

Navigating Political Transitions: The Dynamics of India-Nigeria Diplomatic Relations (2009-2023)

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Abstract

Political changes have profoundly influenced the diplomatic relations between India and Nigeria. Political change, especially Nigeria's transition to democracy and India's assertive foreign policy under recent governments, has significantly enhanced bilateral relations. The relationship has evolved from symbolic solidarity to a more pragmatic, strategic, and multifaceted partnership. The study adopted a historical research methodology. Furthermore, secondary sources utilized journals, government records, gender policy documents and books. Data collected was content analyzed and inferences drawn. The study revealed that diplomatic practices have become increasingly outcome-oriented, particularly in key areas such as trade, energy, security, education, healthcare and defence cooperation. The study also found that India-Nigeria relations faced challenges like internal security concerns in Nigeria and bureaucratic inconsistencies, which are being managed through established diplomatic channels. The study concluded that the enduring historical goodwill, economic interdependence and shared strategic goals underpinned the resilience of this partnership. The study therefore recommended that, owing to the impact of the political changes on diplomatic relations, the government of Nigeria and India should hold regular bilateral meetings with legislative backing, stating the time to hold such meeting in order to reduce changes in domestic political leadership and have a more stable forum for a long-term relationship.

Keywords: Political Change, Diplomatic Relations, Foreign Policy, India, Nigeria.

Introduction

The landscape of international relations is constantly evolving, driven by global politics, economic interdependence, and cultural exchanges (Baylis, Smith, & Owens, 2020). Diplomatic relations are crucial in fostering cooperation and exchange in this interconnected world. The relationship between India and Nigeria is particularly notable, rooted in a shared colonial background and historical collaboration against colonialism and apartheid (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016).

India and Nigeria, two postcolonial democracies with federal systems and diverse populations, have shared a strategic and symbolic bilateral relationship. Rooted in colonial history and sustained through mutual interests in economic development, security, and global south solidarity, the relationship has experienced fluctuations due to political transitions in both countries (Obi, 2012). Between 2009 and 2023, India underwent a significant ideological shift from the centrist Indian National Congress to the right-leaning

Bharatiya Janata Party, while Nigeria witnessed three presidential administrations with differing governance and foreign policy priorities (Kapur, 2017; Eze, 2020). These shifts have had substantive implications for diplomatic engagement, affecting sectors such as trade, defense cooperation, and multilateral collaboration (Suri, 2020; Adebajo, 2021).

India established its diplomatic mission in Nigeria in 1958, prior to Nigeria's independence in 1960 (Ministry of External Affairs [MEA], 2021). Over the years, the domestic politics and foreign policies of both nations have been closely linked, with domestic structures influencing their interactions. Citizen diplomacy, emphasizing the prioritization of citizens' basic needs, human rights, and socio-economic welfare in foreign agreements, was highlighted as a new direction for Nigeria's foreign policy in 2007, an approach similar to India's (Akinboye, 2013; Chaturvedi, 2012).

The period from 2009 to 2023 is significant due to marked political changes in both India and Nigeria. Understanding the specific effects of these changes on bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations has not been comprehensively studied. Research in this area is crucial because political changes can bolster diplomatic ties, and leadership changes influence diplomatic focus, with India reinforcing its Africa engagement and Nigeria prioritizing economic and security partnerships (Pant, 2016; Ogunnubi, 2018). Existing scholarship on the bilateral relations between India and Nigeria exhibits notable gaps, particularly concerning the nuanced effects of domestic political changes on their diplomatic ties from 2009 to 2023. Current research often overlooks how shifts in leadership, governance styles, ideological orientations, and foreign policy agendas within both nations have profoundly influenced their bilateral engagement. A comprehensive investigation into these fluctuations is essential to identify specific patterns and trends that correlate political leadership transitions with subsequent diplomatic developments. There is a significant deficiency in studies that account for the interaction between global geopolitical shifts and internal political dynamics in shaping India-Nigeria relations. The rise of China, the emergence of a multipolar international system, and evolving global trade dynamics constitute a complex external environment that critically impacts the motivations and constraints influencing the diplomatic strategies of both countries. Understanding how these external pressures affect national priorities and whether shifts towards multipolarity lead to realignments in their respective diplomatic approaches remains an under-researched area. This paper aims to fill this gap by exploring the intricate relationship between political changes and diplomatic relations between Nigeria and India during this period. The paper utilizes a historical research methodology, drawing on official documents, news articles, and interviews. Data analysis involved qualitative content analysis, organizing information thematically and periodically to trace how changes in political leadership and orientation influenced the trajectory of diplomatic relations.

