

Paradiplomacy in Nigeria's First Republic: The Uneasy Balance between Faith and National Interest

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Article Info

Article History

Received:
August 2021
Accepted:
Feb 2022
Published:
March 2022

Keywords:

*Nigeria, First Republic,
Paradiplomacy, Northern
Region, Islam.*

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the place of religion in the paradiplomacy that was practised in Nigeria's first republic (1960-1966). It examines how the Northern regional government in Nigeria's first republic engaged in external relations in furtherance of its narrow interests, which were mostly informed by Islam. During the first republic, Nigeria adopted a federal system of government in which the component units (or regions) wielded enormous influences. Some of these influences translated into external relations although foreign policy was constitutionally an exclusive preserve of the federal government. The practice of a regional government conducting its international relations while remaining within a sovereign nation falls under the ambit of 'paradiplomacy'. Thus, this kind of subnational diplomacy is carried out with a view to promote subnational (or regional) interests. This raises the question of the compatibility of the interests of a subnational government with those of the national government, particularly in a country such as Nigeria that is multi-ethnic and multi-religious, with certain regions being predominantly Christian and others Muslim. The study adopts the theory of Social Constructivism as a framework and employs the use of qualitative analysis. The methodology is both historical and descriptive, with data derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources employed include personal communications with retired diplomats as well as newspaper sources and archival materials sourced from the National Archives in Kaduna, Nigeria. Content analysis was also used to ensure accuracy and objectivity. Findings reveal that the government of the Northern Region pursued external policies that placed their region over and above the interest of the Federal Government to the extent of conflicts between the two entities, and religion was a telling factor in how this played out.

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INTRODUCTION

Paradiplomacy (or sub-state diplomacy) is the external relations carried out by subnational or regional governments on their own, with the aim of promoting their own interests (Wolff, 2007). While the practice of paradiplomacy has gained popularity in recent years owing to globalization, it is not a particularly new phenomenon since sub-states have had one form of external interaction or the other since time immemorial (Cornago, 2010, p. 28). It is worth pointing out, as Duchacek reminds us, that paradiplomacy is usually geared towards promoting the economic development of the sub-nationalities that engage in it (Duchacek, 1984). Therefore, these regions, states, provinces and so on seek means to promote trade, investments, cooperation, and partnership in their cross-border contacts. But there is a cultural angle to paradiplomacy as well, which could find expression in 'soft power' diplomacy (Neves, 2010).

Thus, in the cultural aspect of paradiplomacy, some sub-nationalities may seek to promote themselves internationally as an autonomous cultural or religious entity. In this case, the examples of the Spanish autonomous communities of Catalonia and the Basque Country spring to mind. Hubert et al. (2020) have detailed the sub-state diplomacy of Catalonia and identified how it was markedly different from that of Spain in terms of cultural projections. A similar study on the Basque Country also holds of this fact (Lecours & Fernández, 2001). Such regions forge some form of affinity with their co-ideologues abroad or foreign bodies that can relate to their aspirations. The same could be said of the Northern Region, which had Islamic ties with the outside world during Nigeria's first republic.

Hunwick (1996) reminds us that the Northern Region in Nigeria had some form of distinctive cultural and religious identity before Nigeria's colonial experience that was shaped by the Usman dan Fodio jihad of 1804, and efforts were made at Nigeria's independence to reinforce this identity. Thus, during Nigeria's first republic, in the immediate aftermath of independence, the North saw themselves as a different sub-nationality from the Western and Eastern Regions, which were more accustomed to Western-cum-secular influences. This in turn had an impact on Nigeria's political landscape including areas pertaining to external relations.

In fact, the nature of Nigeria's federalism during the First Republic allowed for the manifestation of these differences and encouraged separate regions to pursue different agendas in the international arena. Akinyemi (1970) was the first to identify how such a federal structure affected foreign policy to the extent that the Northern Region toed a different path from the policies their counterparts pursued in the East and West. He, however, did not attribute this to religion but to ethnic differences. The argument goes on to suggest that the conservatism of the Northern Region rubbed off on the central government, which had the responsibility of formulating foreign policy.

Indeed, the influence of culture on foreign policy is not unconnected since it is a well-established fact that foreign policy is a mere projection of what happens on the domestic front. This fact has been made abundantly clear in the scholarly works of Rosenau (1967), Vlahos (1991) Huntington (1993), Feng, (2017). Nigeria, particularly during the First Republic, was a prime example of how culture and identity influence foreign relations. Scholars such as Gambari (1980), Idang (1973), and, in more recent times, Ambe-Uva & Adegboyega (2007), for instance, all agree that ethnic politics played a significant role in Nigeria's external relations and that this was more evident

with the Northern Region, under Ahmadu Bello, who pursued external policies that were different to the rest of the country. The emphasis of such scholars has been the cultural and ethnic differences of the North to the rest of the country. The study contends that the role of religion has not been given sufficient attention in earlier scholarship in explaining the divergent external relations pursued by the Northern regional government and the central government of Nigeria during the nation's First Republic.

