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CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

THE EAGLE AND THE SPRINGBOK: STRENGTHENING THE NIGERIA/SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONSHIP

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The contents of this policy brief do not indicate consensus reached during discussions, but reflect key points raised and include additional research conducted before and after the seminar.

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NIGERIA'S PRESIDENT, GOODLUCK JONATHAN, HOLDS BILATERAL TALKS WITH SOUTH AFRICA'S PRESIDENT, JACOB ZUMA, IN NEW YORK, IN SEPTEMBER 2011.

Image source - South African Consulate General New York
<http://www.southafrica-newyork.net/consulate/preszumany.html>

Introduction

The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Cape Town, South Africa, hosted a policy advisory group meeting in Lagos, Nigeria, from 9 to 10 June 2012, on “The Eagle and the Springbok: Strengthening the Nigeria/South Africa Relationship”.

Nigeria and South Africa have led economic integration and development, as well as peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, in their respective sub-regions, and other parts of Africa. Their partnership represents the continent’s most strategic bilateral relationship. Yet, tensions have emerged between the two countries, particularly between 2005 and 2012, as they both sought a permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council (South Africa publicly announced its intention to seek this seat in 2010). The relationship also became strained after xenophobic attacks against Africans, including Nigerians, in South Africa in 2008; following increasingly divergent foreign policy positions in 2011; and in 2012, when Nigeria and South Africa turned away each other’s citizens in a dispute over entry requirements. Partly in an attempt to resolve mounting tensions, the Nigeria-South Africa Bi-National Commission (BNC) met in full session in Cape Town in May 2012. CCR’s policy advisory group seminar in Lagos in June 2012 sought to build on the outcomes of the BNC meeting and help to “reset” the relationship between Nigeria and South Africa by addressing key themes, and crafting concrete recommendations on the history and diplomacy of bilateral relations; the multilateral roles adopted by the two countries; their economic and trade links; civil society perspectives; and the future of the relationship.

1. The History of Nigeria/South Africa Bilateral Relations

During the 1960s and 1970s, Nigeria took a leading role in opposing apartheid, participating in meetings of the Frontline States (FLS) of Southern Africa; chairing the UN Special Committee against Apartheid; and championing the anti-apartheid cause at the Commonwealth. However, after South Africa’s first democratic election in 1994, the country’s new president and Nobel peace laureate, Nelson Mandela, appeared to don the garments of African leader that Nigeria had historically sought to wear. Relations reached a nadir after Nigeria’s autocratic leader, General Sani Abacha, ignored Mandela’s pleas and ordered the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni human rights activists in November 1995. South Africa called for a boycott of Nigerian oil exports and the country’s suspension from the Commonwealth. However, Mandela’s stand failed to win broad support among African countries. Following General Abacha’s death in 1998, relations between Nigeria and South Africa improved dramatically. Mandela’s successor as president in 1999, Thabo Mbeki, worked closely with Nigeria’s new civilian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, to manage African conflicts and to promote norms of democratic governance through new continental institutions. In addition, a Bi-National Commission was established between Nigeria and South Africa in 1999. Under the presidency

of Jacob Zuma, after 2009, South Africa decided to court Angola as a strategic partner in Africa, leading to suggestions that the relationship with Nigeria had been deprioritised, though the South Africans noted that this was a move to strengthen alliances in Southern Africa. In May 2008, the Nigerian press criticised Tshwane (Pretoria) over a perceived failure to crack down on xenophobic violence in South Africa, which included attacks on Nigerian immigrants. In 2011, Nigeria and South Africa adopted divergent positions on the UN Security Council and at the African Union (AU) over the military intervention conducted by French/UN troops in Côte d'Ivoire, and the recognition of the National Transitional Council (NTC) as Libya's new government. In March 2012, South African customs officials turned away 125 Nigerian travellers. Seventy-eight South African travellers were subsequently barred entry to Nigeria in retaliation.