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the impact of political changes on the diplomatic relations between India and Nigeria from 2009 to 2023. This includes analyzing major political changes, explaining their effects on diplomatic relations, analyzing the contribution of the domestic environment and identifying factors for improvement.

Understanding the complexities of international relations necessitates the application of diverse theoretical lenses. Two prominent frameworks, Realism and Marxism-Leninism, offer distinct yet valuable insights into state behavior, power dynamics, and diplomatic engagement.

Theoretical Category	Realism	Marxism / Leninism
Core Assumptions	States operate in an anarchic international system, driven by survival, power, and national interest.	Global politics is shaped by economic structures, class struggle and imperialist-capitalist exploitation.
Primary Actors	Sovereign states especially great powers.	Classes, states and transnational capitalist interests.
View of Power	Focus on hard power (military) and soft balancing (diplomatic alliances).	Emphasis on economic power, control of production and imperialist exploitation.
Nature of International System	Anarchic, competitive and conflict-prone. Peace is temporary and depends on balance of power.	Hierarchical, shaped by capitalist exploitation of the periphery by the core (imperial centers).
Diplomacy's Role	Tool for state interest, mobilizing allies, engaging in soft balancing, pursuing strategic autonomy.	Instrument for class solidarity or imperial dominance depending on state alignment (socialist vs capitalist).
Application to India-Nigeria	- Both states use diplomacy to pursue national interest, especially through trade and security deals. - Under BJP (India) and APC (Nigeria), ties became more strategic and transactional, reflecting balance of power logics and market interests. - Soft balancing observed in institutional forums and alliances.	- UPA (India) and PDP (Nigeria) emphasized Third World solidarity and multilateral, anti-imperialist goals. - Post 2014, political changes led to market liberalism and dependency, showing alignment with capitalist state interests. - Leninist critique sees a shift from solidarity to neo-imperial economic deals.
View of Change	Change occurs through shifts in power distribution, peaceful change is possible but rare.	Change is driven by class conflict, economic contradictions and anti-imperialist struggle.
Criticisms	- Overemphasis on military and state actors. - Weak on explaining non-state influences and cooperation.	- Overly economic determinism. - Underplays agency of states and identities.
Relevance to Study	Explains strategic shifts in India-Nigeria diplomacy after leadership changes, emphasizes state behavior and interests.	Explains ideological shifts and class/economic interests shaping bilateral ties and foreign policy agendas.
Outlook on Cooperation	Cooperation occurs when interests align or to balance against rivals.	Cooperation is framed as solidarity or dependency, depending on class and ideological alignment.

India's Political Orientation and Diplomatic Practices (2009-2023)

India's foreign policy has historically been guided by the concept of national interest, aiming to promote global peace, tolerance, and respect for other nations (Mohan, 2003). From 2009 to 2014, under the UPA government led by Dr. Manmohan Singh, India's foreign policy was characterized by continuity, emphasizing multilateralism and engagement with global forums (Saran, 2017). This period saw India maintaining relations with a wide range of countries and actively participating in international organizations. The Singh administration's diplomatic approach was largely consistent with India's post-independence tradition of non-alignment and South-South cooperation (Pant, 2016).

