

## Nigeria and Russian Economic Relations: The Post-Cold War Experience

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### ABSTRACT

Post-Soviet Russia has faced considerable challenges in realizing its foreign policy goals, particularly with African nations, including Nigeria. These relationships often leverage the partnerships and networks established during the Cold War. Although Russia has shifted from promoting socialism to pursuing economic interests through its business elite, its values often contrast with Western liberalism. The bilateral relationship between Nigeria and Russia in the post-Cold War era has had its share of positive developments and difficulties. This study evaluates the economic ties between Nigeria and Russia from a historical perspective, using Traditional Diplomatic Theory to explore the diplomatic connections between the two countries. Despite psychological differences and mutual suspicions, the Nigeria-Russia relationship has evolved and matured, yielding numerous benefits. However, further progress is needed, particularly in media and cultural exchanges and the adoption of more favorable trade policies by Russia to support Nigerian exports. The study recommends that both nations focus on strengthening their economic ties, with particular emphasis on enhancing cooperation at the level of small and medium-sized enterprises.

**Keywords:** Post Cold War, Economic Relations, Cooperation, Prospects, Challenges

### INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Nigeria and the former Soviet Union highlighted Nigeria's challenges in engaging with Moscow and the broader communist Eastern European states during the early years of its independence in 1960. Despite the establishment of diplomatic ties, the tense Cold War atmosphere at the time limited relations with the USSR. Although Nigeria adhered to the Bandung framework of nonalignment, true impartial relations with both the East and West were never fully achieved, as the country's declared nonaligned stance was largely superficial. This was due to the fact that most Nigerian leaders, with a few exceptions, showed a strong preference for the Western world. These perhaps stemmed from a morbid of communism and communists in filtration and subversion which stemmed from Nigeria's insecurity born out of Institutions and Military weakness (Poliakov, 2009). Thus, the formal diplomatic exchange between the Soviet Union and Nigeria failed to translate into cordial and effective relations. A combination of Western ideological orientation of the national leaders, colonial legacy, and the nature of Nigerian political and economic systems ensured that the Soviet Union would not be welcomed in Nigeria with open arms. Therefore, Soviet Union and Nigerian relations could be described as ranging from cold to lukewarm (Onafowokan, 2010). Matusevich (2019) explains that, during the Cold War, the USSR established itself as a moral partner against racism and even supported anti-apartheid militias in Africa. In the early 1970s, it also supported the Organization of African Unity, implemented "extravagant" development projects such as a steel mill in Nigeria, and became an African ally at the United Nations. Strategically, Russia was interested in securing economic cooperation and international support in its competition with the West.

Matusevich (2019) argues that there are "continuities" between Cold War-era and current Russian policies towards Africa and that there are some overarching objectives across both periods, such as Moscow's pursuit of international support. However, he provides little explanation regarding specific economic and political interests during the Cold War. He further amplified the importance of personal connections between key Russian and African leaders, which have facilitated Russia's re-entry into the region. Not only were many politicians and African business leaders trained in the Soviet Union, but also many prominent Russian leaders were former intelligence officers, some with African connections. Although a lack of ideological objectives distinguishes current Russian policies from those of the Cold War era, there are other goals that transcend both periods. The 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the end of 74 years of Soviet rule, effectively bringing the Cold War to a close and relegating it to history. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia emerged as an independent, sovereign state, alongside fourteen other former union republics. In this new era, Russia chose to embrace democracy and democratic principles, which signified a shift from centralization to decentralization, from a closed economy to a market-driven economy, and from a concentration of power to a separation of powers. Furthermore, the single-party system was replaced by a multi-party system, allowing for greater political plurality. Perhaps most importantly, this transition also heralded the rise of fundamental human rights, including freedom of the press and freedom of speech, both of which had been stifled under Soviet rule. This period represented the dawn of a new global order, as Russia and the other former Soviet republics began navigating their roles on the world stage with newfound political and economic autonomy. The end of Soviet control not only transformed the political landscape within these nations but also had far-reaching effects on international relations, symbolizing the victory of liberal democratic values over the authoritarianism of the Cold War era. The shift towards democracy,

however, was neither smooth nor without challenges, as Russia faced significant difficulties in its transition to a market economy and in establishing stable democratic institutions. Nevertheless, this moment in history marked the beginning of a transformative period that reshaped Russia's domestic governance and its interactions with the global community (Agubamah, 2014).

