

The Impact of Fethullah Gulen’s Movement in Nigeria: Implications on Foreign Relations

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Abstract - Throughout the years, the foreign policy of Turkey has impacted enormously on numerous African countries from multiple points of view. It is either attempting to contend with other wealthy countries such as China and India or trying to provide assistance in conflict zones like Somalia, Sudan and Niger. Recently, however, there is a growing need to analyze the interest which seems to be generating on the focus of turkey in Nigeria, which is an essential nation of Africa. This article investigates the evolving situation and upcoming prospect of the Fethullah Gülen movement (GM) in the aftermath of the 15 July 2016 failed coup in Turkey. Following the crackdown by Turkish authorities, the implication of the coup projects a bleak future for the GM. Up till this moment, it is not sure if the movement will survive this upheaval. This investigation also intends to explore the movement’s civil society branches in business and education will survive the purge, as well as its implication on the transnational relationship. What will become the fate of GM’s international network of branches if they are uprooted from their Turkish bases? Will it lead to the extinction of the GM activities as we know it? What effect will the conflict between the GM and the Turkish government have on its African philanthropic activities and especially in Nigeria? Subsequently, this paper seeks to examine the association and interests of Turkey in Nigeria. The article will throw light on why it is focusing on Nigeria rather other nations in the African subregion. It will further discuss the implication and otherwise of the failure of Turkish foreign policy in Nigeria. This is a proposition study that is based on foreign policy viewpoints as a theoretical framework.

Keywords – Fethullah Gülen movement, Non-State Actor, International Relations, Nigeria, Turkey

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I. INTRODUCTION

Fethullah Gülen was declared the world’s top living intellectual by the foreign policy and prospect magazines in a 2008 poll [1]. In declaring the survey results, the FP magazine portrayed Gülen as “an inspirational leader to millions of followers around the world and persona non grata to many in his native Turkey, where some consider him a threat to the country’s secular order” Fethullah Gülen has been affirmed to be and respected as a Muslim thinker and a scholarly trailblazer. They stimulated a whole lot of philanthropic, social and educational actions to launch a new religious philosophy that marches with modern times [2]. Fethullah Gullen was also recognized for his commitments to global peace through his exchange exercises and instructive endeavors all over the world [3]. Gülen concentrated on giving sound and qualitative education to young minds, with the conviction that it is this investing in the free-market economy will empower young Muslims to achieve the needed leverage for intellectual pursuit in Turkey. It is the formation of the GM around the ideals of Fethullah Gullen that led to the birth of the GM [4]. The practical components of the GM are what is comprised of “grassroots movements of practicing faithful Turkish people who did not want to abandon their faith tradition while embracing the modern age,” supported by a preponderant segment of the Turkish population, which comprise of people from the businesses, media and other franchises. Ayaz [5] noted that movements such as international non-governmental organizations could promote international diplomacies independent of their home governments this is so because they can foster peace and their recognition for the need to absorb social, cultural and business aims of other countries. The comprehension of these types of international organizations leads to a better knowledge of how the international system works. Movements like the Gullen’s movement can be an asset to international human relations. The Gulen movement also adopts the logic of neoliberalism with which the movement expands and transforms its business networks, comprising from insurance companies and banks—to name a few into an Islamic-based economic empire [6]. The movement founded mass media, newspapers, magazines, radio, and television to expand its Islamic mission.

Furthermore, for the sake of da’wa and its mission to deliver the so-called golden generations of Muslims, the movement established educational institutions across the globe. Nigeria is a heterogeneous country that is comprised of people from a different ethnic, religious and educational background and found the thoughts

and teachings of Fethullah Gulen acceptable and palatable. The impact of the Gulen movement activities is also felt in Nigeria. Nigeria is a country of multicultural backgrounds with a diverse population from over 250 ethnic groups from a diverse background. Nigeria is the bastion of both astonishing prosperity (one-fifth of US oil comes from Nigeria) and abject poverty. The pioneer Nigerian Turkish International Colleges started in September 1998. The school kicked off with a 76-student strength a rented building at Cairo Street, Wuse 2, Abuja [7]. It is a registered private institution bearing the name Nigerian Turkish International Colleges (NTICs) and run by SURAT Educational Institutions Limited. In Nigeria, the schools have a good reputation. The contribution the movement makes to Nigerian education is enormous. The question here is whether the Gülen-inspired schools have been able to make a reasonable contribution to the development of peace, tolerance, dialogue and harmony, and foreign policy.

