 9-11, 2014. Mrs Sarah Reng Ocheke, Minister of Water Resources visited India from March 20-22, 2014 to participate at the Re-invent the Toilet Fair in New Delhi. A 14 member

Senate Committee of Senators & Members of House of Representatives of Parliament, at the invitation of Chief Election Commissioner, visited India from June 21-26, 2014. The Minister of Industry, Trade & Investment Hon'ble Mr. Olusegun Aganga accompanied by a high-level business delegation visited on September 10-13, 2014 (Ministry of External Affairs: 2014).

These visits have re-invigorated and redefined relations within the context of the contemporary developmental and political challenges facing the two countries. The relations were further consolidated through the quick implementations of the agreements and recommendations that resulted from those visits. These visits are indications of the extent of friendliness, mutual understanding, substantive ties and interactions between Nigeria and India (Kura: 2009).

INTERNATIONAL FORA

At the international level, both of them supported the rights of nations to self-determination and freedom from colonial and foreign subjugation, supported all liberation movements in the legitimate struggle for national independence, and offered unrelenting support for all efforts to dismantle the system of apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s and indeed all forms of racial bigotry and prejudice. The Indian government has regularly held diplomatic consultations with Nigeria on strategies for international conferences and forums aimed at providing moral, political and material support to all African states. The two nations have come together on pertinent issues that not only affect them individually but that also affect several Third World countries (Kura: 2009).

Nigeria and India play critical and influential roles in the international for a such as the UN, Commonwealth and others on common issues such as development, security, terrorism, climate change, drug and human trafficking. Both the nations were keen participants in various conferences and summits in which international agreements have been reached regarding political, social and economic issues, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Bale convention, Johannesburg Plan of Action, and Doha Development Agenda etc (Kura: 2009). Nigeria stands to champion the cause of African countries at the international level. India stands with Nigeria as a partner in progress towards issues that generally affect the Third World.

CULTURAL EXCHANGES

Nigeria and India have various cultural and social similarities. The people to people ties between Nigeria and India are vibrant and growing. Indians are the largest non-African expatriate community in Nigeria (The Hindu:

April 04, 2015). Many Indian nationals are now naturalized Nigerians and most of them are actively involved in trading, service sector, education, agriculture, health, manufacturing, construction and aviation, telecommunications, small-scale industries and, more importantly, in the development of railways and the steel industry, for which India has earned the praise and salute of the international community (Kura: 2009).

Similarly, nearly 40,000 Nigerians obtained Indian visas during 2013. The main reasons for visiting India are medical tourism and business. Number of Nigerian students going to Indian tertiary institutions is also on the rise. In general, Indians in Nigeria are well off and enjoy largely non-controversial existence. The High Commission of both the countries actively monitors the pressing needs of the diaspora community. The latest advisory from the High Commission was on the dos and don'ts of *Ebola virus* (Ministry of External Affairs: 2014).

The start of a scholarship scheme for African students by the Indian government way back in 1955 is suggestive of the Indian commitment to helping Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Under the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan (SCAAP), India provides eight to ten scholarships to Nigerians for various training programmes. Moreover, since 1984, under an Indo-Nigerian cultural programme sponsored by the Indian government, five Nigerian students visit India for undergraduate or postgraduate research. And, since 1984, two junior and senior research fellowships are granted annually to Nigerians by the Indian Government (Kura: 2009). Initially the problem of distance impelled Nigerians to prefer western countries rather than India. Today, however despite distance, there are approximately more than 5,000 Nigerians studying in India.