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 gaining of state properties came to be known as *noviruski* (New Russians); oligarchy turned into a strong force to contend with, holding the economy of the country in their hands (Abiodun, 2017). Moreover, there have been significant shifts in the dynamics of international relations, affecting the positions of all actors within the global system. The case of the Russian Federation, however, stands out as particularly unique, primarily due to the numerous challenges it faced in transitioning from a socialist system to a capitalist and liberal democratic one. These challenges had a profound impact on Russia's relations with other nations, including Nigeria. During this period of transformation, Russia appeared to turn inward, focusing on redefining its vision and role in the new global order. This inward focus influenced its approach to international engagements and shaped its foreign policy strategy in the post-Soviet era. As a result, Russia's diplomatic and economic relations with various countries, especially those in Africa like Nigeria, were marked by a reevaluation of priorities and objectives.

This study, therefore, explores the economic ties between Nigeria and Russia in the post-Cold War era, considering how Russia's internal struggles and the evolving international landscape influenced bilateral relations. It assesses how these two nations, emerging from different historical contexts, navigated the complexities of their diplomatic and economic connections. Despite the considerable differences in political ideologies and economic systems, Nigeria and Russia continued to engage with one another, particularly in areas of mutual interest such as trade, energy, and natural resources. However, the path to deeper cooperation has been shaped by both nations' efforts to adapt to new realities in a rapidly changing global environment. Through this examination, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of Nigeria-Russia relations in the aftermath of the Cold War, highlighting both the opportunities and the challenges that have characterized their economic interactions.

### **Objective of the Study**

It has been held in Foreign Policy Circles that Nigeria bilateral relationship with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic now Russia Federation at Independence in 1960 was lukewarm mainly on the ideological ground (Poliakov, 2009). In addition after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the volume of trade still remained abysmally low with visible trade imbalance and several unexplored potentials of mutual benefits to both nations. In light of this assertion, the objectives of this study are to:

- a) Investigate the causes of the lukewarm bilateral relations between Russia and Nigeria at independence.
- b) Account for the low economic and business relations between the two nations in the post-Soviet era.
- c) Access the pattern of Nigeria's external relations in its bilateral relations with Russia.
- d) Provide enduring panacea for purposeful and enduring robust economic relations between Russia and Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Nigeria and Russia Economic Relations in the Post-Cold War Era**

Obasekola (2011) It is argued that Russia's new stance towards Nigeria and Africa, in general, was largely influenced by the departure of Comrade Nikita Khrushchev from power in 1964. After his exit, the Soviet Union quickly abandoned his foreign policy approach, favoring a more balanced and less ideologically driven strategy. By the late 1960s, the Soviet leadership shifted its focus away from promoting revolutions in African states, and instead, prioritized offering political support to these nations as they sought to establish their place in the international system. This new approach was driven by a desire for mutual economic benefits, regardless of the internal political regimes of the African countries. This pragmatic shift in Soviet foreign policy allowed Russia to back the Nigerian Federal government during a critical moment in the country's history. When Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu declared the secession of Nigeria's Eastern Region on May 30, 1967, to form the sovereign Republic of Biafra, the Soviet Union sided with the Nigerian Federal government. This led to the Nigerian Civil War, which erupted on July 6, 1967. The pressing demands of the war prompted the Nigerian government to seek closer ties with the USSR. In this context, Soviet support was instrumental, reflecting the broader strategy of pragmatic engagement that prioritized geopolitical and economic cooperation over ideological considerations.

This evolution in Soviet-Nigerian relations not only demonstrated the USSR's growing interest in maintaining stable and mutually beneficial ties with African nations but also marked a significant moment in Cold War diplomacy. The civil war became a turning point in Nigeria's foreign policy, as the country sought assistance from various global powers, including the Soviet Union, to secure its territorial integrity.

Numerous bilateral agreements have been signed between Nigeria and the Soviet Union (now Russia) over the years, facilitating cooperation in various sectors. These agreements include the Air Communication Agreement (1967), the Agreement on Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation (1968), the Agreement on Cultural and Scientific Cooperation and Exchanges (1970), and the Protocol on the Equivalence of Scientific Degrees, Diplomas, and Certificates (1973). Additional key agreements followed, such as the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation for the

construction of a new metallurgical enterprise in Nigeria (1976), a Trade Agreement (1987), and the Agreement establishing an intergovernmental commission on trade, economic, scientific, and technical cooperation (1989). Other important documents include the Protocol on Political Consultations (1990) and the Agreement on Cooperation Against Illegal Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1999).