However, despite the many years of cordial relationship between Nigeria and Turkey, the bilateral relations then reached its lowest ebb entrenched in policy failures [8]. That is to say, significant agreements were not reached on so many issues by both countries' diplomats. Despite the new shape of the bilateral relations, limited studies were conducted by the scholars of international relations in this perspective. The work mentioned above is the closest effort to this proposed research which was undertaken to examine the impact of the Gulen's movement on Turkish-Nigerian foreign relations. This work focuses on the role of faith-based NGOs in international relations using Fethullah Gulen's Movement activities in Nigeria as a case study [9].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Works of literature have been reviewed across the world to show that Fethullah Gulen's movement has been a subject of amalgamated organizational debates, consideration, analysis, theory-building and investigation on its causes and consequences is significant for the development of appropriate relationships which is in constant evolution concerning the global, political and social change [10][11][12][13]. Despite the handiness of knowledge in current pieces of literature in terms of Fethullah Gulen's movement, there doesn't seem to be a precise conceptual template for looking at the constructs of the subjects towards concluding how they may influence foreign relations [14][15][16].

Fethullah Gulen Movement

The Gülen movement shares the philosophy of many Western, Christian, philanthropic initiatives in education particularly the dialogue between the three Abrahamic faiths which is a bit alien to the majority of the Muslim world [17]. The indispensability of the movement's cherished ideals to decision-makers and policymakers finds themselves in the ideological war against the cleavages and threat of terrorism and racism is quite glaring. A careful assessment of the four major components of civility – tolerance, cooperation, reciprocity, trust - brings to fore how dire is the need for the teachings and philosophy of the Gülen movement in securing and achieving ideal civil societies [18]. Gülen movement schools succeeded in advancing transparency, harmony and exchange in a general public that is profoundly split along ethnic and spiritual positions. Be that as it may, what attracted individuals to Gülen's sermons were his huge spiritual callings before a large number of audience members and open talks which were recorded and sold all over the nation.

His audience members comprised of both wealthy, middle class, the poor downtrodden of the society and highly educated college graduates. These groups of people are responsible for the financial lifeline of the movement. He pulled in individuals who bolstered his thoughts, by going to his talks, yet besides helping financially and humanitarily. Fethullah Gülen assisted students, their parents and other members in raising money for building the "Al-Nur" house of light which became the platform for the movement's teaching [19]. The "Al-Nur" platform became the source of inspiration and hope for the multitude of people who troupe there daily. This is the phase in Mr Gülen's calling at which a gathering of individuals numbering over one hundred started to be noticeable as a help gathering, that is, a gathering that met up around his comprehension of what it is to give back to the community [20]. Accordingly, historically assessed the new circumstances and upcoming course of the GM concerning the 15 July 2016 attempted coup in Turkey and the successive suppression by its government [21]. The authors described the issue of GM existence which took the form of an existential crisis for the movement and have left members stranded in transnational political exile. This study is attempting tried to establish how the movement fared in education and business networks under the new dispensation.

Impact of Movement's Public on International relations

Bashir [22] asserted that FP is tactics that the respective government utilize when relating to each other. It all depends on the choices that countries make in respect to what they want to achieve with other countries. The components of most FP are based on diplomatic, trade, military and economic agreements. While these approaches are customized towards serving the interests of countries included, they may in some cases have the unwanted effect that may prompt other more concerning issues than it tried to address. They may ruin government programmers and even lead to the collapse of governments [23]. Unpleasant developments such as

these are called FP disasters [24] FP disappointments or FP flops [25]. If a country comprehends the meaning of FP failures and let-downs helps countries to comprehend the effect of FP because the success of FP is perceived as the achievement of the whole country [26]. Along these lines, this article sees the influence of FP as either a success or failure to a particular depending on the way it is handled.

