



DOI: 10.22363/2312-8674-2017-16-3-477-490

NIGERIA – RUSSIA BILATERAL RELATIONS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Abiodun Adetokunbo

University of Ibadan
Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria
tokunbonov@gmail.com

In diplomacy, the interests of an individual nation largely determine the form of relations it maintains with other states. This gives credence to the notion that there is neither a permanent friend nor permanent enemy in international relations; rather, it is interests of a country which is permanent. In the pursuance of their national interests, diplomatic relations between Lagos and Moscow were formally established on November 25, 1960 soon after Nigeria's gaining independence. The embassy of the Soviet Union was established in Lagos in 1961, while Nigeria established its embassy in Moscow in 1962.

On December 26, 1991 the Soviet upper chamber under the chairmanship of A. Alimshanov (Declaration № 142-Н) decided to discontinue the Soviet Union existence as a state. This was in line with the outcome of the meeting of December 8, 1991 between Boris Yeltsin (Russia), Leonid Kravchuk (Ukraine) and Stanislav Shushkevich (Belarus) that later came to be known as the Belovezha Accords of 1991. Russia, a prominent union republic of the former Soviet Union, gained international recognition as the successor to the Soviet Union which thereafter took up both the assets and liabilities of the former Soviet Union.

Nigeria-Russia Bilateral Relations (NRBR) had been developing over the years and culminated in the visit of Nigeria's President, Olusegun Obasanjo to Russia in 2001 and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev's visit to Nigeria in 2009. Undoubtedly, the NRBR has had both good and difficult experience. This paper is an assessment of NRBR and it provides answers to the questions of the desirability and necessity of strong Nigeria-Russia diplomatic ties. Besides, it makes recommendations on how the two countries can elevate their bilateral relations to a more functional cooperation in the key and strategic sectors.

Key words: Nigeria, Russia, Soviet Union, bilateral relations, cooperation

Introduction

Before and after the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference on Africa, the major European powers scrambled not only for relevance but also for dominance in Africa for the purpose of political and economic gains. Although the imperial Russia was at the conference but never a party to the balkanization of Africa during the Soviet

era, its activities were centred on and joined with the Africans on their tortuous way to independence owing to its policy of equality and peaceful coexistence among all the peoples of the world. Moscow remains the only major power that has never colonized any country in Africa. Instead, it was active especially in giving impetus to the anti-colonial struggles. The Kremlin's moral and political repudiation of colonial domination was an essential catalyst to the eventual collapse of formal colonialism in Nigeria and in Africa at large.

The initial principle of Russia's foreign policy toward Africa owed much to the view of V.I Lenin – equality and peace among all people of the world [1, p. 2] just like the biblical message of Moses to the Egyptian Pharaoh: “let my people go”. It was this same message that Khrushchev (the former Soviet leader) took to the plenary meeting of the XVth session of the United Nations General assembly with a motion to end all forms of colonization by 1960. The passage of the motion led to the crumbling of colonialism, and sovereign African states began to emerge one after another and Nigeria took its turn to gain independence in 1960, a year that is generally noted as “Africa's year” [3]. Being a superpower in the atmosphere of the “cold war”, the Soviet Union pursued such policy that would create its image of a champion for national liberation [4, p. 18], and ... make Africa's presence on the international arena conspicuous, clearly noticed and appreciated [5]. The Soviet Union policy makers built into its foreign policy architecture a sensitive and positive response to assist Africa in building an egalitarian society for themselves. This came in form of aids and provision of infrastructural amenities. One can mention the Answan dam in Egypt, hydro energy plants in Guinea, Zambia, Mali and Madagascar, Ajaokuta steel rolling mills in Nigeria and other projects in various parts of Africa. The immediate recognition of Nigeria's sovereignty and independence, assistance to prevent the disintegration of Nigeria during the civil war (1967–1970) and the education of the Nigerians who had been deliberately kept untrained and uneducated by their colonialists marked the starting point from where the relations between Nigeria and Russia grew.