These agreements paved the way for varying levels of Soviet (later Russian) involvement in Nigeria's key sectors, including metallurgy, the petroleum industry, geological surveys, public health services, and personnel training. Notably, two extensive oil pipeline systems, stretching 920 km and with a total output of 18.7 million tons per year, were constructed by the USSR between 1977 and 1982 under a general contract arrangement. This collaboration in the oil sector was a significant example of the USSR's impact on Nigeria's infrastructure and resource management, contributing to the country's development in key industries. These agreements and projects reflect the long-standing partnership between the two nations, rooted in mutual economic and technical cooperation. (Obasekola: 2011)

Russia was attempting to regain its footing after the collapse of the old political order, while Nigeria, on the other hand, was under military dictatorship, which began in 1983. Nigeria's military regime was seeking legitimacy and recognition on the global stage, at a time when military governance was widely unpopular and unacceptable. As a result, Nigeria struggled to engage in meaningful and constructive international relations during this period. The military junta, however, demonstrated a flagrant disregard for human rights, particularly through Decree 4 of 1984, which severely curtailed freedom of expression by censoring the media. Numerous media outlets were shut down, journalists and activists were imprisoned, and life in Nigeria became increasingly insecure, marked by widespread violations of human rights. Additionally, the country's economy was in decline, with deteriorating physical and social infrastructures. (Abiodun, 2017).

This difficult period persisted until 1999, when a new democratically elected government was inaugurated in Nigeria, marking a return to civilian rule. Coincidentally, this transition aligned with significant political changes in Russia, where Vladimir Putin emerged as the second democratically elected president of the Russian Federation. The shift towards democracy in both countries opened a new chapter in their respective histories and presented opportunities for renewed international engagement. Despite the challenging legacies of authoritarian rule in both nations, this period signaled the beginning of a more stable political era, providing the groundwork for future cooperation and development.

The rise to power of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the inauguration of Olusegun Obasanjo as Nigeria's democratically elected president marked the renewal of diplomatic relations between Russia and Nigeria. This development opened a new chapter, offering both nations fresh opportunities to explore and strengthen their cooperation in political and economic sectors. Russia demonstrated its commitment to these renewed ties by sending a representative to attend Obasanjo's inauguration, along with an official invitation for him to visit Russia. This invitation was accepted, and Obasanjo made a state visit to Russia from March 5-7, 2001. This visit reactivated Nigeria-Russia bilateral relations, laying the groundwork for enhanced collaboration and mutual interests in various areas (Agubamah, 2014). On March 6, 2001, the Declaration on the Principles of Friendly Relations between Russia and Nigeria was signed, marking a significant milestone in their diplomatic relations. This agreement led to the creation of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation (ICESTC), which became the cornerstone for building mutually beneficial relations between the two nations. The establishment of ICESTC helped to deepen ties by fostering collaboration in key areas of shared interest. The commission was designed to meet regularly, providing a platform for discussing a wide range of issues concerning Nigeria-Russia bilateral relations, ensuring ongoing dialogue and cooperation (Waliyullahi, 2016).

Olusegun Obasanjo committed to enhancing mutually beneficial and enduring relations with Russia. This commitment was further solidified in 2008 through personal interactions between his successor, Musa Ya'adua, and Dmitry Medvedev, who succeeded Vladimir Putin as the President of Russia (2008-2012). Their meeting took place in Toyaka, Japan, during the G-8 summit. Following this engagement, President Dmitry Medvedev made a historic state visit to Nigeria in June 2009, marking the first visit by a Russian Head of State. This visit significantly advanced the Nigeria-Russia relationship. During the summit in Abuja, several agreements were signed on June 24, 2009, among other initiatives, which further strengthened the bilateral ties between the two nations:

- a) Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement,
- b) Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy,
- c) Memorandum of Understanding in the Field of Exploration of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes,
- d) Agreement of the Transfer of Persons Sentenced to Imprisonment,
- e) Memorandum of Association on Joint Venture between NNPC and GAZPROM, and
- f) Legal cooperation between the Nigerian and Russian Ministries of Justice (Abiodun, 2017).

