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**Fostering Turkish-Nigerian
Strategic Cooperation**

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Fostering Turkish-Nigerian Strategic Cooperation

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Preamble

As both the Turkish and Nigerian governments pursue reorientations of their countries from previous courses they were following, it has become imperative that they seek partnership and cooperation outside the traditional areas, they were tied to, in order to sustain the trajectories they are setting their countries on.

In an era of increasing great power competition, where large powers increasingly use a variety of coercive means (sanctions for the US, and debt for China) to compel small states into their respective camps, middle powers that are too big to be easily coerced into submission by great powers, and yet too small to challenge the great powers directly, can balance out pressure from the larger powers and their poles and also project out of their areas, by aligning strategically with like minded middle powers.

Such an arrangement is more beneficial as it allows powers of equal capabilities in geographically divergent regions that cannot otherwise project power, into each others spheres of influence, to work together to achieve mutually beneficial goals of maintaining strategic autonomy, and playing on a global strategy. For example we currently see a growing alignment between Japan, India and Australia, to balance out China, and France and Germany to shepherd European integration and stability in the face of American uncertainty and also balance out the threat posed by Russia. especially diplomats and businessmen, in both countries, and from our conversations plus our assessment of the state of bilateral relations etc, we have written what we hope is a road map of sorts, to serve as a reference on fostering a strategic partnership between Nigeria and Turkey.

Introduction

Nigeria and Turkey are two powers with a long history of relations starting from the late 16th century, when the Mai or Sultan of Kanem-Bornu (a sahelian empire that centred in Northeast Nigeria and spread across the region upto Southern Libya and Eastern Sudan), Idris Ali Alooma dispatched a diplomatic mission across the Sahara and Mediterranean to the court of the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul.

Today possessing a population of 200million and 80million respectively, Nigeria and Turkey are currently rediscovering their strategic autonomy after decades of subordinating their interests to the Pan-Africanism (in the case of Nigeria), and the Euro-Atlantic order (in the case of Turkey). As the world faces a future in which great power competition will most likely be the most prominent determinant of trends, smaller states risk getting forced into rigid blocs led by the major global powers, that do not necessarily have their interests at heart.

To retain their newly reclaimed strategic autonomy in the face of great power pressure (Turkey over the S-400 and its legitimate security interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and Nigeria over its growing economic ties with China and human rights abuse allegations in security operations), and to ensure that they retain freedom of manoeuvre in their individual dealings with both the Euro-Atlantic bloc and the Sino-Russian bloc, it is necessary that relations between Nigeria and Turkey across board are upgraded, and become rooted in a deeper engagement and strategic cooperation.

What A Turkish-Nigerian Strategic Partnership Should Look Like

Turkey today is a major defence items producer, a major shipbuilding country, and an all round growing industrial power. Turkey needs secure energy supplies, particularly in oil and gas that will not leave it vulnerable to major powers in its vicinity (for example Iran and Russia). Turkish exporters also need a market for their goods.

Nigerian on the other requires massive amounts of infrastructural development in road and rail transport, power generation, transmission and distribution, health and education. In addition, Nigeria needs technological assistance, skills transfer to develop a more skilled workforce, investments in developing its oil and gas sector particular in petroleum refining and gas liquefaction etc. Also the Nigerian Armed Forces requires access to modern weapons systems especially those relevant to the current counterinsurgency campaign in its northeast region, which they often cannot purchase from traditional Western suppliers due to restrictions imposed by those governments because of political concerns, thus hampering their ability to fight. A Turkish-Nigerian Strategic Partnership would see both countries leveraging on each other's strengths to fortify their own vulnerabilities and preserve their independence of action.

Economic Cooperation

Priority should be given at the highest levels of both governments to developing, negotiating, enacting and ratifying a mutually beneficial free trade agreement between Nigeria and Turkey, along with a strategic economic cooperation framework to guide relations in the economic sphere between both countries.

Under a strategic partnership, the Turkish Foreign Trade Authority[1] should invest in creating continuous links between Turkish industry, exporters and investors, and their Nigerian counterparts, through organising regular exhibitions and fairs for Turkish concerns in Nigeria, sponsoring and organising tours of Turkey and Turkish industrial concerns for Nigerian industrialists, exporters, investors etc, cooperating with the Nigerian Ministry of Trade and Investment[2] to organise tours of Nigeria for Turkish business people, and organising regular fairs and exhibitions for Nigerian products and producers in Turkey.

Also, the Turkish Foreign Trade Authority, the Turkish Central Bank[3], and the Turkish Export Credit Bank[4], should work with Nigeria's Ministry of Trade and Investment, the Nigerian Central Bank[5] and the Nigerian Export-Import Bank[6], to create and foster the necessary financial instruments for large scale Turkish investment in Nigeria and vice versa.

A continuous effort should be made by both the Turkish Foreign Trade Authority and the Nigerian Ministry of Trade and Investment to match Turkish suppliers with Nigerian producers, and vice versa, and this effort should be institutionalised, through specific departments within the two government agencies in addition to a Turkish-Nigerian Chamber of Commerce.