The first ever Indian Film Festival held in Abuja from March 31 to April 06, 2014 was inaugurated by the first lady, H.E. Mrs. Dame Patience Jonathan on March 31, 2014. There exist informal contact between Nigerian film makers and their Indian counterpart with a view to partnering in film production, marketing as well as in capacity building. Indian films are quite popular in Kano, Kaduna and other Northern States and local channels regularly telecast Indian films. Progress is underway to work towards facilitating a Nigerian Film Festival in New Delhi and to partner with the government of Kano state to establish a film city. For two years in succession, namely, 2010 and 2011, India participated in Abuja Carnival. The yam Group from Kerala mesmerised the audience at the Abuja Carnival in 2011 (Ministry of External Affairs: 2014). Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) and Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) jointly organised 2nd India-Africa Academic Conference at Lagos from 14-15 March 2012. The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) quota for Nigeria for the years 2010 to 2013 was fully utilised. Similarly all 209 slots for the

year 2013-14 were utilised (Ministry of External Affairs: 2014).

The Nigeria-India Friendship Association (NIFA) was formed and inaugurated on November 11, 1978, in Lagos to promote mutually beneficial co-operation between Nigeria and India in the areas of culture, sports, science, technology, exchange of information and tourism. The premise behind the formation of the association reasoned that it was only when developing countries lessen their dependence on global superpowers that they are able to meaningfully talk about a New International Economic Order (NIEO) (Kura: 2009).

In related developments, other organisations were formed in Nigeria by the Indian community, including the Indian Professionals Forum (IPF), the Indian Women's Association (IWA), and the All Indian Cultural Association (AICA). These associations not only work to unite the Indians in Nigeria but also serve as forums through which cordial friendships and mutual understandings can be achieved and enhanced between Nigerians and Indians. These associations have also organised symposia, seminars and social gatherings during which Indian cultural heritage is on display. Moreover, an Indian language school was also established in Lagos. These associations have helped to bridge the cultural disparity between the two countries and have promoted mutual understanding, cordiality and appreciation. As such, it may be worthwhile for the Nigerian community in India to establish similar kinds of associations in India as a way of strengthening mutual cultural understanding (Kura: 2009).

DEFENCE RELATIONSHIP

Militarily, India is a power to be reckoned with, as it is a nuclear power state. India has had a long-standing defence relationship with Nigeria and have been involved in training of Nigerian defence personnel and setting up of military training institutions in that country. India helped Nigeria build various military institutions, including the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) and the Command and Staff College (CSC) in Kaduna. Indian officers have visited to the above military institutions to train Nigerian officers. Similarly, India has provided scholarships for officers in Nigerian Armed Forces to be trained in Indian military institutions. A number of high-ranking military officers have received their training in India, including the late General Murtala Mohammed, General Olusegun Obasanjo, General Ibrahim Babangida, Brigadier General Mohammed Daku, Real-Admiral Augustus Aikomu, and Air Vice Marshal Ibrahim Alfa (Kura: 2009). And most importantly, the current *President Gen. Buhari* has been trained in India at the *Defence Staff College, Wellington* in 1973 (The Hindu: April 04, 2015).

India and Nigeria have engaged in collaborations

regarding military technologies. However, there has only been little co-operation in the procurement of weapons (Kura: 2009). The Armed forces of both the nations have attended military training together, exchange programmes and served in UN Peace Keeping Operations. These bilateral exchanges have assisted in strengthening co-operation not only within the armed forces but between these countries.

ECONOMIC EXCHANGES

Economic co-operation between the two countries also has its genesis during colonialism. Amongst the early arrivals, were the Sindhi traders who reached Lagos in 1919 (Wapmuk: 2012). The 1923 establishment of Indian trading company *K. Chellaram* marked the formal beginning of economic relations between Nigeria and India. Since 1923, economic co-operation between the two countries has continued to flourish. Accordingly, Nigeria is now India's largest trading partner in Africa. The relations between India and Nigeria have continued to be reinvigorated by series of visits at the governmental and commercial levels which have redesigned, refocused and redefined the economic relations between the two countries (Kura: 2009). There exists great potential for the development of economic relations between the two countries.

Trade and investment can be said to be the fulcrum of economic relations between Nigeria and India (Wapmuk: 2012). Nigeria and India as emerging global powers and reliable partners have recognized the need to make trade and economic opportunities the central focus and hence take full advantage of the existing potentials in both countries. Economic, trade and investment relations between Nigeria and India have improved considerably over the years.