2. The Diplomacy of Nigeria/South Africa Bilateral Relations

Although diplomatic relations between Nigeria and South Africa were established in 1994, high commissions in Abuja and Tshwane were only founded in 1995 and 1996 respectively. Relations soured when Nelson Mandela sought international sanctions against General Abacha's regime. However, after 1999, presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo initiated a "golden age" of bilateral relations between Abuja and Tshwane, building new African institutions and making continuous efforts to address difficult issues as they arose. High commissioners on both sides had relatively open access to their host leaders. Nigeria and South Africa closely coordinated their efforts before key AU and UN meetings. The Bi-National Commission, which was headed by the two countries' deputy presidents, was established, and held seven meetings between 1999 and 2008. In addition, 20 key bilateral agreements had been signed by 2003. However, tensions emerged in the relationship from 2005 over African permanent representation on the UN Security Council, the Chair of the AU Assembly of heads of state and government, and Mbeki's mediation role in Côte d'Ivoire. After 2008, no full sessions of the BNC were held for four years. An eighth BNC meeting took place in Cape Town only in May 2012 as part of efforts to strengthen bilateral relations.

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FORMER NIGERIAN PRESIDENT, OLUSEGUN OBASANJO, AND FORMER SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT, THABO MBEKI, CONFER AT THE AFRICAN UNION (AU) SUMMIT IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA IN JANUARY 2012.

Image source - Sahara Reporters
Photo - Tony Karumba/AFP/Getty Images
<http://saharareporters.com/gallery/photonev5-goodluck-jonathan-au-summit-addis-ababa>

3. Nigeria/South Africa Multilateral Relations

After 2005, both Nigeria and South Africa promoted themselves as candidates for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, though Tshwane was more discreet and only publicly declared its interest in 2010. The two countries subsequently agreed that the contest could undermine unity of purpose in advancing peace, security, and development on the continent, and that efforts to win Africa's right to proper representation on the Security Council should take priority. Abuja and Tshwane have acknowledged the primacy of the AU in mandating African non-permanent representatives to the Council, with South Africa consistently insisting on the 2005 "Ezulwini Consensus" which called for at least two permanent African

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seats and five rotating ones (instead of the existing three non-permanent seats allocated to the continent). Nigeria and South Africa have adopted common responses to African security challenges, including as key troop- and police-contributing countries to UN peacekeeping missions on the continent. Both countries have also worked together in multilateral institutions including the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the World Bank; the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); and the Commonwealth. However, South Africa has also joined key multilateral bodies as the sole African country, including the Group of 20 major economies (G20), and the BRICS economic bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), which has created further tensions with Abuja. In 2011, Nigeria and South Africa served as non-permanent members on the UN Security Council and occupied seats on the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC). The two countries adopted divergent positions on the crises in Côte d'Ivoire and Libya. In Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa opposed Nigeria's belligerent stance towards Laurent Gbagbo, who had refused to cede power after losing elections. Abuja interpreted Tshwane's actions as a challenge to the principle of "subsidiarity" under which each African sub-regional bloc takes the lead in decisions about external interventions within its sphere of influence. In relation to Libya, Nigeria was quick to recognise the National Transitional Council as the country's new government, while South Africa delayed recognising the NTC. At the AU, Nigeria opposed South Africa's nomination of its home affairs minister, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, for the Chair of the AU Commission. In July 2012, Dlamini-Zuma won the post in the fourth round with 37 votes after a protracted and fiercely contested election. Although South Africa accurately argued that its action did not break any legal AU rules, Nigeria and several other countries questioned whether it was politically wise.

4. Nigeria/South Africa Economic Relations

South Africa with an estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$368 billion represents Africa's largest economy, despite slowing growth that is forecast to drop to under three percent in 2012. Meanwhile, Nigeria became Africa's second biggest economy by GDP, recording \$232 billion in 2011, representing a long-term market for South African investment. After South Africa's Mobile Telephone Networks (MTN) successfully entered the Nigerian market (three times the size of South Africa's) in 2001, other major South African companies followed, including banks, investment funds, hotels, breweries, media houses, and food and clothing retailers. Nigerian engagement in South Africa has been limited by structural restrictions: the South African market is an established, competitive one with relatively thin profit margins and low growth prospects. South African business people often approach Nigeria as a destination for products rather than as an opportunity for industrial investment. However, the direct employment benefits of South Africa's economic engagement in Nigeria continue to outweigh those brought by Nigeria's export of oil to South Africa, which represents its main contribution to bilateral trade. South African businesses in Nigeria can find themselves targeted by popular resentments; boycotts of South African goods can be threatened; and business people suffer directly when retaliatory travel restrictions are imposed.

Business people suffer directly when retaliatory travel restrictions are imposed



NIGERIA'S ARIK AIR SUSPENDED ITS DAILY FLIGHTS TO JOHANNESBURG AFTER 125 NIGERIANS WERE REFUSED ENTRY INTO SOUTH AFRICA IN MARCH 2012.