Industrial Cooperation

Nigeria has a large and growing need for steel and cement, with a very weak steel and metallurgy industrial base and a cement production capacity that cannot meet its needs despite significant potential for expansion. Nigeria's Ministry of Trade and Investment and the Turkish Foreign Trade Authority should work together with the Turkish Export Credit Bank and the Nigerian Export Import Bank, to create the financial instruments for Turkish steel and cement producers to invest in joint ventures with private Nigerian steel and cement concerns that will fill up the massive gap between what Nigeria needs and what Nigeria currently produces.

Perhaps, a Nigeria-Turkey Industrial Development Bank may be created and funded sufficiently by both governments to provide the capital credit base through which such Turkish-Nigerian joint ventures in cement and steel can be funded on favourable terms.

Turkish manufacturers should be encouraged to take advantage of the large and cheap labour pool in Nigeria to scale up manufacturing of Turkish consumer brands for the Nigerian market and the larger West and Central African market. And Turkish exports to Nigeria should be encouraged to be more of designs, parts and industrial production machinery, and less of finished goods, which will integrate Turkish and Nigerian production systems to a great degree.

To kickstart strategic industrial cooperation between Nigeria and Turkey, the Turkish Foreign Trade Authority (and the larger Turkish government) should provide technical support to the Nigerian government in revising current trade, investment, technology transfer, intellectual property protection laws, regulations and statutes, and in updating them or drafting new ones where necessary.

Infrastructural Cooperation

Turkey possesses a plethora of construction companies with experience in large-scale infrastructural projects. Nigeria has a massive infrastructural deficit in road and rail transport, water, electricity generation, transmission and distribution, seaports etc.

The Turkish Foreign Trade Authority, working with the Nigerian Ministry of Power, Works and Housing, can design a framework through which Turkish investment financing, or Turkish based investment vehicles can fund infrastructural projects across Nigeria, with Turkish construction companies providing the technical capacity and employing Nigerian labour. Also the Turkish Foreign Trade Authority could organise an infrastructural investment vehicles for Nigerian investors to put funding for infrastructural projects in Turkey.

Nigeria today has a housing deficit of more than 20million units[7], with only a hundred thousand units being built annually, which is inadequate to fill the gap, instead increasing the already gaping deficit. Turkey's Public Housing Development Administration aka TOKI[8] working together with the Export Credit Bank of Turkey and MUSIAD the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association of Turkey[9], Nigeria's Ministries of Trade and Investment and Power, Works and Housing[10], Nigeria's Federal Housing Authority(FHA)[11], and the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria(FMBN) [12] can develop a framework for TOKI and the FHA to work together to establish housing concessions across Nigeria in collaboration with Nigerian and Turkish private real estate developers.

FHA/TOKI housing concessions can then be funded by investment vehicles anchored by Turkey's Export Credit Bank and the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria, providing credit to Turkish and Nigerian real estate developers.

As part of the strategic partnership between Turkey and Nigeria, Turkish companies should be granted priority in concessions to build and operate new seaports in Nigeria, and the same level of priority should be extended by Turkey to Nigerian companies and consortiums seeking to do the same.

To source funding for Nigerian government investment in infrastructural credit financing vehicles, quietly, the Nigerian government could reach a deal with persons known to have amassed wealth either through kickbacks, looting, or other corrupt ways, and who are holding such wealth offshore, that would see the Nigerian government ease off from chasing them if they invested their ill gotten wealth in designated infrastructural investment vehicles based in Turkey, and focusing on projects Nigeria and Turkey. Such a model could also be used to provide the credit financing for implementing Turkish-Nigerian economic and industrial cooperation programmes.

Cultural and Educational Cooperation

As a majority Muslim country, Turkey through its Directorate of Religious Affairs or DIYANET[13], is well placed to help Nigeria research and put forward narratives that uplift the Islamic consciousness of its Muslim population while countering the nihilistic tendencies of Khariji/extremist groups. Cooperation between the Turkish DIYANET and Nigeria's Jamaa'atu Nasril-Islam or JNI, and the National Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), should form a cornerstone of cultural cooperation in this regard. The DIYANET should sponsor young Nigerians aspiring to become scholars of Islam to study in Turkey, in addition to working with JNI and NSCIA to establish Islamic schools and universities in Nigeria to serve the religious needs of Nigeria's Muslim population.

Turkey through the Turkish Maarif Foundation[14], should establish Turkish schools and continuously expand the number of such schools in Nigeria and their reach, ensuring that in every state of Nigeria there is at least one Turkish Maarif Foundation school.

Also through the Turkish Scholarships Foundation, Turkey should provide annual scholarships to Nigerian students to study at the university and post graduate level in Turkey, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics courses, in substantial numbers (at least 2,000 students per annum), particularly from less developed and more populous Northern Nigeria.

Turkey should also invest in a programme to attract the large numbers of Nigerian students leaving Nigeria each year to study in the UK, US, Malaysia, Ghana, Ukraine and Canada. This programme if successful will see as many as 30,000 Nigerian students paying to study in Turkish universities as against the current number of below 3,000[15].