In 2005, Codel International Limited of Nigeria and Asen of Russia signed an agreement at the Nigerian Embassy in Moscow for the construction of a Gas Turbine Electricity Generation Plant in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. This agreement followed the successful construction of the Thermo Power Station in Kwara State by the same Russian company, underscoring Nigeria's trust and interest in Russian technology. The significance of this collaboration was highlighted by Steve Azaiki, the Secretary to the Bayelsa State government, who affirmed the commitment during the signing ceremony in Moscow on behalf of the Bayelsa State government. The visit of President Dmitry Medvedev and the subsequent agreements catalyzed several new initiatives, further strengthening the bilateral relationship between Nigeria and Russia (Agubamah, 2014). The Russians were collaborating with Nigeria's National Commission on Atomic Energy to establish an Experimental Research Nuclear Plant in Abuja. Additionally, an agreement was made for Russia to provide technical assistance to enhance Nigeria's peacekeeping and peace-support operations. As part of this cooperation, numerous Nigerian security operatives have been and continue to be sent to Russia for specialized training aimed at strengthening Nigeria's defense capabilities.

As part of the enhanced scientific and technological cooperation between Nigeria and Russia, Nigeria launched the Nigeria SAT 2 and Nigeria SAT X spacecrafts into orbit in August 2011. These satellites were launched aboard a Russian Dnepr rocket from the Yasny launch site in southern Russia. To further strengthen business relations between Nigerian and Russian entrepreneurs, Glades Sasore, a special adviser to Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015) on export promotion, traveled to Moscow to promote Nigerian products. Her visit highlighted a range of Nigerian goods, including quality agricultural commodities, timber, solid minerals, gemstones, and tanned leather. During her meetings with the Russian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Sasore emphasized Nigeria's interest in leveraging Russian technology to advance its industrialization efforts. Additionally, in August 2016, the Russian Chambers of Commerce granted exclusive rights to import cashew nuts from Nigeria, reflecting the growing trade partnership between the two countries (Waliyullahi, 2016).

Nigeria is increasingly becoming a significant business partner for Russia in Africa. The trade volume between the two countries surged from \$300 million to \$1.5 billion by 2010, with a trade surplus favoring Russia, according to the Central Bank of Nigeria. Major Russian companies have begun operations in Nigeria, reflecting the growing economic ties. RUSSAL, the Russian aluminum giant, acquired a 77.5 percent stake in Nigeria's aluminum smelter, ALSCON. Gazprom, Russia's national energy company, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to explore and exploit Nigeria's vast gas reserves through a new joint venture called NiGaZ Energy Company. This agreement also includes participation in various critical infrastructure projects and the training of Nigerian personnel. Both companies were projected to invest up to \$2.5 billion in the joint venture. Additionally, the Russian oil giant Lukoil sought to expand its operations within Nigeria's oil sector. In a related development, General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, met with Nigerian Defense Minister Mansur Muhammad Dan-Ali in Moscow to discuss military-technical cooperation. They reviewed the 2012 agreement on a joint project to design, develop, construct, operate, and commission a nuclear power plant, with the completion scheduled for 2025 (Agubamah, 2014).

These developments are positive indicators of the dynamic Nigeria-Russia relationship, leading to gradual but steady growth in bilateral trade and the promotion of direct interactions between Nigerian and Russian officials, institutions, agencies, and companies. This growing engagement has opened up further opportunities for cooperation. In June 2016, RuNiTrade, an e-commerce platform, was launched in Lagos, Nigeria, through a partnership between the Lagos Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Russian Trail Trans Logistics Group. This platform aims to enhance bilateral trade relations and stimulate economic activity between Russia and Nigeria by providing information about business opportunities in both countries. The goal is to encourage investment flow between the two nations. Additionally, in August 2015, Soyuznik, an association of Soviet and Russian-trained professionals working in various sectors in Nigeria and abroad, was established under the leadership of Shina Fawole, who was later succeeded by Jerome Okolo. This organization is dedicated to revitalizing Russia-Nigeria relations. One of its key concerns is the productive utilization of the Ajaokuta Steel Rolling Mills, which were built during the Soviet era (Waliyullahi, 2016).

