

**THE JULY 15 COUP IN TURKEY, ISLAMAPHOBIA, DOUBLE
DEMOCRATIC STANDARDS AND PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS IN
NIGERIA**

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The trajectory of interplay in the international system of nations came to a stalling preponderance to many last month, and raises many questions about its future, about democracy, about human rights, and about self-determination of nations. And it can be - may be - the final balancing of interests - either along a dichotomy of two camps or shared vision among nations with common interests, destiny, all over the continental divides. It all depends on the best outcome of the political system's repositioning and redirection in Turkey – the world's most determinant nation in history.

July 15, 2016 was a history which started in Turkey only and it is still in the news, but it holds some promises for all of humanity across the world. It was a coup attempt against the wrong system, the wrong President, and at the wrong time. It was a wrong time both in the

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instructive life of the Turks as a common people, determined and informed by their legacy in history, and wrong even at the time of day. It was meant to start when the people are asleep and finish before they wake the next day.

Turkey was a wrong nation to dare by just anyone and not at this time when it wages through world economic recession with an even stronger economy, with a stable political system that is unshaken by all attempts of diplomatic sabotage. As a person with a rising political profile across the Muslim and underdeveloped world, President Tayyip Recep Erdogan was the wrong politician to touch just like that, for he is currently the most influential and most respected Muslim leader and hero of the underdeveloped world.

And is partly why Turkey is not a country for its own nationals alone. It has never been. Scholars and students of European and Islamic civilisation and history know much of this. It is a nation which holds the roots of many disheartened, frustrated, and troubled people across all the divides, all over. Many reasons account for this. Turkey faces the East as a shield to Asia and backs the West as a gateway to Europe – it confluences two civilisations, a mixture of derived progressive values meaningful only to its people and a strategic geographical expression which played, and still plays, key roles in history. So it always mattered to the rest of the world, and her politics, economy and diplomacy is of interest to them.

But it is the only nation, I now know, whose people are more concerned about the system than politics or even the leadership. This is an expression of how people-oriented the Turkish system is. And that is exactly what most nations lack. Political orientation is an ingredient which non-western democracies need for their people to understand the risks involved in conspiracies of the hidden hands in the control of the world. Progressive nations must realise and act on this, must learn from the Turkish experience, in order to actualise

their objectives. The only other reason the Coup happened was to teach us all this and other lessons.

Thank God Turkey has crossed the line of orientation of its own democracy. And that is, exactly, the problem of its enemies and the reason for the July coup plotters has. With a strong economy and a loved democratic President, the Turkish system is a threat to the envying nations of the world and a stumbling block for their stooges - terrorists with empty political ambition, seeking power to please their patrons. By now, this theory is no longer a surprise explanation to all that happened to the Turks since 1923 and since July 15, 2016. The Turks have understood this ever since and have evolved over the years to collectively chart their course of the future.

No force succeeds against a people whose resolution about their future emanates from a depth of rich, universal socioeconomic and political history that also stretches out and touched every part of the world. No one can. Not easily. And because of that, the world needs a repositioning now. Thanks to the martyrs of the Coup across the country that night. They died for the rest of us to live and to live a better life, free of conspiracy, free of shame and with full pride as not just Turks but also citizens of the world. I was privileged to meet them in cold blood, in images that fill my eyes, that night in Kutahya, and with my heart, I have never felt so much full of my ideology as someone who detests anything against the collective will of a people. In fact, going to Turkey for the first time, I felt connected on landing, to a place, to a people and to a democratic system that I so much like and hope for Nigeria. I feel Turkish in all sense of it, still.

Coverage of the Coup and Perceptions in Nigeria: A Confluence of Mutual Interest?

July 15 was just a little more than a year anniversary of the government of Change in Nigeria, sworn into office May 29, 2015, under the second most influential black person around – the venerable Muhammadu Buhari – whose profile is also rising fast and it is here that all my hopes and prayers for a model in Turkey lie. As in Turkey, the Government's popularity in Nigeria today rides on the integrity of the person in charge, who is solely the incorrupt public officer/public figure alive in Nigeria today. And his pathway must meet the Turkish model to succeed.