The success of FP is evaluated based on the strength of policies if positive or negative. As part of its move towards globalization, the Turkey-Nigeria relations are perceived by the Turkish government as its strategy towards that direction of "Opening up to Africa" [27]. The aim of Turkish FP, especially concerning Nigeria, is based on the hope that the policy will be beneficial to the citizens of both countries. As a result, on a general note, Turkey-Nigeria FP interests is both economical and political. These two are the citadel of a success FP in the international setting. Both economic and political interest thus helps in advancing FP agendas and ambitions and the other way round. Thus, the financial impact of a nation in another nation encroaches on its political impact in that [28]. Throughout the years, Turkey and Nigeria have kept up excellent political relations. Both Turkey and Nigeria are considered to have the political will to help collective progress relations in required fields. The explanation is because the two nations are members of OIC and members of D-8 association of developing countries. Nigeria and Turkey share the membership of different international organizations [29]. There seems to be a flourishing economic relationship between both countries, and it has survived for some years.

The volume of business transaction between both countries reached over 1.144,9 million USD in 2015, including Turkey's import of oil and LNG. There is no doubt about the fact that in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria is Turkey's most prominent business associate. The presence of Turkey can be felt in Nigeria can be seen by numerous Turkish businesses and interest [30]. The name Gülen never shows up in matters of discussions, and that type of "camouflage" is one of the elements of the movement since the 1970s. This stealthy way of operation has afforded the movement the secrecy and confidentiality it needs to survive. The movement has been known to have its presence in Africa since 1994 and has spread to some 54 African countries. In reality, Turkey's action in Africa, most prominently in SSA, has generally relied upon Gülenist associations working in four principle fields: humanitarian aid, business, media, and education. Gülenist commitment in Africa was driven, at any rate at first, by honest intentions, however, after 2016, it turned out to be sure that its exercises were a front for it to achieve its long-term ambition which is to have spread and tentacles everywhere around the world.

Unfortunately, the FP initiatives between Nigeria and Turkey was put to the test after the failed coup. This led to the Turkish government making a formal request from the Nigerian government not to recognize the GM any longer. Incidentally, Nigeria, for a long time, has already invested millions of dollars into Turkish institutions for so many years as other African nations. Consequently, all these investments have helped to improve a lot of both countries economically. In any case, immediately after the coup, the Turkish government made a formal request to the Nigeria government for all these investment and institutions to be closed down. From that point forward, the relationship between Nigeria and Turkey deteriorated, and it reached a point where differences reached an irreconcilable proportion level. This marked a new low in the relationship between Nigeria and Turkey as well as the loss of confidence and trust between both countries. Turkey has for a long time, preceding the coup had a clean sheet of relationship with Africa. The way Turkey presents itself as a secular Muslim nation by the USA has helped projected a positive image of Turkey in Africa and around the world. This brilliant picture of Turkey is what has attracted it to Nigeria as a model in FP dealings.

The Implications of the 15 July Failed Coup Attempt

Between 2005 and 2014, the GM development had an extraordinary spot in the detailing and useful usage of Turkey's incursion into Africa. Conversely, the cracks emerged between the government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the GM, which lead to some crisis inside Turkey, which had severe ramifications for the GM home and abroad. The Turkish government has been in a state of war with the GM since 2014. This has led to the closing down of the movement's schools and other institutions both at home and outside of Turkey. The Turkish government has continued to pressure the GM, and it reaches a new height when the government declared it a terrorist organization. As a result of the 15 July overthrow, Ankara needed to take part in the conflict considerably further abroad, neutralizing Gülenist purposeful publicity and its enlistment apparatus. For this reason, Turkey has been applying pressure on African governments to close down all GM identified interest and institutions. Simultaneously, the Turkish government knows that they have to redefine their African strategy as it searches for new strategies for engaging with the international community [31].