However, according to Kohnert (2022), the main reason behind contemporary Russian engagement in Africa and Nigeria in particular is to counter Western influence, particularly as Moscow feels chastised by Western sanctions for its actions in Ukraine, its human rights abuses, its malicious cyber-activities, and interference in foreign elections, among other activities. The Russians believe Africa can be a stage where it can find partners to create a multipolar world and reduce Western global dominance. By forging new relationships across Africa, Russia would gain new allies within multilateral organizations, particularly at the UN General Assembly (UNGA). For example, when the UN voted in 2014 on a resolution criticizing Russian hostilities in Crimea, twenty-nine countries from Africa either voted against the resolution or abstained and Russia garnered much of this support through debt relief.

The Soviet Union focused a large portion of its economic aid towards large-scale projects. For example, Nigeria did not have socialist inclinations, but the Soviets wanted to maintain good relations with the country because it had the largest population and second-largest army in Africa. The Soviets funded the construction of a major pipeline in Nigeria as well as the construction of an iron and steel complex. The total amount of global economic aid provided by the Soviet Union declined in the early 1980s, from \$8.1 billion from 1975-79 to just \$2.5 billion in 1980-81, an average reduction of \$367 million per year. Several factors influenced the Soviet Union to reduce economic aids to Africa in the 1980s. First, the Soviet Union was facing its own economic struggles, making it difficult for it to continue providing aid to developing countries (Onafowokan, 2010). Also, Gorbachev's reforms, which started in the mid-1980s, allowed for a more open press, which criticized the Soviet Union's policy towards Africa. According to an EU Parliament brief, Soviet interest in the region declined in the 1980s because of economic hardship coupled with improved relations with the West. The Soviets benefited as much from economic aid as they invested in it. Their primary goal in Sub-Saharan Africa was to promote socialism, a path few countries pursued. However, their expenditures were negligible. Soviet aid in 1979 was less than one percent of global development assistance, and less than one (1) percent of the USSR gross national product. The one important gain was the international recognition the USSR received for funding large-scale infrastructure projects (Kaplila, 2010).

Today, Russia uses development assistance as part of its strategy to establish a multipolar world order and regain the status it had during the Cold War in Sub-Saharan Africa. Russia claims to pursue normative foreign aid goals such as eradicating poverty, but it uses development assistance to exercise political influence and solidify its position in Nigeria. By providing development assistance, Russia legitimizes its status as a great power that could assume a global leadership role (Waliyullahi, 2016). Russia's political motives are also evident through its prioritization of food security and health assistance programs. In terms of food security, Russia sources its contributions from domestic producers, which further consolidates its position as one of the largest wheat suppliers in the world. In terms of health assistance, Russia funds medical projects that include training elements, which allowed it to maintain a long-term physical presence

in the recipient country (Ukiyedeikimie, 2023).

Russia distributes its development assistance primarily through international organizations. According to a 2011 Russian national report, it channeled most of its development assistance through the UN, World Bank, World Health Organization, and International Civil Defense Organization. By providing aids, Russia presents itself as a major power capable of assisting countries in need. Russia distributes approximately 60 percent of aids through international organizations and the rest through bilateral agreements (Waliyullahi, 2016). Russia provides very little development and humanitarian assistance overall, but it broadly advertises when it does to promote its image as a major donor. The limited use of development assistance is a Russian characteristic that has continued from the Cold War era. The Soviets did not provide much aid to Nigeria and got as much in return, which perhaps influenced Russia's current disposition towards development assistance (Omotuyi, 2019). Russia is unlikely to change this trend, creating opportunities for the United States to counter Russia. The United States could, for example, reallocate portions of its development assistance budget to countries where Russia is trying to make inroads.

### **Prospects of Nigeria-Russia Relations in the Post-Cold War**

Nigeria needs Russian technology to boost industrialization just as Russia needs Nigeria as a market for its industrial products and military equipment. Many reasons have been advanced on 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" (Abiodun, 2017). 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". The common features which Russia and Nigeria exhibit are more compelling than politics and economy, population size or natural endowments; Abiodun (2017) mirrored quite a number of similarities in the culture of these two nations 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.