The government came on the promise of Change – fight Boko Haram to the end; overhaul the system to wipe out corruption; create jobs for the over 70, 000 idle youths; deal with the few wicked persons holding the system down and uplift the spirit of the poor to a new hope in life. There are many hidden hands from within in sabotage, slowing down success, and an imminent western eyebrow is telling Buhari to look east for support, and East does lie Turkey at the gate. If only I were in the Government, this cause will be my point of advice for Buhari. But in writing this, I seek Allah's many ways of inspiring the good-intended and the righteous.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Nigeria earlier in the year was seen largely as one of the key consultations and collaborations President Muhammad Buhari was seeking to inject the economy back to life. Because the Nigerian society is hypersensitive to religions, the majority north saw Buhari making interest in sister Muslim country as commendable. But the President knows the challenges in seeking the West which conditions would always subject the national economy to a strangle and put all eggs in the basket of their interest.

This was informed by idea that failure of years of IMF/World Bank and western countries' economic policies in Nigeria is a silent fact which critical minds know well. Shortly after signing the annual budget into law, this year, President Buhari rejected the advice of the IMF on a visit of its Head, Christine Lagarde to Nigeria and sought the East, signing key agreements with China, and will have to follow President Erdogan's path of success for advice, at the least. Change, to ordinary Nigerians, was meant to be everything President Buhari does and the political will is strong with him.

Turkey is a sharp contrast to this picture of Nigeria. It has overcome all these – it has tamed terrorist to an unpopular level; it has earned the peoples' confidence and trust because of the many jobs created; the strong economy with a formidable middle class and a strong purchase power. So Nigeria trails the path of Turkey. A year on, the actions and processes of implementing the policies are popular only with the many who voted the Government in but largely abhorred, criticised and overtly or covertly challenged by the elite – big businesses, marketers and politicians - even those of Buhari's own party extraction.

President Buhari is almost a lone man at the helms but popular across. Appointees in different ministerial and parastatals do not share the vision of the President; his passion to build the economy. There are pullbacks, undermines, unnecessary distractions and destructive criticism by the opposition and persons with high interests in the national economy. The new policies would work for the poor, not the rich, and that is detrimental to their interest. Sadly, the Press, even the public media which should be a sincere, true platform for public debates and support for popular policies are themselves enmeshed in corruption too, and are now too critical of the Government for no popular reason.

In Nigeria, the state institutions have been abused over years of devaluation and destruction and have become personal instruments of actualising individual and group interests by using broadcasts and written stories to sway public opinion away from any good turning out of government policies and rush to blindly condemn any firm action the President takes for the State. The media are against the government fight against corruption. The negligible elite minority view against President Buhari's fight of corruption has been amplified by the press which editors and even publishers are at the disposal of corrupt politicians since the institution of democracy in 1999. Even the state-owned mass media stations only support the Government in principle. Editors and journalists are not devout to the campaign of national reorienting.

The media in Nigeria suffers from a number of symptoms for long, owing to the general decline in the national economy. Working tools in most of the public media are obsolete; production is frustrating and expensive because of lack of working tools and motivation. This couples with dearth of work values, professional ethics and qualifications among journalists and editors, most of whom grew on the job from the backbench, and most lack the relevant education. They are unpatriotic, greedy and shallow-minded. Bad politicians take this advantage of the state of the media/press and the ignorance and docility of journalists to pocket some organisations and editors to kill stories or write for the status quo with shallow accounts, for handouts of rewards that can hardly transform their lives, talk less of their jobs. As a result, they become indolent and wanting on the job. There is, sure, little or no hope in an industry that has been so corrupt itself.