Image source - Pilot News Magazine
http://pilotnewsmag.com/wp-content/uploads/030312_arik-620x373.jpg

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5. Nigeria/South Africa Trade Relations

Nigeria has been South Africa's largest trading partner in Africa since 2006, with the value of bilateral trade reaching \$3.6 billion by 2011. Oil represents over 95 percent of Nigeria's exports to South Africa, which, in turn, account for about 80 percent of the balance of trade between the two countries. By contrast, South Africa exports a wide range of goods to Nigeria: machinery, electrical equipment, wood, paper, plastics, rubber, foodstuffs, beverages, spirits, and tobacco. Bilateral chambers of commerce were established in Nigeria and South Africa in 2000 and 2005 respectively. South Africa can provide technical competence and finance to develop Nigeria's transport, power, iron, steel, agriculture, and information and communication technologies (ICT) sectors. Joining one of Nigeria's 20 free trade zones, or establishing a new one, might enable South African businesses to service the country's major infrastructural deficit on favourable terms. Intra-African trade is estimated at less than ten percent, and a political commitment to the impulse to create a free trade area between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) could help to replace the vertical patterns of trade imposed on Africa under colonialism with a more horizontal dynamic.

6. Civil Society Perspectives

In Nigeria, civil society was historically enlisted in support of the government's principled opposition to apartheid in South Africa. After democratic rule emerged in 1994, South African human rights activists opposed General Abacha's increasingly repressive regime. A South Africa-Nigeria Democracy Support Group was formed in South Africa in 1996 to rally a mass democratic movement against the regime, and was reconstituted following Abacha's death in 1998. Following this activism, it was hoped that the creation of the Bi-National Commission in 1999 would signal a new engagement with civil society. However, this did not happen. Subsequently, immigrant Nigerian and South African communities have encountered mounting prejudice in both countries. The need for efforts to promote mutual understanding in people-to-people relations is critical. Young Nigerians and South Africans can potentially find common cause in addressing the huge employment and education challenges facing the continent. In addition, think-tanks in South Africa and Nigeria may usefully host "track-two" meetings outside the glare of public scrutiny to explore and resolve tensions between Abuja and Tshwane. Other actions to improve bilateral relations could include: programmes to educate media in both countries; strengthened links between trade unions, business associations, militaries, sports clubs, and cultural groups; and the establishment of Nigeria/South Africa friendship associations.

Oil represents over 95 percent of Nigeria's imports to South Africa, which, in turn, account for about 80 percent of bilateral trade



CHEVRON CORPORATION'S FUNIWA OIL FACILITY OFF THE COAST OF NIGERIA.

Image source - Sweet Crude Reports
<http://sweetcrudereports.com/2012/01/16/chevron-reports-fire-on-nigerian-oil-rig/>



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7. The Future of Nigeria/South Africa Relations

Divergences of national and regional interests between Nigeria and South Africa need to be clearly communicated and managed within appropriate institutions such as the Bi-National Commission. Thus the BNC meeting in Cape Town in May 2012 provided an opportunity for the two countries to “reset” their relationship. Economic and technical agreements were signed at the meeting, including on migration issues; customs procedures; economic cooperation; the protection of investments; extradition and mutual legal aid; and terrorism and cyber crime. New deals were also proposed in the areas of aviation, defence, agriculture, minerals and energy, as well as science and technology. It was further agreed that focal points for the BNC should be established at the two countries’ high commissions in Abuja and Tshwane, and that an implementation committee should meet within six months to review the progress made on the BNC’s decisions. Future meetings have been planned for working groups on foreign affairs; trade, industry, and finance; defence and security; agriculture and the environment; minerals and energy; public enterprise and infrastructure; social and technical matters; as well as communications and constitutional issues. A consular and immigration forum will also meet monthly. Finally, the BNC recommended that the bilateral Joint Presidential Advisory Council on Investment should be revived.