Nigeria is India's largest trading partner in Africa and India is the largest trading partner of Nigeria globally. Nigeria is also the largest market in Africa for Indian exports. The bilateral trade between India and Nigeria in 2013-14 increased by 2.5% to US\$ 16.98 billion mainly due to large crude oil import by India. India's exports to Nigeria have grown gradually during the last few years from US\$ 1.08 billion in 2007-08 to US\$ 2.66 billion in 2013-14. During 2013-14, our imports, mainly consisting of petroleum and crude products, stood at US\$ 14.31 billion as against US\$ 13.82 billion registered in 2012-13 (Ministry of External Affairs: 2014).

Nigeria is the largest **oil** producer in Africa. Nigeria is highly important for India's energy security as we import around 8% to 12% of our crude requirements from Nigeria (Ministry of External Affairs: 2014). India has overtaken the U.S. as the top buyer of Nigerian crude oil. Initially, India imported only palm oil from Nigeria. However in recent decades, Indian investments in Nigeria

have branched out into other areas, creating employment opportunities and adding value to the Nigerian economy (Wapmuk: 2012). Besides oil, Nigeria exports cashew nuts, wood, cotton, pearls, rubber and gum Arabic to India. India's exports to Nigeria comprise paper and wood products, textiles, plastics, chemicals, machinery, transport equipment, drugs and pharmaceuticals.

A large number of *Indian companies* have footprints in Nigeria with an investment of over \$11 billion (The Hindu: April 04, 2015). They have made substantial contribution in the field of investments and employment creation in Nigeria. Indian companies have invested heavily in Nigeria in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, plastics, engineering, information technology and communications. Some of the popular brand names in Nigeria are Ranbaxy, Unique, and Dana in *pharmaceuticals*; Simba, Wandel, and Bhojraj in *technology*; Reliance Textile Nigeria Ltd, and Globe Spinning Mills Nigeria in *textiles*; Multi-links Telecommunications and Reltel Communications in *telecommunications*; Infosys, Satyam, NIIT, and Aptech in *Information and Communications Technology (ICT)*. Several Nigerian banks are using ICT software developed by Indian companies. Thus, Indian investments are recognised as making significant contributions to the Nigerian economy (Wapmuk: 2012).

Primus Super-Specialist Hospital is the premier India health care provider to operate hospitals in Nigeria with a view to easing the outflow of patients outside Nigeria in search of medical treatment. Other major Indian companies are Bajaj Auto, Birla Group, Kirlosker, Mahindra, Ashok Leyland, New India Assurance, Bhushon Steel and Skipper Electronics etc. Furthermore, a number of Indian companies are participating in Nigeria's upstream sectors of oil and gas namely ONGC Mittal, Sterling and Essor.

India has executed a number of *technical assistance and consultancy* projects in Nigeria. For instance, the Metallurgical Consultancy (MECON), which is an Indian joint venture in Nigeria, has been involved in developing the Nigerian steel industry. As a consultant to the Delta Steel Complex, MECON has supervised the completion of the design bureau and operation of the complex. Indian experts have also been sent to Nigeria under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation (ITEC) agreement since 1971. India is providing technical assistance to Nigeria to cover installation, upgrading and rehabilitation of small and medium-sized enterprises in the areas of engineering, tool manufacturing, leather technology, weaving and textiles, medicine, woodwork, bio-gas and metal work. This is a clear indication that the technical co-operation between the two countries is another strong aspect of their bilateral economic interactions (Kura: 2009).