A significant shift occurred in 2014 with the election of Narendra Modi and the BJP. Modi's foreign policy has been described as more aggressive and economically ambitious, with a renewed emphasis on Africa under the "Look West" framework (Chaudhuri, 2018). This new orientation, sometimes referred to as "multi-alignment," involves interacting with several international blocs and powers concurrently to maximize national interests (Saran, 2017; Mohan, 2015). Modi's diplomatic approach became more strategic, proactive, and goal-oriented. By 2015, India under Modi had established strategic ties with 28 nations and aimed to reestablish itself as a major world power (Pant & Joshi, 2017).

From 2009 to 2014, under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of the Indian National Congress, India pursued a development-focused and non-aligned foreign policy, emphasizing South-South cooperation (Chaturvedi, 2012). The 2014 election of Narendra Modi and the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party marked a shift to a more assertive, market-oriented, and strategically aligned diplomatic agenda. Modi's foreign policy initiatives—including the "Act East" and "Look West" strategies—sought to reposition India as a global power, and re-engagement with Africa, particularly Nigeria, was intensified through summits and economic initiatives (Suri, 2020; Adebajo, 2021).

Nigeria's Political Orientation and Diplomatic Practices (2009-2023)

Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and has historically prioritized Africa in its foreign policy, a framework established by the Tafawa Balewa government (Akinboye, 2013). This Afrocentric approach has often been pursued at the expense of prioritizing the interests of Nigerian citizens (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). Critics have described Nigeria's foreign policy over the years as inactive, inconsistent, ambivalent, passive, moralistic, and illogical (Gambari, 1989; Eze, 2010). Nigeria is often referred to as the "Giant of Africa" due to its regional and continental influence (Adebajo, 2008).

From 2009 to 2015, President Goodluck Jonathan's administration followed the concept of citizen diplomacy, prioritizing the basic needs and welfare of Nigerians in foreign policy, marking a departure from the customary Afrocentric approach (Akinterinwa, 2010). Jonathan's government implemented a foreign policy driven by a desire for foreign investment and aimed to reinvent Nigeria as an attractive destination for international capital. His diplomatic approach included global collaborations, developmental diplomacy, and multilateralism (Ogunnoiki, 2017).

The election of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 brought a significant political upheaval and a dramatic shift in Nigeria's foreign policy orientation. Buhari's government, based on military discipline and a focus on domestic issues, emphasized economic diplomacy, security-centered governance, and anti-corruption measures (Saliu, 2019). Restoring Nigeria's reputation abroad and attracting foreign capital were top priorities. Under Buhari, diplomatic strategies focused more on strategic partnerships and broadening international allies, including deeper collaboration with India in commerce, defense, and education (Ogunnubi, 2018). Nigeria's foreign policy under Buhari also aimed to promote "good neighborliness," although relations with ECOWAS nations reportedly hit a low point due to border closures (Akinola, 2020).

Political leadership in Nigeria transitioned from President Umaru Yar'Adua (2007–2010) to Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015), and then Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023). Each administration brought distinct diplomatic styles: Yar'Adua emphasized rule of law and regional peace (Obi, 2012); Jonathan fostered economic and energy ties with India (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016); and Buhari, driven by a security-focused agenda, emphasized counter-terrorism and anti-corruption in foreign policy. Buhari's administration aligned closely with India's strategic interests in energy and defense cooperation (Eze, 2020).

Comparative Analysis of Political Orientation and Diplomatic Practices of India-Nigeria (2009-2023)

India and Nigeria have historically enjoyed cordial and warm relations. India established a diplomatic mission in Nigeria in 1958, two years before Nigeria's independence. The two nations share a long history of cooperation across various sectors (Adebajo, 2021; Suri, 2020).

Comparing the political orientations and diplomatic practices from 2009 to 2023 reveals notable shifts in both countries. Under the Indian National Congress (2009–2014), India focused on economic liberalization, non-alignment, and multilateralism (Pant, 2016). Simultaneously, Nigeria under Presidents Yar'Adua and Jonathan (2009–2015) maintained an Afrocentric and non-aligned stance, focusing on developmental diplomacy and multilateralism (Akinterinwa, 2010; Ogunnoiki, 2017). Both countries operated within a broadly non-aligned framework and participated actively in multilateral forums, which positively influenced their bilateral ties (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016).