Emergence of Russian Foreign Policy

According to the 1993 foreign policy concept, Russia is to be a great power with the following foreign policy objectives:

- Ensuring national security through diplomacy
- Protecting the sovereignty and unity of the state with special emphasis on border stability, protecting the rights of Russians abroad, providing favourable external conditions for internal democratic reforms
- Mobilizing international assistance for the establishment of the Russian market economy and assisting Russian exporters
- Furthering integration of the Commonwealth of Independent States
- Pursuing beneficial relations with “nearby foreign states”, including those in central Europe

- Building relations with countries that have resolved problems similar to those Russia faces
- Ensuring a role for Russia as a great power
- Enhancing ties with Asian Pacific countries so as to balance relations with the West
- Playing an active role in safeguarding the human rights of the 25 million ethnic Russians who found themselves in foreign lands after the break-up of the Soviet Union
- Pursuing a policy of collective security within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and support for reduction in nuclear arsenal and
- Domestic military reforms¹.

Until his retirement from office and from politics in 1999, Boris Yeltsin, as the first democratically elected president of the Russian Federation, maintained that the Russian foreign policy would be non-confrontational and would follow the principle of 'real partnership' in all directions².

In his efforts to stabilize and grow the Russian economy, Yeltsin focused on the relations with specific countries and regions: Europe, China, India, Japan, and Latin America. Africa was obviously missing in the directions to which he navigated his foreign relations, but with Putin and subsequently Medvedev (2008–2012) in office, Russia-Africa in general and Russia-Nigeria relations in particular began to change.

Nigeria's Foreign Policy

An overview of Nigeria's foreign policy from gaining independence until now has received the attention of scholars, career diplomats and top government functionaries. The policy is generally observed as put together by Ignatius Ollisemeka (2008), the former Nigerian External Affairs Minister, that Africa has always been the centrepiece of the Nigerian foreign policy, and this policy has been consistent and continuous. Victor Chibundu [6, p. 6] also remarked that the emphasis, style and implementation of the policy for many reasons have varied from one government to another. Both of them, however, agreed that the essentials and fundamentals of Nigeria's foreign policy have remained steadfast. All these are attributable to the foundation laid by the architects of Nigeria's foreign policy during the first republic. Among them are the following: Jaja Anucha Wachukwu (Nigeria first Foreign Minister), Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Prime Minister of Nigeria 1960–1966) and Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe (Nigerian first President).

Nigeria's foreign policy evolved from the ideas put together by its early political, intellectual and foreign affairs experts. Their intention is to project Nigeria to play a major role in world affairs in general and Africa in particular.

¹ Pravda. 17 April, 1992:, p. 14.

² Izvestia, 6 May, 1992, p. 3.

The social factors, economic demands, religious affinities, security needs and dimensions of global politics have reshaped Nigeria's view on foreign relations which made it establish contacts and form allies with other nations beyond the borders of Africa among which Russia is prominent.

Nigeria-USSR Relations in 1960–1991

During that period the main interest of the Soviet Union was to expand its political influence among the countries of Africa and have more states converted into socialist-oriented nations in the then ideologically polarized world that was popularly referred to as the cold war. Nigeria being a capitalist state was not inclined to change its orientation. Its colonial master and allies were opposed to Nigeria and any of its former colonies having cordial relationship with Russia which they came to identify as a strong iron curtain and which should not be allowed a space of further expansion in Africa. This situation brings the Nigeria-Russia relationship into what Onafowokan (2010) as cited by Agubamah (2014) describes as a lukewarm relationship. The Balewa-led administration was particularly intolerant toward Russia on the ideological ground. Any manifestation of or link to the communist ideology was met with censorship and repression.