CHALLENGES FOR NIGERIA– INDIA RELATIONS

Although Nigeria–India trade and investment relations have come a long way, there are certain challenges that need to be addressed in order to further strengthen bilateral relations. The trade and investment opportunities between India and African countries still go largely untapped, because trade with Africa is confined to some ten countries and limited to only a few commodities. This is compounded by the one-sidedness in trade and investment relations which is heavily skewed in favour of Nigeria. Imports by Nigeria are mostly manufactured goods whereas imports by India are largely primary commodities. While Nigeria continues to import a wide range of goods from India, the latter's trade is overwhelmingly concentrated on the importation of Nigerian crude oil, which accounts for some 96 per cent of total imports, the remaining 4 percent consisting of non-oil products such as metal scrap, wood, cashew nuts, and iron and steel (Mathews: 2008).

While Indian businesses are firmly established in Nigeria and more are gaining root, foreign direct investment in India by Nigerian firms, in relative terms, is marginal. This is a huge challenge for Nigerian entrepreneurs, to take advantage of the investment opportunities that do exist in India, and for the Nigerian government to provide the necessary support for those desiring to enter the Indian market. The government of India should also reciprocate the Nigerian gesture by creating a similar conducive economic environment for Nigerian entrepreneurs who want to do business in India (Wapmuk: 2012).

The issue of under-employment by some Indian companies is also of grave concern to the Nigerian government. Contrary to the stance of Nigerian trade unions on casual labour, some Indian-owned companies still engage staff as casual labourers and hide behind agreements on contract-staffing in order to evade the law. With this kind of arrangement, technological know-how is not being transferred to Nigerians (Wapmuk: 2012).

The establishment of Indian businesses in Nigeria has created employment for nationals from both countries. But, it has been observed, too, that generally, there are no comparable job opportunities for Nigerians in India. At the same time, the rise of internationally competitive Indian businesses has affected domestic sales and exports by Nigerian producers in various sectors of the economy. This competition necessitates Nigerian firms to become more efficient and competitive (Wapmuk: 2012).

Indian investments in Nigeria face serious challenges of inadequate infrastructure, like poor power supply, thereby increasing the cost of doing business. The relationship is further hampered by the lack of taxation avoidance treaty and investment protection agreement, and also by the lack of direct flight between the two

countries (Vanguard: September 12, 2014). Correspondingly, the unsavoury practices of some unscrupulous elements that circumvent national laws to smuggle in sub-standard and fake goods into each other's economy has adversely affected the pharmaceutical industry and other sectors of the Nigerian and Indian economy. And importantly, the increased activities of terrorist group like *Boko Haram* further acts as a deterrent to the up-and-coming economic avenues in Nigeria.

Nonetheless, trade has not achieved its true potentials. Putting adequate trade instruments in place will facilitate increased trade ties between the two countries. It is important and necessary to address market access constraints as well as non-tariff barriers that hinder the free movement of goods and services across the region's frontiers. Need is to encourage greater bilateral economic synergy. As emerging economies, the two countries need to work together to advance their economies.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING THE TIES

Nigeria has witnessed impressive growth in the past few years. In fact, it continues to be one of the fastest growing economies for the foreseeable future. Nigeria is amongst the largest consumer markets in Africa, with a fast-growing economy and an emerging middle class. The Government of Nigeria has created a favourable climate for business and industrial ventures. Administrative and bureaucratic procedures have been greatly streamlined. Considerable progress has been made in introducing market-oriented reforms in Nigeria especially since 2008. These include modernizing the banking system, removing subsidies, developing stronger public-private partnerships (www.ficci.com).

There exists immense potential along various sectors of the economy. The likely areas under the *agriculture* sector include processing of agricultural produce, supply and distribution, storage facilities, agricultural mechanization, research and development, and development of small scale technologies for on-farm as well as secondary processing. Agricultural products with great potential include groundnuts, palm oil, cocoa, coconut, citrus fruits, maize, millet, cassava, yams and sugarcane. In the *oil and gas sector*, downstream activities such as domestic production and marketing of LPG offer growth avenues. Upstream activities such as petroleum exploration and exploitation hold significant potential. In the field of *banking and financial service*, opportunity exists in microfinance, agricultural credit, and financing of small and medium enterprises (www.ficci.com).