With the rise of Narendra Modi in 2014, India's foreign policy shifted towards an "aggressive" approach with strategic autonomy and a focus on becoming a major power. This involved increased ministerial trips, promotion of Indian businesses abroad, and strengthening consular ties (Chaudhuri, 2018; Mohan, 2015). India's engagement with Africa, including Nigeria, was intensified, concentrating on commerce, energy security, and development cooperation within this new strategic framework (Saran, 2017).

In Nigeria, the transition to President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 brought a focus on economic recovery, security, and anti-corruption, leading to a more pragmatic approach to

foreign alliances (Saliu, 2019). This involved domestic reforms like foreign exchange restrictions and local content laws (Akinola, 2020). Nigeria's foreign policy under Buhari was described as prioritizing "good neighborliness" (Eze, 2020).

While both countries saw shifts in leadership and priorities, the fundamental relationship remained cordial. India's intensified engagement with Africa under Modi coincided with Nigeria's focus on domestic issues under Buhari, influencing the dynamics of their interactions. For example, India's interest in Nigeria's oil and gas remained a cornerstone, but Nigeria's new economic policies impacted Indian companies (Ogunnubi, 2018).

The increasing participation of the Indian diaspora in Nigeria was a significant milestone, fostering commercial cooperation, cultural interaction, and people-to-people diplomacy. Both administrations recognized the significance of the diaspora, although their treatment could be affected by internal security situations (Adebajo, 2021).

The rise of China as a significant player in Africa also influenced the India-Nigeria dynamic. China's presence is driven by Africa's resources and markets, bringing investment but also impacting Nigeria's bargaining power. India's strategic push to Africa was partly motivated by a desire to offset China's influence, positioning India as a link between the developed and developing worlds (Chaudhuri, 2018; Mohan, 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic also altered diplomatic procedures, with India providing health diplomacy and vaccine diplomacy, which enhanced its reputation in Nigeria (Suri, 2020). Nigeria's diplomatic practice became more health-focused in response (Akinola, 2021).

Despite changes, the hallmark of the relationship remained mutual collaboration based on shared history and interests. Diplomatic encounters, while cordial, evolved to become more outcome-oriented and representative of national interests, influenced by both internal political views and external factors (Pant & Joshi, 2017).

Challenges with Political Orientation and Diplomatic Practices of India-Nigeria (2009-2023)

Changes in political orientations and diplomatic approaches present both advantages and challenges. While India's aggressive diplomacy has increased its prominence in Africa through investments and capacity-building (Chaudhuri, 2018; Pant & Joshi, 2017), challenges remain.

One significant challenge for Nigeria is unmanageable insecurity, including attacks by Boko Haram, Fulani herders, armed banditry, and kidnappers. These criminal groups have operated with impunity due to a perceived inability of state and federal governments to safeguard people and property (Akinola, 2020; Eze, 2021). The high rate of kidnappings makes it difficult for investors to bring money and manpower to Nigeria. Few international investors will risk investing in a nation with significant physical security concerns (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Another potential issue leading to conflict is the threat of intellectual property rights violations in Nigeria, where enforcement is weak despite existing laws. This affects

industries like music and Nollywood and could complicate trade relations (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2019).

Corruption in both the public and commercial sectors is a major problem affecting both Nigeria and India, making business transactions sensitive and hazardous. Embezzlement of millions of dollars from public coffers and companies makes conducting business challenging and poses obstacles to investment. Theft by employees has caused business closures and slowed expansion (Transparency International, 2022; Saliu, 2019).

The Nigerian legal system also poses an obstacle. The slow operation of courts, which defeats the maxim "justice delayed is justice denied," coupled with judicial corruption, causes firms to avoid the area. Investors are concerned about becoming victims of a sluggish and dishonest legal system, leading to disinterest in creating businesses if significant reform is not undertaken (Onyema, 2014).