Regardless of that, certain groups emerged at that time in Nigeria, which describe themselves as “the progressives”. They propagated the communist ideology and principles. Prime among their agitations was “free and compulsory primary and secondary education for all Nigerians” as the case was in the then Soviet Union. These groups were gaining grounds particularly among trade and student union leaders. They engaged in enlightening the public on good governance. Their activities triggered some level of resistance against certain government policies by some labour leaders particularly in the academics. The terms ‘bourgeois’ and ‘peasant’ started to grow and became frequent and fashionable in their vocabularies just as ‘perestroika’ and ‘glasnost’ in the recent past. The link between these radical groups and Moscow began to grow as scholarships were doled out to them and their sympathizers began to study in Soviets’ tertiary institutions.

Segun Odunuga (the first Professor of Russian Studies in Africa) was one of the beneficiaries of the scholarships and he comments on Nigeria-Russia relationship of the early 1960s as follows:

“The Nigerian government didn't want people to go to Russia at the time. Russia was not the place to go then. In fact, it was after I got to Moscow that I wrote my father to inform him that I was in Moscow... incidentally, just before the postman came to deliver my parcel, a CID man (Criminal Investigative Department) was there interrogating my father on my whereabouts” ... people are not supposed to go to Moscow [7, p. 12]. This affirms the opinion of Onafowokan reference to the attitude of the Nigerian government toward Russia at that time.

Back then, the Nigerian press was entirely in the hands of the government and it was made to serve as a strong instrument of propaganda. This was well used to

the effect of projecting the image of Russia in a manner that makes it not only unappealing but also unfriendly. It was so terrible that Russia was described as ‘evil’ or “kingdom of darkness”. Russian people were portrayed to be ‘wicked’, ‘unfriendly’ and ‘callous’.

The effect of this on Nigerians who became so fearful and frightened was to keep away from any dealings with Russia in either commerce or culture. This attitude seems to linger on for a very long time in the minds of people perhaps till date.

This gives explanation to the success of the western induced unfriendly propaganda against Russia in Nigeria during the early and mid-1960s. In contrast to this, the nations like the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France, Italy, Spain and other countries in Western Europe at large enjoyed positive propaganda which made them seem as ideal and friendly. They are described in the Yoruba language as ‘ilu oyinbo’ or ‘ilu oba’ (the land of the king). In fact, they are referred to and honoured so due to the positive and friendly propaganda in their favour. It was generally considered a rare opportunity for outstanding success and comfort to be in these countries. The system of governance in most African countries including Nigeria was fashioned after their former colonialists even in a manner that gives preference to the interests of the colonial masters. With this mindset of the Nigerians and their government, the environment was not conducive to friendly Nigeria-Russia relations.

Nigeria got involved in a civil war (1967–1970) which nearly tore the country apart. During this time, the main allies of Nigeria were unwilling to provide military assistance due to the conceived economic advantages that were to serve the national interests of their countries. Nigeria desperately needed weapons to stop the seceding Biafra. At this very crucial time in the history of the country, Russia rose to the need of the time and did not only supply weapons to the Nigerian armed forces but also deployed military and other technical personnel to aid in the use of the weapons which resulted in the defeat of the seceding Biafra army. It was this that kept Nigeria together again. Many scholars [8; 9] have argued that the continuous corporate existence of Nigeria as a sovereign state owes much to the timely assistance provided by Russia during this Nigeria’s trying period. Thus, Nigeria-Russia relations took a different look.

By the time the civil war ended in 1970, in the words of Agubamah (2014), “Nigeria had become an economic partner as it had opened its doors to other Russian products and aside of that many contracts were awarded to Russian firms...”

Since then, the bilateral relations of Nigeria and Russia have grown and witnessed cooperation on metallurgy and petroleum industries, geological prospecting, public health services and personnel training. There were signed more than 15 joint agreements, including the agreement on air communication in 1967, the agreement on economic, scientific and technical cooperation in 1968, an agreement on cultural cooperation in 1970, the trade agreement in 1987, and agreement on cooperation

against narcotics in 1990. One should particularly mention the Russian technical assistance in the geological prospecting works on metallurgical raw materials: iron ore, coal, and non-metallic raw material¹.