The principal focus of Ankara's nullification endeavours is to eliminate a whole lot of the GM's network of schools, universities and institutions in both Turkey and abroad. Unquestionably, GM's network of educational institutions is a veritable source of finance and revenue for promoting its activities. At this stage, the Turkish government sees all these as a national security matter for Turkey. The Turkish government aims to counter the GM by establishing its versions of such educational institutions or replace that of the GM altogether.

The Turkish government went as far as establishing the Maarif Foundation, an auspice of the Turkish education ministry. But things didn't seem to go smoothly as they become complicated. Turkey soon ran into a problem with so many governments who refused the instruction of the Turkish government to close down those institutions.

Despite Ankara's earnest attempts, the GM fought back via propaganda and took a harsh stance against the Turkish government's position. To be sure, even though about all Gülen-affiliated media action inside Turkey has been closed down or taken over by the express, its media endeavours outside Turkey were still flourishing and enduring. The proactiveness of the GM's affiliates and adherents is leading to reawakening among the Gülenist diaspora in Africa that works as a campaign against the Turkish government. Moreover, the ties set up by the fethullahçı with the African government leaders have made the Africans to side with the GM and ignored the Turkish overdrives. Those African nations with weak bilateral and diplomatic relationship with turkey have refused to cooperate with Turkey over the matter. Given these developments, the Turkish government are in a dilemma, because if they push those governments too far, it will lead to a collapse in their relationship and bilateral cooperation.

Theoretical Frameworks of the Study

In comprehending the GM, two theoretical frameworks are advanced to explain its successes both in Turkey and internationally. The theoretical frameworks to be employed in this study are the complex interdependency theory and the social movement theory. The two theories are, therefore explained below as they relate to the research.

Complex Interdependence theory

The essence of adopting this theory is that the theory has taken into consideration the role of international organizations as well as states. Keohane and Nye [32] view interdependence as reciprocal effects among actors resulting from international transactions- the flow of money, good, people and messages across international borders. Complex interdependence recognizes the role of transnational actors vis-à-vis the state. The theory highlighted the emergence of international regimes and institutions that identify the importance of welfare, trade and other related issues. Additionally, complex interdependence is a backbone of the neoliberal view of international politics. The theory posits that the states are ready to enter cooperative alliances with one another under complex interdependence [33].

While highlighting the increasing importance of the International Organizations (IOs) and Multinational Corporation (MNCs), complex interdependence has projected what is popularly known as globalization. The era of interdependence has changed the nature of international relations, and the states have become more interdependent in all aspects. Chaudoin, Milner, and Pang [34] assert that the agenda of interstate relations involve multiple issues that are not arranged in an evident or harmonious order. They argue that military issue does not consistently dominate the agenda, among other issues [35]. According to Keohane and Nye [36] "dependence means a state of being determined or significantly affected by external forces. Interdependence, most simply defined, means mutual dependence. Interdependence in world politics refers to situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or actors in different countries [37].

Social Movement Theory

Tilly sees a social movement as a "distinctive way of pursuing public politics" [38] and the process through which the ordinary people engage in politics [38][40]. For Tilly, SMT absorbs campaign and repertoire, along with what he termed WUNC "for displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment "[41]. SMT uses "campaigns of collective claims on target authorities" in an "array of claim-making performances" (or repertoire) and "public representations of the cause's" WUNC to pursue their aims. Tilly [42] enlarges WUNC by describing how "social movements validate worthiness through legitimizing attributes such as sober demeanor and neat clothing, unity through standardization, numbers through filling the streets, and commitment through resistance to oppression and widespread participation" among other examples. He contends that social movements proclaim widespread control, solve changing claims internally, and are easily adoptable by modelling, communication, and collaboration. According to Tilly, social movements are occasional, meaning that they arise, becomes apparent and then later disappear. Tilly recognizes the "shifting political conditions that made social movements possible". Absorbing these concept helps a lot in comprehending the GM in Turkey as a function of the more liberal atmosphere that emerged following the end of the military junta in 1983.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this research, a qualitative case study approach is proposed, as it is seen as the most appropriate methodology for enlightening the procedure of peacebuilding and strengthening international diplomacy by faith-based NGOs. A case study is a vital method of social science research that offers a thorough and organised