While Nigeria aims to reorient its diplomatic compass and restructure its foreign policy architecture to meet the needs of a globalizing world, domestic issues like insecurity, corruption, and a weak legal system present significant challenges to its diplomatic effectiveness and ability to attract foreign investment, including from India (Ogunnubi, 2018; Akinola, 2021).

Bilateral Diplomatic Relations (2009-2023)

India and Nigeria have enjoyed warm relations, with India maintaining a diplomatic mission in Nigeria since 1958 (Embassy of India, Abuja, 2023). They share a history of cooperation in areas like South-South cooperation and non-alignment (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). The bilateral relationship has evolved, covering political, economic, and socio-cultural spheres. Key areas of cooperation have included trade, investment, defense, education, and cultural exchange (Chaudhuri, 2018; Pant & Joshi, 2017).

Economically, India has been a significant trading partner for Nigeria. In 2023, India was one of Nigeria's top five trading partners (World Bank, 2024). However, bilateral trade volume saw a significant drop from US\$14.95 billion in 2021–2022 to US\$7.89 billion in 2023–2024 (Ministry of Commerce & Industry, 2024). Indian investments are present in various sectors in Nigeria, including manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure, and the oil and gas sector (High Commission of India, Abuja, 2023). Nigeria is a major supplier of crude oil to India, while India exports pharmaceuticals, textiles, and machinery to Nigeria (Ogunyemi, 2022).

Defense cooperation has also been a key area, with exchanges of visits, training programs, and collaboration in counterterrorism efforts (Adetula, 2020). India has explored defense collaboration with Nigeria, particularly in maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea (Swarajya, 2021). Education and cultural exchange programs, such as the ITEC program offering training to Nigerian professionals and students, have strengthened ties and fostered goodwill (MEA, 2022). Medical tourism from Nigeria to India is also a significant phenomenon due to challenges in Nigeria's healthcare system (Adebayo & Alimi, 2019).

The political changes in both countries translated into shifts in diplomatic priorities. Under Jonathan and Modi, bilateral trade and investment saw significant growth, culminating in India becoming one of Nigeria's top trading partners (Ogunnubi, 2018). The Buhari-Modi era was characterized by a more security-centric partnership, including discussions on counter-terrorism, cyber-security, and defense procurement (Akinola, 2021). Diplomatic summits such as the India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) provided a multilateral platform for reinforcing bilateral ties (Chaudhuri, 2018).

However, challenges persisted. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, policy inconsistencies, and ideological divergences occasionally disrupted the momentum (Eze, 2021). Public diplomacy, though recognized as vital, remained underutilized, and people-to-people engagement was limited compared to the potential offered by cultural and educational exchanges (Saliu, 2019).

Table 1: India-Nigeria Bilateral Trade Statistics

India's	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Export	2,609.91	3,134.89	4,663.17	5,159.44	3,663.49
Import	10,213.61	5,672.38	10,291.58	6,692.65	4,229.81
Trade	13,823.52	8,807.27	14,954.75	11,852.09	7,893.30

Source: India High Commission in Nigeria, 2025

Challenges of Bi-lateral Relations between India-Nigeria (2009-2023)

Despite cordial relations and key areas of cooperation, the bilateral relationship between India and Nigeria faced challenges during this period. Some challenges stemmed from political and economic changes in Nigeria. The implementation of foreign exchange restrictions and local content laws under President Buhari affected Indian companies, making it difficult for them to repatriate profits and comply with new regulatory frameworks (The Times, 2024).

Several domestic challenges within Nigeria significantly impacted the relationship, particularly concerning trade and investment. Unmanageable and hyperactive insecurity, including attacks by Boko Haram, Fulani herders, bandits, and kidnappers, poses a major obstacle. The inability of governments to protect people and property makes it challenging for investors to bring money and manpower. This security risk deters foreign companies from investing (AP News, 2025; BudgIT Foundation, 2024).