The Government of Nigeria has identified certain priority areas under *manufacturing* which will lay down a broad base of industrialization in Nigeria. Key sectors in

manufacturing that hold prospects are iron and steel, non-ferrous metals, consumer durables, textiles, leather products, paper products, and fabricated metal products. With rising disposable incomes and construction boom, opportunities also exist in non-metallic building materials like bricks, ceramics and glass. *Pharmaceuticals* and *Computer peripherals* and power-support systems hold great potential for investments. Much of the rich endowments of *minerals* in Nigeria like coal and tin are yet to be fully exploited. Nigeria has one of the best quality coal deposits in the world with the lowest sulphur content. Opportunities exist for the exploitation and export of natural gas, bitumen, limestone, coal, tin, gold, silver, lead-zinc, gypsum, glass sands, clays, asbestos, graphite, and iron ore, among others (www.ficci.com).

There are no direct *air services* between India and Nigeria. Air travel between India and Nigeria involves transfer at a hub, with Dubai, Addis Ababa, Nairobi, Cairo, Doha, Frankfurt and London being popular (Ministry of External Affairs: 2014). Commencing a direct flight between Nigeria and India would boost trade relations between the two countries. Equally, Nigeria could benefit from Indian experience and her successes in *Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)* development which form the cornerstone of the Indian economy.

Likewise Nigeria has potential to become one of the hubs of *medical tourism*. The fragile state of the nation's health care delivery system, lack of requisite equipment, manpower and expertise are reasons for large exodus of Nigerian visiting India as medical tourists. India can collaborate to establish health care facilities, build hospitals and share its medical expertise to make healthcare easily accessible and affordable to Nigerians and stop the high cost of travelling and medical expenses paid by Nigerians in India (The Sun: July 09, 2014).

The recent headlines about *declining crude prices* across the globe should be a stern reminder for oil rich countries to not put all their eggs in one basket. Nigeria should, therefore, not be carried away by the financial gains to be made from the sale of crude oil, but should rather pay special attention to technological co-operation and skills acquisition which it needs for development (Wapmuk: 2012).

In recent times, India has made several overtures towards not only Nigeria, but also towards other African countries. The phenomenon should not be interpreted as a '*new scramble*' for Africa's resources and markets. It must be seen as a re-branding of a relationship in the context of old ties, such as in the heyday of NAM and the anti-colonial struggle, and within the spirit of South-South co-operation. The first Africa Summit held in New Delhi in April 2008 witnessed a serious strategic push by the Indian government to strengthen its ties with leading African nations, with Nigeria being one of the 14 African countries represented at the summit. Both countries, as

members of the Global South, should continue to work towards strengthening bilateral relations to their mutual benefit (Wapmuk: 2012).

CONCLUSION

The concept of Non Alignment acquires more teeth in the 21st Century given the constant struggle for dominance in today's multi-polar world order defined by new and brutal modes of warfare. It is in this light that the friendship between India and Nigeria forged during Non-Alignment decades needs ever more nourishing given the diverse challenges of the new millennium. It further underscores the pertinent need for rejuvenating the agenda of South-South cooperation. The historical relationship between Nigeria and India is based on mutual respect and perennial friendship. As India seeks to solidify her relations with Africa, stronger ties with Nigeria as global partner become an imperative. India acknowledges the importance of Nigeria and in particular, her leadership role in the West African region and in the entire African continent.

There is a need to significantly enhance mutually beneficial trade and investment exchanges between the two nations. The mutual bilateral visits will strengthen the commonalities and complementarities existing between the two friends. India's booming technological economy and its increasing demand for oil combined with Nigeria's untapped oil reserves and need for technology, logically implies that their relations will continue to be mutually beneficial. Nigeria and India would continue to work to strengthen this partnership to the mutual benefit of the two countries, their respective regions and the world as a whole.

The new political dispensation in India and Nigeria, under the aegis of Prime Minister Modi and President General Buhari respectively, is expected to give the required fillip to the traditional strategic bonhomie.

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