investigation of an individual unit [43]. This method may involve several data sources, such as documents, archival records, and artefacts, depending on the subject of the case study. Often, in studies of this type, the focus is on a critical case that can shed light on the research phenomena at hand [44]. This case study is guided by the explanation building approach that consists of the construction of description and illustration of the phenomenon under investigation including causes, processes, and outcomes based on the theoretical framework chosen to inform the phenomenon [44].

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research has studied the Turkish-Nigeria FP postures. It revealed that the two countries had had a fantastic and cordial relationship which can be considered as FP achievement. The record shows that both countries relationship has been through years of different engagement which have helped them to realize their common goals. GM's diplomatic strategy in Africa is operated within the context of diverse levels. Given its substantial visibility in public society, especially in the African continent has transformed it the best-known advocate of Turkish diplomacy in the diaspora.

Nevertheless, the assessment found that the Turkey-Nigeria FP dealings are not without hitches because it has its moments of successes and failures. Relations, like most FPs, have not been entirely devoid of policy failures. This ugly angle of their FP manifested after the failed coup, and the failed attempt by the Turkish government to close down the GM's education institutions in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Unfortunately, the move proved to be an albatross that led to the collapse of good diplomatic relations between both countries. The implementation of any such move would have denied Nigeria the gains of her investment if it had been successful. Therefore, mutual benefit is the cornerstone of the Nigeria Turkish relationship as with other such relationships in the diaspora. However, it is suggested that political motives and over calculations are separated from good FP objectives to avoid the possible collapse of diplomatic and bilateral relations. It is also advised that active participation in corporate social responsibility by Turkish businesses and interest to booster and strengthen bilateral relationships and agreements.

It can be said that the gigantic educational movement of the Fethullah Gulen Group all over the world can be considered as an indication of the nature of trust and cooperation within that community. Otherwise, Fethullah Gulen will not be able to organize both businessmen and educators for the community's educational campaign. It is clear that the Fethullah Gulen Community is a dynamic case for debate on the idea of social capital, civil society and its prospects for democratic consolidation in Turkey. There is general paranoia concerning what will be of the Gulen movement in the wake of the clampdown by the government of Tayyip Erdoğan. As the Turkish government aims to take over schools, its policy does not include intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. Although there is no change in the rights of non-Muslim minorities in Turkey, Erdoğan also announced openly during his last visit to Pakistan that there is no dialogue between Muslims and Christians. It is therefore possible to speculate, according to Erdoğan's anti-dialogue rhetoric, what kind of pedagogy and comprehension the Turkish government will grow when schools are handed over to them. The AKP would replace the constructive contributions of the movement to avoid conflicts in countries where Christian-Muslim friction exists with Islamist rhetoric and will generate confrontation instead of exchange of ideas. Finally, civil society movements in countries where schools are handed over will need to review their financial contributions. If, contrary to other African nations, in countries such as Senegal, where functional democracy exists, the licenses of Gülen schools are revoked without a legal decision, and if the schools are handed over to a Turkish government base, this will stop any business or civil society organization considering operating in Senegal from doing so. It is clear how the extent of democracy and the rule of law in such a country would be viewed in an atmosphere where the authoritarian approach of Erdoğan and his acts of despotism are noted by human rights organizations.

Research indicates that the education offered is typically above the regular educational standard of the country. If the schools are handed over to the Maarif Foundation, the high level of education provided, the academic performance, the happiness of parents, and the English-language education are not likely to be maintained, as the Turkish State will send its own teachers from Turkey and Turkey's own persistent education challenges will be exported to the receiving countries.