Corruption in both the public and business sectors in Nigeria is another major issue, making business transactions sensitive and hazardous. Embezzlement by government representatives and oversight agencies creates obstacles for business and investment (PwC Nigeria, 2025).

The Nigerian legal system's slow operation and judicial corruption deter firms from operating or investing, as they fear becoming victims of a sluggish and dishonest system (Babalola, 2024).

Other issues mentioned in the sources include the strain caused by some Nigerian students in India engaging in drug trafficking or cybercrimes, which harms the relationship. The threat of intellectual property rights violations in Nigeria is also noted as a potential source of conflict (PwC Nigeria, 2024).

These domestic challenges in Nigeria can negatively impact the economic dimension of the bilateral relationship, hindering Indian investment and trade despite India's strategic interest in the Nigerian market and resources.

Effects of Political Changes on Diplomatic Relations

The political transitions in both countries directly influenced their diplomatic engagement. In India, the shift from the UPA's multilateral, development-focused diplomacy to the BJP's more strategic, aggressive, and economically motivated foreign policy under Modi significantly impacted interactions with Africa, including Nigeria (Singh, 2017; Sharma, 2020). India's increased initiative in pursuing trade, investment, and defense ties under Modi required Nigeria to adjust its diplomatic stance. Modi's "Act East" and "Look Africa" strategies actively pushed Indian businesses towards Africa (Kumar, 2018). The expanded India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) in 2015, while including Nigeria, reflected Modi's strategic focus on business, defense, and infrastructure financing (Ministry of External Affairs, 2015).

Concurrently, political changes in Nigeria altered its foreign policy perspective. Buhari's focus on domestic issues like economic stability, anti-corruption, and internal security led to a more conservative stance on foreign policy (Adebayo, 2019). This resulted in Nigeria being less inclined towards high-profile foreign events unless directly supporting domestic objectives. Buhari's administration adjusted its diplomatic practices to interact with India's changing focus, concentrating on shared interests like digital infrastructure, healthcare, education, and counterterrorism (Okonkwo, 2021). India's digital diplomacy and IT solutions became key instruments in engaging with Nigeria's development agenda under Buhari (Chatterjee, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) served as a crucial test, demonstrating the adaptability of diplomatic practices. India's provision of vaccines and medical aid to Nigeria through the "Vaccine Maitri" program underscored its reliability as a partner and strengthened its reputation as a responsible global player (Government of India, 2021). Nigeria's expression of gratitude demonstrated a lasting strategic partnership despite political divides. The pandemic also accelerated the adoption of e-diplomacy and virtual engagements by both countries (UNDP, 2022).

Challenges remain in the bilateral relationship, including insecurity in Nigeria affecting foreign investment and issues related to intellectual property rights (World Bank, 2020). Despite these challenges, the partnership has persisted due to mutual respect, common developmental goals, and institutional stability (Ibrahim & Singh, 2023).

Causes of Changes in Orientation and Diplomatic Relations between India and Nigeria

Election-based leadership changes in democracies like Nigeria and India are a frequent cause of significant changes in diplomatic relations and political orientations (Sharma, 2020). When political views evolve following elections, corresponding adjustments often occur in diplomatic practices (Kumar, 2019).

In India, the 2014 general election, which brought the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under Narendra Modi to power, was a major political change. This victory sparked debate about whether India was shifting from a multipolarity and coalition era towards a dominant-party system centered on the BJP (Chhibber & Verma, 2018). While some academics downplayed the significance of the vote shares, others viewed it as a notable change in the party system (Yadav, 2015). The BJP's rise marked a shift towards economic nationalism and Hindutva as ideological pillars, aiming to reestablish India as a major world power with strategic independence (Jaffrelot, 2016).