The Place of Religion in International Relations: A Theoretical Framework

Despite religion being a major determinant of international politics up until medieval times, the evolution of the state system in the 17th century relegated religion to the background as far as inter-state relations were concerned. Consequently, until recently, international relations were viewed from the prism of material factors such as the economy, politics, and military capabilities. Thus early International Relations (IR) theories excluded religion in their explanation of state relations. This was not until the late 1980s when revisionist theories such as 'Constructivism' were developed by scholars such as Onuf (1989) and Wendt (1992), among others, to explain hitherto less-heralded 'social' aspect of IR. In other words, through this theory, these scholars establish that aspects of state relations are shaped by ideational factors that are collectively historically and socially constructed.

It follows, therefore, that any cultural approach to IR fits the constructivist school of IR. Reus-Smit (2005, p. 188), for example, illustrates how the theory of constructivism explains the influence of identity, norms, religion, and ethnicity on actions and behaviour among and between state actors. Thus, constructivism helps us understand how the religious identity of a people can help shape how the international environment is perceived. This is particularly helpful in making us appreciate the international politics (or paradiplomacy) of Nigeria's Northern Region during the first republic, particularly given that the region had been administered as more or less a theocracy for decades before colonialism and the nation's subsequent independence in 1960.

The objectives of this study, therefore, include investigating how the Northern regional government, in the context of paradiplomacy, pursued its subnational interest during the first republic. Also, how did the Islamic culture that was prevalent in the North constitute these interests? More importantly, how did the Nigerian Government respond to the subnational interest of a region under its control, whose external conduct had been influenced by religion, given that the Nigerian Government was guided by secular ideas? Finally, what were the implications of this dynamic for both the Northern Region and Nigeria as a country?

METHODS

The approach to this research is qualitative. The historical research methodology is adopted, and the study is both descriptive and analytical. To this end, the essay employs the use of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data included archival materials sourced from the National Archives in Kaduna (NAK), Nigeria, and newspaper materials as well as personal communications with veteran diplomats. The archival documents sourced from NAK are quite important as they contain Northern Region's correspondence with the outside world. The newspaper sources help understand the public perception of these external interactions and the

Federal Government's responses to them, while the personal communications help provide hands-on experiential information.

The interview protocol observed was the 'semi-structured' approach, which involved the combination of scripted questions and informal conversations with the interviewees. The justification for the adoption of this semi-structured approach to interviews was to allow the interviewees to be expressive and make extensive comments outside of what they were asked. And the information they provided was further verified from other available sources.

These primary sources are then supplemented with secondary sources for more nuanced analysis. The secondary data were derived from extant publications such as books and journal articles. Relevant data that examined the themes related to Nigeria's foreign policy in Nigeria's First Republic, the concept of paradiplomacy, as well as Northern Region's political administration, were derived from secondary sources. These data were carefully selected, reviewed, and applied in this study's presentation and analysis.

The process of data analysis followed different stages. The first stage required the researcher to collect secondary sources that have addressed issues relating to external relations in the first republic and related issues to sieve out relevant information. This was then followed by a visit to the National Archives, Kaduna to gather official documents and personal correspondence of the Premier of the Northern region and his associates. These documents were supplemented with newspaper articles that detailed both the Premier's actions and reactions to them. The third stage had to do with the conduct of semi-structured interviews with veteran diplomats to fill some of the gaps identified in existing literature and primary documents. Content analysis was then deployed by juxtaposing the texts and appreciating context to achieve accuracy. This triangulation process was important in attaining objectivity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Northern Nigeria's External Relations

At Nigeria's independence in 1960, the constitution made it the responsibility of the Executive to formulate the country's foreign policy. However, both primary and secondary data suggest that the nature of Nigeria's federalism during this period made the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa's position tenuous; there was a weak centre and very strong component regions. Thus, although the Independence Constitution made foreign policy formulation an exclusive preserve of the Federal Government, the strong regional and party leaders of Ahmadu Bello, Obafemi Awolowo, and Michael Okpara had their proclivities when it came to foreign policy. The fact that under the 1960 constitution states (or regions) were allowed to negotiate foreign loans and foreign economic assistance programs without going through the federal government also gave these regional heads some form of international role (Personal Communication, Bolaji Akinyemi, External Affairs Minister, 1985-87). In addition, section 69 of the same constitution demanded the consent of regional governments before treatise affecting regional subjects can become operative. This scenario was to have implications on Nigeria's external relations in the First Republic, particularly in respect to how core values like religion affected Nigeria's relations with other countries.