Nigeria-Russia Relations 1991 – to date

The 1991 declaration of the disintegration of the Soviet Union brought an end to the 74 years of the Soviet rule which moved the ‘cold war’ to the heap of history. Russia emerged as an independent sovereign state, so did the other fourteen union republics that constituted the then Soviet Union. Russia opted for democracy and democratic culture which was to replace centralization with decentralization, the closed economy to the market economy, fusion of power to separation of power, the single party system to the multi-party system and above all the emergence of fundamental human rights together with freedom of the press as well as freedom of speech. It was a dawn of a new world order.

The post-Soviet Russia was concerned with the task of building a new structure to match its new political philosophy. It was indeed a very difficult time for it as a nation. The challenges were enormous but the most significant was a need to have a new constitution, as the Soviet laws were not only obsolete but also inadequate. The Khasbulatov-led Duma, which was constituted under the Soviet system, was uncooperative and confrontational with Boris Yeltsin, the first post-communist president of Russia. Besides, the country suddenly became a lawless state with all attendant social vices. The crime rate was growing exponentially and there was unemployment throughout the country. The gate that had kept corruption shut for more than 74 years got loosed while the very few privileged ones who succeeded in the gaining of state properties came to be known as *novi russki* (New Russians); oligarchy turned into a strong force to contend with, holding the economy of the country in their hands.

Boris Yeltsin was dealing with those challenges and at the same time pulling down the socialist political and economic structures and building a new democratic political order. At the same time, on the one hand, the Chechnya republic was fierce on its campaign for secession, which eventually resulted in a civil war; while on the other hand, Khasbulatov’s duma was unrelenting on his perceived anti-government stand. If the domestic needs were to drive foreign policy, it was clear that Africa had no place or role to play in the search by Russia to rebuild itself into a strong superpower. Yeltsin concentrated his foreign policy on those nations from which he hoped to draw strength in order to confront the growing domestic challenges.

One must acknowledge as a very significant and outstanding duty to homeland his ability to identify not only the most appropriate time to quit active poli-

¹ Website of the Russian Embassy in Nigeria. URL: <http://www.russiaembassyagos.com> (Date of access: 10 October, 2010).

tics but also to hand over the reign of affairs of the nation to a very competent hand in the person of Vladimir Putin in January, 2000.

Russia was trying to gain balance following the elimination of the old political order, whereas Nigeria on its part was under military dictatorship, which began in 1983. It was making efforts to gain legitimacy and recognition in the comity of nations where military governance was unpopular and unacceptable. Consequently, during this era, Nigeria was unable to conduct meaningful international relations. Despite this, the Nigerian military junta displayed a high level of disrespect of human rights ranging from the obnoxious Decree 4 of 1984 that censors all forms of freedom of expression. Several media were proscribed; journalists and activists were put into prison, and generally, life became unsafe and insecure apart from the crumbling economy resulting in inadequate physical and social infrastructures. This persisted until 1999 when a new democratically elected government was inaugurated. Incidentally, it coincided with the change of government in Russia when Vladimir Putin emerged as the second democratically elected president of the Russian Federation.

The coming to power of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the inauguration of Obasanjo as a democratically elected president of Nigeria brought about the reestablishing of diplomatic ties between Russia and Nigeria, which opened a new window of opportunities for the two nations to exploit the potentials of their cooperation in the political and economic spheres. Russia sent a representative to attend president Obasanjo's inauguration who delivered an invitation to visit Russia. This invitation was honoured and Obasanjo paid a state visit to Russia March 5–7, 2001 which reactivated Nigeria-Russia bilateral relations. On March 6, 2001 there was signed the Declaration on Principle of Friendly Relations between the two countries. This led to the eventual establishment of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Scientific-Technical Cooperation (ICESTC) which laid the foundation for forging mutually beneficial relations and helped deepen their ties. This commission is to meet regularly to discuss on a wide range of issues concerning Nigeria-Russia bilateral relationship.