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 (Obiozor, 2002). "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 precolonial Nigeria even till date. This is well represented in Yoruba language: 'ayeoba- 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 while in power or was forced to abdicate office (Obiozor, 2002). Only Boris Yeltsin remains the first and the only Russian leader to have voluntarily left office. In comparison with Nigeria, since independence to date, no election had been free and fair until 2015. They had all been characterized by violence and chaos, because leaders are unwilling 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 but a few. In March 2009, Nigerian Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe visited Moscow to have talks with his Russian counterpart, Lavrov and had meeting with President Medvedev. Agreements were reached on activating the realization of the potentials both countries have in the trade and economic spheres, including execution of projects in infrastructure, ferrous and nonferrous metals industry, electric power generation, and nuclear energy. Russia and Nigeria are cooperating in a joint venture to exploit Nigeria's vast gas reserves. Russia's state-owned Gazprom has signed a \$2.5bn (£1.53bn) deal with Nigeria's state operated NNPC, to invest in a new joint venture to develop, extract and transport gas from Nigeria's fields, The agreement comes during a four-day African tour by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, the contract, when fully implemented would lead to the exchange of ideas and engagement of Nigerian armies of jobless youths (Waliyullahi, 2016). 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 the deserved attention.

### **Problems of Nigeria-Russia Relations in the Post-Cold War**

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 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 (Poliakov, 2009). There is weak indication that the two countries have sufficient and adequate knowledge of each other. This, in part, is responsible for the lack of the political will to fully implement their existing bilateral agreements. On the Russian side, in terms of foreign policy priority, Russia gave priority to the Magreb Union Countries in North Africa due to geographical proximity to Russia, geographical location

in the Southern part of E.U Countries and national security considerations. The second area of priority is South Africa, while Nigeria is placed in the third position. Even so, it was argued that Angola might even come before Nigeria (Akinterinwa : 2013). The other problems of Nigeria – Russia relations are as follows:

- i. 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.
- ii. 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 could be sourced from Nigeria by Russian industries.
- iii. Inadequate information on business opportunities in Nigeria poses one of the major problems. Foreign investors including Russians have no access to up to date and reliable information on business prospects in Nigeria (Poliakov, 2009).
- iv. 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 hires (Abiodun, 2017).

Moreover, Waliyullahi (2016) Diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Russia have experienced challenges at various times. One significant low point occurred when sailors from a Greek-owned ship, the MT African Pride, were charged with oil bunkering, illegal possession of Nigerian oil, and economic sabotage, crimes punishable by the death penalty. The prolonged delays in the sailors' trial led to protests from the Russian government, straining diplomatic relations with Nigeria. Although the sailors were eventually convicted and received six-month suspended sentences as part of a plea bargain, they were released due to having already spent nearly two years in pre-trial detention. Another troubling incident occurred in June 2007 when six Russian employees of the Russian Aluminum Company (RUSAL) were abducted by militants in Nigeria's volatile Niger-Delta region. After a prolonged period in captivity, the men were rescued safely by a combined team of Nigerian Army and Police in August 2007. Additionally, on November 24, 2011, the Russian daily Moskovsky Komsomolets reported the brutal murder of a Nigerian student, Mr. Akinola Olufemi, in southern Moscow. Olufemi, who was studying in Arkhangelsk, was found stabbed to death with his ears cut off, and his study materials and wallet were left at the scene, indicating the crime was not a robbery. This incident further strained Nigeria-Russia relations, highlighting the difficulties faced in their bilateral interactions.

In 2014, there were media reports that efforts to procure arms from Russia were unsuccessful owing to a slight weakness in the Nigeria's stance on Ukraine at the United Nations. However, this view was debunked by Russian envoy to Nigeria Amb. Nikolay Udovichenko who countered this position when He said: 'we see no reason why the situation around Ukraine should have negative impact on our relations with Nigeria which is traditionally a good friend and partner of Russia' (Omotuyi, 2019). Also in 2017, the Federal Government had alleged that low revenue, low output and dwindling demand for fish in Nigeria are because of the poor policing of the country's territorial waters, a development that had allowed illegal Russian and Chinese Companies free hand to fish illegally in the Country. In the words of Senator Heineken Lokpobiri Minister of State for Agriculture 'they bribe officers who are on the high sea and then they fish as much as they want and go back' (Omotuyi, 2019)

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study utilizes Traditional Diplomatic Theory, which is centered on state-to-state diplomacy. Traditional diplomacy involves the interactions between states through their permanent ambassadors or specially appointed diplomats. The essence of this theory lies in the concept of permanent bilateral representation as a fundamental aspect of diplomatic relations (John, 1998). Traditional diplomacy views states as the primary actors in the international arena, asserting that even when non-state actors participate in international relations, they do so under the guidance of states. Key proponents of this theory include Woodrow Wilson, Basil, and Hedley. Traditional diplomacy is deeply influenced by historical precedents and established practices.