The mass media system Turkey is a sharp contrast from all accounts. The Systems Theory of mass communication which the Turkish system uses provides that all institutions must work to support popular policies and causes of government for public interest. On

almost all issues of development and the economy the American and European media/press have always sided their governments. The bad orientation for our media – thanks to imperialism – is that journalism is all about condemnation and destructive criticism about anything from government. That is the bastard theory that blinds our press from serving the people.

It is in the light of the above that right thinking Nigerians are interested in Turkey's strong system and decry the loosened Nigerian system subjected to individual/personal abuse in the name of democracy and the criminals against the State are backed by the media and saved by another corrupt institution – the judiciary. And only a strong president and a strong system can make hope for accountable journalism, Nigeria now has the President but the system is weak, almost dysfunctional but the President is working to revive it. Only that - again here is democracies other evils – he has a time limit by which he must leave. Continuity which the Turks instituted against western ideal democracy is the best way to fix any system as sick as Nigeria's.

We should remember to also add the ever presence of the foreign hidden hands in the frustration of national governments. And it is here, again, that right thinking Nigerians admire President Erdogan's redefinition of democracy and repositioning of national institutions with unconditional obligations to the State and to the Turks. In democracy of Nigeria's definition, the President has limited powers and so cannot wield enough will to tame excesses, and all the bottlenecks of the Government are perpetrated under the cover of freedoms in democracy.

We have been brought up as humans with the basic idea and now Erdogan and Turkey remind us that no freedom is absolute. Freedoms of individuals and organisations must stop where matters of the State and collective will of the people begin. In Nigeria that is both misunderstood and ignored. Of course, Government can take some decisive action in the

interest of the nation but Buhari was not disposed to overheating the polity already hot from different forms of crises. But Nigerians always mistake humility, silence and patience for weakness, cowardice and inability/incapacity.

Nigeria's Press Coverage and Public Perceptions of the Coup

Normally the press in Nigeria reserve a page or two in the last pages for shallow foreign news. Only rarely a big international story gets a front page placement. A number of papers carried a front page story of the July 15 coup in their July 16 editions. For the obvious reasons we earlier stated, no Nigerian media organisation has a correspondent anywhere in Turkey. So they relied on agency reports and rewrites of monitored stories. And objectivity is difficult even with first-hand accounts talk more of second-hand or even third-hand accounts coupled with the fact that most writers in Nigeria are ignorant of both critical thinking/conspiracy theory and the Turkish system/people. There may be a negligible exception, though.

The aggregate of the tone of traditional media coverage of the Coup was like any strong-headed government that doesn't listen and go with democratic principles will always face what happened to the government in Turkey. Of course there are few that were cautious and critical about the coup. But a majority view surveyed out of coup-time-long and beyond discussions and sharing of ideas over the social media, especially after the coup failure, was like anyone who tries to sabotage or disrupt a popular Government like that of Buhari will never succeed and will face the wrath of the law just like the terrorist and plotters failed in Turkey.

This latter predominant view came to hold grip of the people's confidence in Nigeria's leadership in the wake of the Turkey experience. Thanks to the new media. In the following weeks, the sharp response of President Erdogan's government - mass arrests and

detention - attracted huge criticism in the Nigerian traditional press, gospeling human rights and democratic rules. Any such response on the social media attracted rapid attacks from even the most ignorant person about Turkey. But that doesn't change anything. Ignorant opinions have the right of expression but cannot rule popular public opinion and reason.

The Turkish Schools are predominant in the northern Muslim part of Nigeria, popular and considered the best in the country. It is the dream of both the status-symbol-crazy and genuine education-seeking parents. The Schools were largely mistaken as extension of Turkey's education service to other nations. To Nigerians, the ownership of the Turkish schools wasn't as important as the services rendered.

So Fatullah Gulan's conspiracy and use of the schools as cover to his terrorist empire were hardly popular to Nigerians. The idea that the American based clergy was both the owner of the Schools and the mastermind of the coup was a shock to many Nigerians, who are largely gullible, ignorant of such conspiracy ideas in their lives. Even those who know are just too adamant.