Obasanjo made a commitment to ensure improved mutually beneficial and enduring relations with Russia. This position was further strengthened in 2008 by the personal contact between Musa Ya'adua who took over from Obasanjo and Medvedev, the successor to Putin (2008–2012) in Toyaka, Japan during the G-8 summit. As a follow up to that meeting, President Dmitry Medvedev came to Nigeria on a state visit in June, 2009. That was the first visit of a Russian head of state in history which gave a boost to the evolving Nigeria-Russia relationship.

As the outcome of the meeting of the Nigeria-Russia Heads of state in Abuja, the following agreements were signed on June 24, 2009 among others:

1. Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement
2. Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy

3. Memorandum of Understanding in the Field of Exploration of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes

4. Agreement of the Transfer of Persons Sentenced to Imprisonment

5. Memorandum of Association on Joint Venture between NNPC and GAZPROM, and

6. Legal cooperation between the Nigerian and Russian Ministries of Justice.¹

Codel International Limited of Nigeria and Asen of Russia signed an agreement at the Nigerian Embassy in Moscow on the construction of the Gas Turbine Electricity Generation Plant in Bayelsa state, Nigeria, in 2005. The Thermo Power Station in Kwara State had earlier been constructed by this same Russian company. This further displays the interest and confidence of Nigeria in Russian technology. This position was affirmed in a statement by Steve Azaiki, the secretary to the Bayelsa state government while signing the agreement in Moscow on behalf of his state government [11].

As a result of President Medvedev's visit that led to the signed agreements, there emerged several new initiatives. The Russians are working with the National Commission on Atomic Energy to build an experimental research nuclear plant in Abuja. There is also the agreement on the Russians providing technical assistance for beefing up Nigeria's peacekeeping and peace-support operations. In this regard, several security operatives from Nigeria had been sent and are being sent to Russia for special training to boost its defense capacities.

As a part of the new level of scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries, in August 2011, Nigeria launched Nigeria SAT 2 and Nigeria SAT X spacecrafts into orbit aboard the Russian Dnerpr rocket from a launch pad in the town of Yasny, southern Russia [10].

In a bid to foster mutually beneficial relationship between Nigerian and Russian business people, Glades Sasore, a special adviser to the president Jonathan of Nigeria (2010–2015) on export promotion, visited Moscow to showcase products made in Nigeria ranging from quality agricultural commodities, timber, solid minerals, gemstones and tanned leather. At her meeting with the Russian chambers of commerce and industry, Sasore emphasized the interest of Nigeria in Russian technology to boost industrialization drive. In August 2016, there was given a concession by the Russian chambers of commerce to exclusively import cashew from Nigeria.

Nigeria is increasingly becoming a key business partner to Russia in Africa. The volume of trade grew from three hundred million to about 1.5 billion dollars in 2010 in favour of Russia according to the Central bank of Nigeria figure². The major Russian companies have commenced operation in Nigeria. RUSSAL – the Rus-

¹ *The Nation*. 21 April 2011.

² *The Nation*. 5 April 2010.

sian aluminum giant bought a 77.5 per cent stake in Nigeria's aluminum smelter, ALSCON. Gazprom, the Russian national energy company, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) on the exploration and exploitation of the nation's huge gas reserves with a new joint venture company to be known as NiGaZ Energy Company, which will also take part in several other critical infrastructural development projects, including the training of Nigerians among others. Both companies are expected to invest up to 2.5 billion US Dollars in the joint venture¹.

The Russian oil giant Lukoil is working to expand its operation in Nigeria's oil market². The Chief of General Staff of the Russian armed forces General Valery Gerasimov met Nigerian Defense Minister Mansur Muhammad Dan-Ali in Moscow to discuss the bilateral agenda in the field of the military-technical cooperation on the 2012 agreement on joint project to design, develop, construct, operate and commission a nuclear power plant scheduled to complete in 2025³.