The shift from the INC under Manmohan Singh to the BJP under Narendra Modi represented a change in administrative culture and leadership ideology. Singh's administration (2009–2014) focused on economic liberalization, non-alignment, and multilateral diplomacy (Menon, 2013). Modi's administration (2014 onwards) brought a more forceful and practical diplomacy, aiming for major power status and pursuing strategic autonomy (Pant & Joshi, 2017). India's diplomatic evolution has included stages focused on sovereignty and non-alignment during the Nehruvian era, pragmatism under Indira Gandhi, and incorporating soft power through economic reforms and cultural diplomacy in the 21st century (Mukherjee, 2020).

In Nigeria, political change was marked by transitions in presidential leadership. The period included the end of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's tenure (2009–2010), the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015), and the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023) (Adebayo, 2021). These transitions involved shifts in the ruling party, from the PDP to the APC in 2015.

The transition from Jonathan (PDP) to Buhari (APC) in 2015 was a notable political change. While Jonathan's administration continued the PDP's approach focused on global collaborations and multilateralism, Buhari's administration prioritized economic recovery, security, and anti-corruption, seeking workable foreign alliances to meet these goals (Okonkwo, 2021). This involved a shift in Nigeria's foreign policy focus (Ogundele, 2022).

External factors also influenced these changes. The rise of China in Africa is noted as a factor. China's presence, driven by interest in African resources and markets, brings investment but also impacts Nigeria's bargaining power (Taylor, 2019). India's strategic response to China's influence partly motivated its increased engagement with Africa (Chatterjee, 2020). Global geopolitical shifts, such as the trend towards multipolarity and changing trade dynamics, also interact with domestic changes to affect relationships (Saran, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic was another external shock that altered diplomatic procedures, promoting health diplomacy and vaccine diplomacy (UNDP, 2022).

Changes in Orientation and Diplomatic Relations between India and Nigeria

During the 2009–2023 period, India's diplomatic relations with Nigeria demonstrated a conventional, developing approach, particularly under the INC government (2009–2014) (Singh, 2015). The focus was on economic relationships, education, healthcare, and capacity-building, with little geopolitical posturing (Adebayo, 2017). This approach was well received in Nigeria, especially during the Yar'Adua and Jonathan administrations, which maintained a foreign policy acknowledging the significance of such collaborations (Okonkwo, 2018). Both countries preferred formal bilateral arrangements like ministerial visits and joint commissions to coordinate collaboration (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). The ITEC program significantly expanded training opportunities for Nigerians in India (Chatterjee, 2016). India's developmental diplomacy created a favorable reputation among Nigerian institutions and civil society (Ibrahim & Singh, 2019). Nigeria's similar emphasis on development and South-South cooperation meant its diplomatic practices aligned well with India's approach during this initial period (Adebayo, 2017).

However, India's diplomatic posture changed under Modi, becoming more strategic, transactional, and goal-oriented (Kumar, 2020). The enlarged India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015 symbolized this rebranding of India's Africa strategy, with a focus on business, defense, and infrastructure financing (Ministry of External Affairs, 2015). This shift affected the relationship with Nigeria, bringing both benefits and challenges. On one hand, Nigerian companies and policymakers were presented with new opportunities for partnership and investment, particularly in sectors like infrastructure and defense (Okonkwo, 2021). On the other hand, India's more transactional approach might have clashed with Nigeria's traditional developmental diplomacy, requiring adjustments in expectations and engagement strategies (Ogundele, 2022).

The shift in Nigeria's political orientation under Buhari towards prioritizing economic recovery and security also influenced diplomatic interactions (Adebayo, 2021). While India sought opportunities for investment and energy security, Nigeria's domestic policies, such as foreign exchange controls and local content rules, created complexities for Indian businesses (Ogundele, 2022). Navigating these required refined diplomatic efforts (Chatterjee, 2020).

The involvement of the Indian diaspora became increasingly important, fostering commercial and cultural ties recognized by both governments (Ibrahim & Singh, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic led to adjustments in diplomatic practice, including virtual summits and a focus on health diplomacy, with India providing vaccines and medical supplies to Nigeria (Government of India, 2021).