This form of docility is another sharp contrast with the Turks, whose explanation to conspiracy was quick, precise and coherent. They are the only example of genuinely-informed public I know. More than even the Americans and Europeans whose opinions are based on propaganda and double standards of their governments, the Turks have actively sought the truth about their government and stood to defend it. And that makes them also the most patriotic citizens ever, next only to Jews.

Is Democracy an End in Itself?

So with all that we have seen above, stop for a minute. Recall your knowledge of the world and the current conditions of desperate nations among both the North and the South.

What is your judgment of western democracy, and its role in countries? Can we afford to implement it fully and blindly to the best interest of its founders? No.

Western democracy does not hold an inherent value to work well for all societies. It is not an absolute system of universal values applicable in all nations, at all times, under all conditions. Even in its best form and best society, western democracy is only a means to an end. It has limits to the different situations, conditions and systems in different nations. That is exactly the lesson President Erdogan keeps telling the world in action since the Coup of July 15. It doesn't matter how much of the world has heeded. But Nigerians in the middle and lower class support Erdogan's response to the Coup in defending the national economy his government has worked hard to build over the years, and which, now, becomes the envy of developed nations, who see Turkey as a Muslim nation with a Muslim President who is increasingly popular in the world.

Even the best form of democracy cannot save a nation, its government and its people in defending their interest against any form of sabotage or seizure of government. The world has seen much of the double standards the west played over the years in the international system either by conspiracy or by direct involvement. The United States and western countries will stop at nothing to arrest the fast growth of successful economies. The entire crises in the world, over nuclear, involving Iran, North Korea, have been the crises of economic determinism. All the crises are results of the big boss' desperation to keep their own economy above all the rest, no matter the costs or the consequences.

And that is why it is only through the instrumentation of Political Economy can we appreciate Turkey's experience with the July Coup; with its strategic role from history; with the events since July 15, and with the economic conditions in Nigeria which overheat the polity and seeks to threaten a popular Government. Nations that have carted their causes and

made significant progress for their people have outgrown the excesses of external interferences in their domestic affairs because they have relatively successive governments.

At the end of World War II, the United States mobilised for the institution of the present international system under the United Nations and its organs. They needed to have a system of checks and balance so that no nation attacks another or human killing others in any name. Thanks to the horrible experience of the War's human crimes and other atrocities. Not a bad idea totally, considering the horrific experience of the Wars. But then Soviet leadership was sceptical either with having such a system or with the US championing the cause of such a system, and eventually dominating and teleguiding it. They may have many other reasons. In any case, the Russian at the time had a good vision.

But what was obvious was the fact that after the War, Islam and Muslim Unity were the next “threat to the world”; to their interest; a challenge to their might, and they needed a regulatory system to tame excesses of the Muslim world. Their fear of Muslim unity even without the Caliphate deconstructed by them, led to the creation of terrorism and gave it a Muslim colour. Ever since, the Western media bias is that radical Muslims – radicalised by them, through their institutions - are the terrorists. This view is an agenda for media coverage of the world ever since, and a working value of the media in America and Europe.

I wonder why no other mass media system is as vocal on an agenda. The media and journalists in the rest of the world have to be forced to do the right thing for their nations, usually with some extrajudicial measures. And **them** the custodians of this international arrangement will cry foul, citing human rights and freedoms. Turkey has told us a national media in our part of the world must stand up and walk with the Government to actualise public good as defined by the national government.

There can be few cases of misdefinition national interest when some bad leadership will push for the personal whims of the leadership which may be against the public interest. But that is a negligible reason to distrust governments at all time. When a national policy is defined to be good, everyone knows it, and should be supported by every individual, group and organisations.

Conspiracy always has a domestic hand. By our thoughts and reasoning, we are responsible for the predicament we found ourselves in. The Turks understand this theory well. They know they have a strong economy, a good government and a vibrant President that is loved by his people and the champion of the second world. Turkey is ten times a lucky nation. So it has been all her years on earth. The rest of the world must listen and learn.

Thank you.