These are good indicators to the dynamic Nigeria-Russia relations, and it has led to though slow but steady growth of the bilateral trade and promotion of direct contacts between Nigerian and Russian officials, institutions, agencies and companies opening up opportunities for further cooperation. In June 2016, in Lagos, Nigeria, there was launched RuNiTrade (Russia Nigeria e-commerce platform) out of the partnership between Lagos Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Trail Trans Logistics Group of companies in Russia. The focus is to strengthen the bilateral trade relations between Russia and Nigeria and boost the economic activities between the two countries by providing information about business opportunities in the two countries. This is to stimulate the investments flow between the two nations.

In August 2015, there was launched Soyuznik (Association of Soviet/Russian trained professionals who worked or are still working in different sectors in Nigeria and abroad) under the leadership of Shina Fawole who later handed over to Jerome Okolo. This organization is making efforts in rejuvenating Russia-Nigeria relations. The productive exploitation of Ajaokuta steel rolling mills built during the Soviet era is a cause of serious concern to this organization.

Problems of Nigeria-Russia Relations

There are several challenges confronting Nigeria-Russia relations. For instance, in order for agreements among nations to become operational, they are to be passed by the National parliament and that forms their legal framework. The agreements

¹ *The nation*. 16 June 2010.

² *Sputnik*. 12 January 2016.

³ *Sputnik*. 8 June 2017.

signed with Russia are yet to be ratified by the parliament with particular reference to the Abuja agreement of 2009.

Adequate knowledge and clear understanding of culture, history, language, mentality, world-view, capabilities and potentials of other nations are crucial to foreign policy making. It facilitates correct and accurate perception on which policies on diplomacy rests.

There is weak indication that the two countries have sufficient and adequate perception of each other. This in part is responsible for the lack of the political will to fully implement their existing bilateral agreements. The other problems of Nigeria – Russia relations are as follows:

- * Political orientation. The majority among the Nigeria political elites are under strong influence of London and Washington whose interest is to distance Moscow from the affairs of African countries.

- * Trade imbalance. There should be created more adequate environment for Nigeria to increase its export to Russia. Tropical agricultural products like cashew, coffee, and cocoa can be sourced from Nigeria by Russian industries.

- * Inadequate information on business opportunities in Nigeria poses one of the major problems. Foreign investors including Russians have no access to update and reliable information on business prospects in Nigeria.

- * ALSCON, Nigeria's only aluminum smelting plant, handed over to Russian aluminum giant, United Company RUSAL PLC was closed down in 2014 placing more than 98 percent of its workforce out of job, most of them local hires¹.

Prospects of Nigeria-Russia Relations

Nigeria needs Russian technology to boost industrialization just as Russia needs Nigeria as a market for its industrial products and military equipment.

Many reasons account for the fact why Russia should be a strategic partner for Nigeria like the one expressed by Poliakov (Russian Ambassador to Nigeria) that "Nigeria and Russia exhibit commonalities which include the practice of federalism, have almost the same population size, the two countries are advancing from autocratic to democratic rule apart from that, they are endowed with human and material resources including agricultural land, oil and gas". Poliakov further stated that "Both countries even have "mission 2020" though with different goals: Nigeria aims to become one of the twenty most developed countries in the world while Russia is determined to be one of the world five largest economies" [12].

The common features which Russia and Nigeria exhibit are more compelling than politics and economy, population size or natural endowments. Afons Adebisi (2010) mirrored quite a number of similarities in the culture of these two nations,

¹ Bassy Udo. *Premium Times*. 2 June 2015.