Policy Recommendations

The following 10 key policy recommendations emerged from the Lagos policy advisory group seminar:

1. Strong mechanisms to institutionalise the strategic partnership between Nigeria and South Africa, such as an active Bi-National Commission with an effective implementation and monitoring mechanism, need to be fostered. The establishment of focal points at the countries’ missions in Abuja and Tshwane, and regular consultation at the level of permanent secretary and director-general could aid the BNC’s efforts. High commissioners from both countries should have access to host leaders to help maintain the bilateral relationship. In addition, the BNC’s decisions need to be communicated at all levels, including provincial and local government, to ensure effective implementation;
2. Nigeria and South Africa should prioritise their bilateral relationship to promote democracy, security, and development in Africa. Divergent national and regional interests need to be carefully managed to ensure that the continent is protected from external attempts at “divide and rule”. Steps should be taken to ensure that the two countries’ efforts to keep and build peace in Africa are not

“ Economic and technical agreements were signed at the BNC meeting in Cape Town in May 2012, including on migration issues; customs procedures; economic cooperation; extradition and mutual legal aid; and terrorism and cyber crime ”

misinterpreted as attempts to further parochial agendas. Nigeria and South Africa should also coordinate carefully on any interventions in each other's sub-regional spheres of influence;

Consideration should be given to agreeing a mechanism to formalise how the AU should select African non-permanent representatives to the UN Security Council



THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL, ON WHICH BOTH NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA SAT IN 2011, MEETS IN NOVEMBER 2011.

Image source - Top News
<http://www.topnews.in/law/un-security-council-condemns-bomb-attacks-nigeria-280907>

3. Nigeria and South Africa need to resolve their differences over representation on international bodies. Consideration should be given to agreeing a mechanism to formalise how the AU should select African non-permanent representatives to the UN Security Council. For example, one of the three non-permanent seats could be rotated between Africa's major powers; another between the continent's middle powers; and the third between the smaller African states. Abuja and Tshwane should also coordinate more effectively on nominations of senior officials to the AU Commission;
4. Nigeria and South Africa should work together more closely to represent Africa's interests at international fora, including at multilateral bodies such as the G20 in which South Africa is the sole African country. The foreign affairs committee of the BNC could aid this process. As already suggested by the BNC in 2012, Nigerian and South African diplomats in Addis Ababa, New York, Geneva, and Vienna should prioritise the coordination of both countries' positions on international bodies in order to promote African interests more effectively;
5. Also suggested by the BNC of 2012, a tripartite group consisting of Nigeria, South Africa, and Angola could be created to consult on African issues, and this body could later be expanded to include Ethiopia and Algeria. It was further suggested that a second North African representative could be Egypt, and an East African representative such as Kenya could also be included in the group;
6. Greater South African investment in Nigeria should be encouraged to develop infrastructure and create mutually beneficial business models. Economic relations could also be improved through greater inclusion of the private sector in the BNC's work, and by relaxing entry restrictions for business people;
7. The Nigeria/South Africa free trade area proposed by the BNC in March 2002 could be revived to remove high tariff and non-tariff barriers that inhibit intra-African trade. A political commitment should be made to create a free trade area between ECOWAS and SADC in the long term, and a trade corridor between the two sub-regions in the medium term, in order to promote regional integration and socio-economic development across Africa;

Links between trade unions, business fora, militaries, sports clubs, and cultural groups should be strengthened



MARY NTSWENG OF SOUTH AFRICA'S BANYANA BANYANA TUSSELES WITH NNENENA GLADYS AKPA OF NIGERIA'S SUPER FALCONS IN AN INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL FRIENDLY HELD IN RUSTENBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, IN JUNE 2012.

Image source - Kick Off Magazine
<http://www.kickoff.com/news/28754/banyana-and-nigeria-share-the-spoils-in-action-packed-friendly.php>

8. Nigeria and South Africa should be in the forefront of efforts to redress capital flight from Africa – estimated at between \$735 billion and \$1.8 trillion between 2008 and 2010 – which would boost intra-regional trade, strengthen region-building efforts, and help to alleviate poverty;
9. The BNC should seek greater engagement from civil society in its work, particularly to counter common prejudices and communicate more effectively the benefits of close cooperation between the two countries. Abuja and Tshwane should seek greater public visibility for bilateral visits and events. Media on both sides should also be educated on the extent and nature of current and historical socio-economic and political relations. Business schools in both countries should provide diversity training for South African businesses operating on the continent. Links between trade unions, business fora, militaries, sports clubs, and cultural groups should be strengthened; and the establishment of friendship associations encouraged; and finally,
10. “Track-two” mechanisms deploying current and former senior foreign policy officials and experts could be established to forestall potential diplomatic incidents, to act as back-channels in times of crisis, and to help both sides to “reset” bilateral relations.