The problems of Turkey in the field of education have recently been presented in the Pisa research prepared by the OECD. The country has many problems with its education system, according to this report, and it is unclear how Turkey will contribute to education in Africa in this situation. As such, it is obvious that it will not replace the Movement's popular education model. With their accomplishments in mathematics and physics and their openness to cultural exchange, schools would be staffed and operated by opportunistic individuals. So, there would be a void in the standard of education when these schools are shut down or taken over. Turkey is far from fixing its own persistent educational issues. Educational achievement levels are very poor, particularly in cities with low incomes, and, according to data given by the OECD, these problems will only be compounded over time. Abuse and sexual discrimination against children are another educational issue in Turkey. Sexual

abuse against children has not been stopped by the AKP; such sexual crimes have particularly begun to occur in the Ensar Base, which is considered to be similar to Erdoğan's AKP. Consequently, if, in countries like Nigeria, where democracy is beginning to gain traction relative to other African countries, the licenses of Gülen schools are revoked without any legal decision, and if the schools are handed over to a Turkish government foundation, this would stop any business or civil society organization considering operating in Senegal. In an atmosphere in which the oppressive mentality of Erdoğan and his acts of despotism are noted by human rights organizations, it's clear how the degree of democracy and the rule of law would be viewed in such a world.

To conclude, today's global challenges require universal teamwork to be solved. The movement is conscious of global concerns and challenges, and they firmly believe that only global cooperation and collaboration will solve these problems. The Hizmet movement schools help build bridges between the movement and other communities in the world. The service projects and networks of the Hizmet Movement successfully open up opportunities for new ideas by bringing people together to discuss vital issues in their communities and teaching them how to solve social challenges through mutual collaboration. The movement thus helps to create insights and solutions to common problems and common concerns. The schools in conflict-ridden regions such as the Philippines, Nigeria, Macedonia, Afghanistan, Northern Iraq, Bosnia, and Kenya serve as stable, educational environments for intercultural, interethnic, and interfaith unity from the definition of the movement. These schools, regardless of their location, are seen as symbols of intellect, peace, and unity. The HM's success in promoting and maintaining cooperation and dialogue among communities pushes people to contribute to the common good in many conflicts. HM understands that we live in a global society, but we live in the same culture as Muslims, non-Muslims, or any other distinct communities. We must therefore develop a common understanding, a shared experience, and a shared code of ethics. These beliefs and traditions are recognized and accepted by individuals around the world and have added prestige to the HM.

In addition, the schools that are based on the values of the Gülen are the primary predictor of the success of this NTIC school in academic competitions, according to documentation and testimony (some from sources in the Nigerian government), achieving success in academic achievement. As a result, schools are places where people want their own children to be taught at the higher levels of Nigerian society. Furthermore, most participants were eager to announce that the schools are attracting government attention for their success and high rates of graduation. The NTIC schools in Nigeria, for instance, are among the highest achievements on the African continent in math and science [45]. Nigerians are very proud of the successes of the NTICs and thank the schools for the achievements of the Olympics in math and science. The type of training that leads to highly competitive accomplishments, of course, does not inherently signify the development of skills, understandings, and arrangements that are supposed to correlate with independent thought and successful decision-making. Outside of Nigeria, the findings of this study could be used in nations around the world to create multicultural and intercultural relationships through new school configurations that enable direct contact between members of various cultural groups.

After careful introspection, the researcher believes that the NTIC schools demonstrate the effectiveness of the Gülenian educational philosophy, particularly in conflict-ridden nations such as Nigeria, because if those participating in the study are correct, it can help reduce poverty, promote positive human development, promote peace, aid in conflict resolution, and develop educational opportunities. These elements can enable religious and tribal violence to be reduced and the implications of exclusive agendas operating in these countries to be addressed. From the foreign policy perspective, pressure from Ankara on the Nigerian government and other African countries about Gülen and the threats of "parallel state" structures is now becoming a key component of Turkish foreign policy, and only time will reveal its long-term consequence for both countries.

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