which, in our view, if well explored should enhance their relationship. Particular attention was drawn to some of their traditions, mentality and way of live. For example, traditionally, Russians worshipped water which is a reflection of osun Oshogbo – (god of water) in Nigeria, also, worship of iron in Russia is similar to ogun (god of iron) in Nigeria. Of particular interest is the tradition of marriage in these two countries. Among the Yorubas in Nigeria, for example, marriage is described as: “carry the wife” (gbe iyawo.) As a sign of love, the Russians do carry their wives in their hands and sometimes walk distance before they embark on what they call ‘gulanie’ (strolling) either in a park or any historical place from where they proceed to the reception. “To carry” in this case symbolizes taking full responsibilities for her. Apart from all these, in terms of character, the Russian and the Nigerian people like making themselves noticeable wherever they found themselves, which is always accompanied by ‘some excesses’ in terms of the spending habit. In the area of governance, the tsarist era in Russia was a period of absolute power where the reign was passed from father to son. This is almost the same in the pre-colonial Nigeria even till date. This is well represented in Yoruba language: ‘aye-oba- aye- a –je- rorun’ which explains absolutism. In both countries leaders like being close to power. From Stalin in 1923 to Gorbachev in 1991, a leader either died being in power or was forced out of office. Only Boris Yeltsin remains the first and the only Russian leader to have voluntarily left office. In comparison with Nigeria, since its gaining independence to date, no election had been free and fair until 2015. They had all been characterized by violence and chaos, because leaders are not willing to relinquish power.

These attributes point to a number of similarities between the two countries. In spite of this, Russia is a developed nation, whereas Nigeria is not. The process that leads Russia to greatness is a path worthy of emulation by Nigeria.

As noted by Agubamah, Russia has a lot to offer Nigeria in terms of technological support in several critical areas. In addition, Russia has a track record of nurturing several countries to industrial success through strategic partnership. Such countries include China, India and Egypt, to mention just a few. It was Russia that helped to lay the foundation of the economic development of China, constructing several critical industrial complexes and deploying its engineers to help the Chinese. However, it should be understood that the Chinese leadership under Mao was particularly dedicated in pursuing the course of strategic partnership with the Soviet Union. After the victory of the Chinese communists in 1949, thousands of Russian advisers were sent to China to train their technicians, while a large number of Chinese students were sent to Russia for training. Mao launched a blueprint for the industrialization of China in 1953 on the background of fifty-three critical projects. Josef Stalin agreed to supply an additional ninety-one which Stalin’s successor Nikita Khrushchev also agreed to sell to China, as cited by Agubamah [9, p. 195].

Indian leaders, particularly Indira Gandhi, also found Russia a prospective partner. They gained trust and support of the Russians for the construction of giant industrial complexes, which, as the Indians supposed, played a critical role in the development of their country. Russia stood by India in the trying times and contributed to India's national security interest, providing muscle to the Indian armed forces by supplying advanced military hardware, predominantly underwriting India's economic growth [12, p. 116].

Nigeria has a major role to play in its relationship with Russia. First, by recognizing its needs within the areas where Russia has capacities and capabilities to provide assistance on the one hand and on the other, to follow up on these and working hard for the achievement of such set goals. There are two key areas in which Russia can assist Nigeria. First, to provide permanent solutions to the crisis which is caused by two major factors – social and technical. The social factor has to do with vandalism of pipelines for crude oil and gas. Russia has a long experience in providing maximum security for its pipelines in the Caspian down to the Black sea and all other areas. The Nigerian security agents working in this sphere can be further empowered by the Russians through training and equipment, which could extend to other aspects of the security system in Nigeria including the fight against insurgency. The other area is a technical one which borders on inability of Nigeria to refine its crude oil and the wanton insufficient storage facility. The biggest oil and gas company in the world is Gazprom, which is owned by Russia. Nigerian NNPC (Nigeria National Petroleum Company) can tap into the experience of this oil giant to enhance its capabilities, competence and service delivery. Russia can also help to address the problem of electricity supply which is mostly occasioned by the perennial shortage of gas to thermal power plants and weak transmission network which points to the need to construct a super transmission grid that can take huge power.

In November, 2010 Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov visited Nigeria to mark the 50th anniversary of Nigeria-Russia diplomatic relations. The agreements of the two countries to give a new impetus to their relations through strategic partnership on the strength of their 2009 agreements need to be accorded deserved attention.