Turkey's Yunus Emre Institute should invest in expanding programmes for Nigerians to learn the Turkish language both online and offline, creating applications and establishing language centres.

Development Cooperation

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency or TIKA[16] should engage Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Education in providing continuous training to Nigerian teachers and education administrators, while constructing schools, laboratories and libraries and providing Nigerian universities with technical equipment.

TIKA should also partner with Nigeria's Ministry of Interior, and Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency or NEMA in helping Nigeria develop and sustain improved humanitarian and emergency response capabilities. TIKA should also provide Nigeria through its Ministry of Interior with technical and material support in rebuilding infrastructure destroyed by the Boko Haram conflict in North-east Nigeria etc.

TIKA should work with Nigerian non-governmental development organisations and civil society outfits, to develop the capacity of local NGOs to professionally operate in the sector. TIKA should also invest in training a pool of individual development workers in Nigeria. Also, TIKA should help Turkish NGOs match up with Nigerian NGOs in their field to foster greater people to people ties in the development sector.

Defence Cooperation

The Nigerian Armed Forces are currently focused on firstly defeat insurgent groups and stabilise the internal security of the country, and secondly projecting Nigerian power across the continent in support of political directives. These two priorities dictate that they need to develop new capabilities that they currently do not have. The Turkish Armed Forces on the other hand have been fighting a long-running insurgency against the PKK terrorist organisation which they have pushed into Iraq and Syria, while carrying out expeditionary operations against the PKK's affiliates in both countries and the Islamic State Group in Syria, conducting proxy warfare against the Assad regime in Syria, and maintaining a strong conventional deterrence capability against Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey under a strategic partnership framework, should create mechanisms to transfer the knowledge and skills its armed forces have developed over the years operating on multiple fronts, in multiple warfare modes, to the Nigerian Armed Forces.

A long-term programme to have substantial numbers of Nigerian military officers attend Turkish military colleges, would go hand in hand with continuous joint militarily exercises between the Turkish and Nigerian Armed Forces.

A strategic defence cooperation framework would also see Turkey working with Nigeria in expanding Nigeria's defence industrial production capabilities, and providing Nigeria with access to quality weapons and defence technology that it currently cannot procure due to Western countries refusing to sell these items to Nigeria for political reasons.

Diplomatic Cooperation

The success of the entire Nigerian-Turkish Strategic Partnership, will depend on the diplomatic cooperation and coordination between both sides.

To begin with, Turkey needs to expand its diplomatic presence across Nigeria. The Turkish Foreign Ministry must invest in opening Consulate Generals in Kano and Port-Harcourt, and consulates in other cities, while appointing Honorary Consul Generals and Consuls to represent and advance its interests across the country.

Turkey should also work with Nigeria to gradually liberalise travel between both countries, starting with a visa on arrival policy, and extending the number of places Turkish short term visas can be applied for in Nigeria.

A Turkish-Nigerian Strategic Coordination council should be formed and co-chaired by the Presidents of both countries, while including the two Foreign Ministers, the two national security advisers, the two Defence Ministers, the two Central Bank Governments, the heads of the external intelligence and internal intelligence agencies of both countries, the two chiefs of the Armed Forces, the chiefs of staff to both Presidents, the officials responsible for trade and investment, the two ministers of interior, and the closest political adviser of each President.

This council, should meet every year in rotation between Abuja and Ankara, to set the broad stroke agenda for bilateral cooperation for the the next year.

To follow up on this the Turkish and Nigerian Ministries of Foreign Affairs, should work closely to organise continuous contact between key interlocutors within both governments at the operational level, through summits and roundtables focusing on the relationship, through bilateral meetings between individual ministers and agency heads, and through supporting research to constantly review and assess the development of the relationship and the implementation of agreed upon strategic cooperation frameworks.

END NOTES

[1] DEiK available at:

www.deik.org.tr

[2] Nigerian Ministry of Trade and Investment:

www.fmti.gov.ng

[3] Turkish Central Bank:

www.tcmb.gov.tr

[4] Turkish Export Credit Bank:

www.eximbank.gov.tr

[5] Central Bank of Nigeria:

www.cbn.gov.ng

[6] Nigerian Export-Import Bank:

www.nexim.gov.ng

[7] Nigeria's Housing Deficit:

<http://housingfinanceafrica.org/countries/nigeria/>

<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2018/12/19/nigeria-has-20m-housing-deficit-says-osinbajo/>

[8] TOKI available at:

www.toki.gov.tr

[9] MUSIAD available here:

www.musiad.org.tr

[10] Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing of Nigeria:

www.pwh.gov.ng

[11] Federal Housing Authority (of Nigeria):

www.fha.gov.ng

[12] Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria

www.fmbn.gov.ng

[13] DIYANET:

www.diyanet.gov.tr

[14] Turkish Maarif Foundation:

www.turkiyemaarif.org

[15] Data on Nigerian students studying abroad available here:

<http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow#slideoutmenu>

[16] TIKa available at:

www.tika.gov.tr

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