Multilateral cooperation remained a constant pillar, with both countries advocating for a more representative international system and supporting each other's global goals in forums like the UN, BRICS, and G20 (Sharma, 2022).

In summary, the changes in political orientation led to a shift in diplomatic practices. India moved towards a more strategic and outcome-oriented approach, while Nigeria focused on pragmatic alliances supporting domestic priorities (Kumar, 2020; Adebayo, 2021). These

shifts influenced the nature of bilateral interactions, emphasizing tangible results in areas like trade, investment, and security, while also creating challenges related to domestic policies and security environments. The relationship adapted through continued high-level engagement, specific initiatives like ITEC and health diplomacy, and sustained multilateral cooperation (Ministry of External Affairs, 2015; Government of India, 2021).

Conclusion

The political changes in India (UPA to BJP) and Nigeria (PDP to APC) between 2009 and 2023 significantly impacted the orientation and practice of their diplomatic relations. India shifted towards a more strategic and economically driven foreign policy under Modi, actively pursuing opportunities in Africa. Nigeria's focus under Buhari became more domestically oriented, prioritizing economic recovery, security, and anti-corruption in its foreign engagements. These divergent orientations required adjustments in diplomatic strategies on both sides.

Despite these shifts, the underlying robustness of the India-Nigeria relationship persisted, demonstrating the importance of mutual respect, shared developmental goals, and institutional foundations in maintaining ties through changing political tides. The collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the humanitarian and solidarity aspects of their relationship. The relationship is a key example of South-South collaboration, adaptable in the face of political upheavals and ideological changes due to historical solidarity, mutual respect, and economic complementarity. One of the most crucial lessons learned is that, absent significant ideological changes that contradict earlier agreements, political change does not always cause bilateral diplomacy to suffer. The fundamental objectives of mutual benefit, South-South collaboration, and strategic partnership persisted in the case of India and Nigeria, even though the tone and content of diplomacy changed. This partnership's tenacity highlights how crucial mutual respect, common developmental goals, and institutional stability are to preserving diplomatic ties in the face of shifting political tides.

Based on the outcome of the study on the political and diplomatic relations between India and Nigeria from 2009 to 2023, the following recommendations are hereby put forward;

1. Owing to the impact of the political changes on diplomatic relations, the government of Nigeria and India should hold regular bilateral meeting with legislative backing stating the time to hold such meeting in order to reduce changes in domestic political leadership and have a more stable forum for a long-term relationship.
2. Also, India High Commission of Nigeria in Abuja should provide timely advices and economic intelligence to businesses operating in Nigeria on the need to comply with political and local regulatory frameworks. Nigeria government on its part should also provide open regulatory environments to attract more investment from India especially in ICT, healthcare, education and agriculture.

3. On the defense, India should collaborate with Nigeria especially in the area of insurgency management, counter-terrorism expertise and military training in order to combat the current security challenges.
4. Both India and Nigeria government needs to invest in people centered diplomacy which includes diaspora engagement, student scholarships, cultural festival and exchange of professionals to create a long-term relationship between both countries.
5. India and Nigeria government should continue to participate in multilateral forums likes G7, the commonwealths and United Nations as well as jointly advocating for the climate justice, global south interest, equitable global economic governance and UN security council reform.
6. India and Nigeria should also continue to invest in e-diplomacy which will allows their missions to engage in active digital platforms for consular services, real time communications and public diplomacy in order to reach wider audiences.
7. Both countries should also establish research centers focusing on public health, diplomacy, technology transfer and sustainable development in order to deepen their policy and intellectual engagement with each other.
8. India government should encourage private investment that can support job creation and value addition in Nigeria, while Nigeria government on its part should also promote exports in manufacturing, services and agricultures to India as against oil and gas which is being majorly exported to India.
9. Above all, Nigeria and India governments should continue to uphold the principle of non-alignment and south-south engagement which provide a moral and ideology based on their diplomatic identify from traditional power politics that can position them as leading partner in global development.

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