Conclusion

The diplomatic relations between nations are established to serve national interests. Nigeria-Russia relations should be focused and geared towards the promotion of the cultural heritage, scientific, economic and technical/technological cooperation. A strive to facilitate good knowledge as well as correct and accurate perception of each other needs to be given a place of priority for maturity of their

bilateral conceptions. All issues on the privatization of ALSCON to Russian RUSAL including the legal tussles require diplomatic solutions in a manner that will bring the company to function at its maximum capacity.

© Абиодун Адетокунбо, 2017

REFERENCES

- [1] Lenin V.I: Word collections. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe bzdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury Publ., 1963; 6 (in Russian).
- [2] Gafurov BG. 1960 – Africa’s year. *Asia and Africa Today*. 1961; (3): 34–41 (in Russian).
- [3] Bill Vann, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2002; 18.
- [4] Obiozor George A. *Africa in the Context of North-South Relation*. Enugu: Our grace publishing, 2002.
- [5] Chibundu Victor Nwaozichi, *Foreign policy with particular references to Nigeria (1960–2008)*. Ibadan: Success press, 2008.
- [6] The African European Interplay. *A frestschrift in Honour of professor Segun Odunuga*. Ibadan: Abisomo press 2006, pp. 12–19
- [7] Odunuga Segun, *East European Revolution and Nigeria’s Diplomacy*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan press, 1995.
- [8] Akinade Akinkunmi, Cultural dichotomy. *Journal of culture and religion*. 2001; 2 (1): 17–29.
- [9] Agubamah E. Nigeria-Russia Relations: After and now. *European scientific Journal*. 2014; 193–201.
- [10] *Moya Afrika*. Moscow; 2005 (in Russian).
- [11] Poliakov AD. *A seminar paper at the Department of European Studies*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Publ., 2009.
- [12] Kaplila Gardy. In the interests of their nations. *SAGE journals*. 2010; (1): 26–41.

Article history:

Received: 26 April 2017

Accepted: 28 August 2017

About the author:

Abiodun Adetokunbo, Ph.D in Russian History, Lecturer in the Russian Unit of the Department of European Studies at University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

For citation:

Abiodun Adetokunbo, Nigeria – Russia bilateral relations: problems and prospects / Нигерия – Россия: проблемы и перспективы двусторонних отношений. *RUDN Journal of Russian History*. 2017; 16 (3): 477–490. DOI: 10.22363/2312-8674-2017-16-3-477-490.

НИГЕРИЯ – РОССИЯ: ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ ДВУСТОРОННИХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ

Абиодун Адетокунбо

Ибаданский Университет
Ибадан, штат Ойо, Нигерия
tokunbonov@gmail.com

Дискурс о двусторонних отношениях между Нигерией и Россией продолжает привлекать внимание исследователей из Нигерии, России и других стран мира. Между тем слабо изученными остаются вопросы об особенностях данных отношений на современном этапе, существующих сходствах и различиях в менталитете, мировоззрении и образе жизни народов двух стран. Автор анализирует различные аспекты культурных, политических и экономических связей, указывает на их достижения и проблемы.

Результаты исследования позволили автору сделать вывод о росте объемов торговли между Нигерией и Россией, о формировании совместных институтов по реализации различных проектов. Это дает возможность говорить о том, что присутствие России в Нигерии становится все более заметным, в стране формируется позитивный, дружественный имидж России, который может способствовать повышению уровня доверия и взаимности двух стран не только в сфере торговли и политики, но и в глобальных делах.

Ключевые слова: Нигерия, Россия, Советский Союз, двусторонние отношения, сотрудничество

История статьи:

Поступила в редакцию: 26 апреля 2017 г.

Принята к печати: 28 августа 2017 г.

Информация об авторе:

Адетокунбо Абиодун – кандидат исторических наук, преподаватель кафедры европейских исследований Ибаданского университета, Ибадан, Нигерия.

Для цитирования:

Abiodun Adetokunbo. Nigeria – Russia bilateral relations: problems and prospects / Нигерия – Россия: проблемы и перспективы двусторонних отношений // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: История России. 2017. Том. 16. № 3. С. 477–490. DOI: 10.22363/2312-8674-2017-16-3-477-490.