Traditional diplomacy emerged in Europe after the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War in 1648. The need for a method to manage and mitigate the frequent conflicts that had plagued Europe during the 17th century led to the development of traditional diplomacy. This form of diplomacy evolved in tandem with the emerging state system. Its core principles include sovereignty, national interest, state representation, and national security, which are fundamental to the practice of traditional diplomacy. These principles are central to the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Russia. For traditional diplomacy to function effectively, certain qualifications must be met. Firstly, there must be multiple states, each a sovereign political entity with the ability to exercise supreme authority within its borders and maintain independence in its external relations (Hedley, 1997). Secondly, there must be shared values and interests among these states, which enable them to establish regular patterns of interaction and cooperation.

Sharp (2009) contends that the demand for diplomacy and the relevance of diplomatic theory are increasing. He identifies a diplomatic tradition rooted in how people organize into groups, the differences between intra-group and inter-group relations, and the perspectives of those managing these relations regarding international disputes. Central to traditional diplomacy are the core principles of sovereignty, national interest, and national security. These principles are fundamental to both Nigeria's and the Russian Federation's diplomatic objectives. Traditional diplomacy is characterized by formal procedures and protocols that demonstrate goodwill. Consequently, the diplomatic relations between Russia and Nigeria, being centered on state-to-state interactions, validate the application of Traditional Diplomatic Theory to this study.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

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 would bring the company to function at its maximum capacity. Nigerians and Russians are friendly and sympathetic to each other. There are lots of Joint-Ventures involving private Nigerian and Russian businesses, operating on their level without any involvement of their governments. The nation newsstudy reported back in June 2015 about “Olalusi O. Victor, a Nigerian who led a team of other International students from Russia, Italy, Greece, and Morocco and bagged the “Best Captain of the Year” award at the University’s annual Quiz competition. His team – International United – won Silver at the University’s annual Quiz competition”. Nigerians are perceived to be brilliant, hard-working, intelligent and pleasant people in Russia, although not without exceptions. They have always been among the best minds in Russia, over the past five years, Nigerian students at the Russian National Research Medical University have consistently topped the graduation chat, bagging honours and contributing their wealth of knowledge to the University’s academic status.

There is inherent prospect for robust bilateral relations between Nigeria and Russia. Nigeria needs Russian technology to boost industrialization just as Russia needs Nigeria as a market for its industrial products and Military equipment. There should be adequate information on business opportunities in Nigeria. This would provide foreign investors including Russians with reliable and update information on business prospects in Nigeria. During parliamentary visit of Bukola Saraki’s to Russia in July, 2018, it was observed that even though there exists good relations between Nigeria and Russia, on the political, economic, cultural and diplomatic spheres, that there was much space left to be covered in order to improve on the relationship. Saraki noted that as a fellow oil producing nation, we do believe that Russia has a keen insight on some of the challenges we face in Nigeria with regard to the economy, as well as our drive towards diversification.

Nigeria-Russia relations have come of age, despite some psychological differences and suspicions, there are lots of gains while additional work are required in the direction of media and cultural exchanges and some favorable trade policies on the part of Russian government to allow more Nigerian exports, while it is desirable that Nigeria and Russia move their bilateral relation to a new level of active cooperation in important and strategic economic sectors, both countries should take adequate stock of the disparity in capacities and ensure that this is not allowed to lead to lopsidedness and dependency, such as being witnessed in the economic cooperation with China, America, India and other developed economies. 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. Therefore, the study recommended that:

1. The economic relations between the two countries should be strengthening and make more emphasis than before on the development of cooperation at the level of small and middle-size enterprises.
2. There is a need to stimulate dialogue between business circles and other groups along with the inter-state relations. This dialogue is not necessarily limited to large-scale companies. Considering Nigeria’s advantage in small and medium-scale companies, efforts should be made to bring them into the dialogue as well.
3. It is likely that Nigeria will remain one of the major popular destinations for Russian tourist in the near future. However, Nigerian and Russian entrepreneurs should take advantage of this attention by broadening touristic activities, like developing culture tours or package programs along with the conventional combination of sea, sand, and sun.
4. The Russian policy of putting quota restrictions on large airline companies and keeping the number of destinations limited stands out as an important issue that Nigeria authorities should work on. As a matter of fact, increasing the number of flights and destinations is already a necessity to advance bilateral relations.

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