With the loose nature of Nigeria's federalism, by 1960 there was increased contact among major political leaders at every level of government with the outside world. No other region in the country was as emblematic of this phenomenon as the Northern regional government under the control of Sir Ahmadu Bello. Indeed, the Premier has been described by Walter Schwarz as the 'most powerful politician in Nigeria' during the first republic (Schwarz, 1968). The fact that he was the President of the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), the ruling party, and the forceful nature of his style made him have a cumulative impact on Nigeria's foreign policy (Paden, 1986, p. 388). We should at this point not forget that his worldview was shaped by his cultural background, which had much to do with his religion, Islam. The man himself had traced his lineage to Prophet Mohammed (Bello, 1962, p. 239). Our data reveals that Bello's religious outlook affected external relations in three main ways: his relationship with Israel, his commitment towards making Nigeria a centre of Islamic radiation in Black Africa, and his general involvement in Arab politics.

Relationship with Israel

Throughout his lifetime the Sardauna, Ahmadu Bello, was antagonistic towards Israel. On his visit to Jordan in 1965, he was famously quoted to have said, 'it (Israel) does not exist. And it will never exist... I don't know what it is' (Daily Times, 1965). Such a view of Israel was borne out of the international happenings in the Middle East at this time. Since Israel was created in 1948 there were political tension and conflicts between Israel and the Arab world. At the heart of the issue are the conflicting claims to the land that the country Israel occupies. The Jewish people of Israel refer to the territory as their ancestral homeland, while the same territory is regarded by the Arabs as both the historical and current belonging of the Palestinians, and in the pan-Islamic context, as Muslim lands. Indeed, as al-Ahsan (2018) highlights, the hostility towards Israel is rife throughout the Muslim world. And this was no different in Northern Nigeria.

The first evidence of substantial antagonism from the Northern regional government towards Israel came in June of 1960, shortly before independence. That month, the Federal Minister of Finance, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh, concluded an economic and aid agreement with the Israeli government, which was meant to benefit the whole country. Before 1960, there would have been no basis for any negotiation of such between Northern Nigeria and Israel because of the Sardauna's well-known stance on the Jewish country. But since the entire country was gearing itself for an autonomous rule, and the Sardauna's party, the NPC in the election that preceded Nigeria's self-government had for strategic reasons entered a political alliance with the dominant party in the Eastern Region, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), the situation became delicate. On getting wind of such an agreement with Israel, the NPC secretariat appealed to the Federal Government to end all negotiations with Israel for financial assistance and to withdraw recognition from the state of Israel (Nigerian Citizen, 1960a). When the federal government ignored this call, the Northern Regional Government, through its official newspaper (the Nigerian Citizen) issued a statement dissociating itself from the stated Israeli-Nigerian loan and export agreement. It stated categorically that, 'the northern government does not wish to accept any part of such loan or export credit agreement. The Regional Government considers that acceptance of such a loan or export credit would be interpreted as involvement in Middle East controversy' (Nigerian Citizen, 1960b).

This position on Israeli assistance was greeted with strong reactions from other segments of the country including the Federal Government. The immediate reaction, however, came from the opposition party in the north, Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). It warned the NPC not to introduce religion into the politics of Nigeria (Personal Communication, Bolaji Akinyemi, External Affairs Minister, 1985-87)). Also, the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, courageously told Ahmadu Bello off. He publicly stated that Nigeria and Israel were in a friendly relationship and would cooperate for their mutual development. He vowed that Nigeria will not get entangled in the conflict between Israel and the Arabs. Lastly, he asserted that the country will continue to receive genuine assistance from any country except South Africa, with which Nigeria had a strained relationship because of its apartheid policies. Balewa added that ‘it will be the end of happiness in this country when religion is brought into politics’ (Nigerian Citizen, 1960c). It is instructive to note, however, that despite the Prime Minister’s reprove, the Sardauna made sure his region had nothing to do with the Israeli assistance (Akinyemi, 1970, p. 121).

In the ensuing months, the Premier of the Northern Region continued to boast to his Muslim associates, especially in the Middle East, that he would continue to resist any Israeli ‘infiltration’ in the north. In October 1962, another chance presented itself to the Sardauna to show his disdain for Israel. That month the Federal government signed another agreement with the Jewish nation. This agreement included an offer of Israeli technical assistance in projects under the Nigerian National Development Plan. Predictably, Sir Ahmadu Bello waded in to try to prevent such from happening. He asked the Parliament not to ratify such an agreement (West African Pilot, 1962). What the Premier was trying to do was to capitalize on the numerical advantage his party, the NPC had in parliament to make these legislators use their votes to repudiate the policies of the Prime Minister. This was against the constitution as it was clearly written therein that the conduct of external relations was an executive preserve (See section 69 of the 1960 Constitution). As he had previously done, the Prime Minister ignored the Premier and accepted the trade agreement with Israel without making any recourse to Parliament. The Northern Premier, however, maintained his stance on the Jewish nation and even took pride in jettisoning the Israelis and their overtures on the basis of faith. This was made abundantly clear in his address to the World Muslim League, November 1964. The Premier states,

“...It is also fitting at this juncture for me to mention the numerous attempts being made by the Jews to entice under-developed countries to their side. Barely two years ago, they offered a sizeable amount of loan to the Federation of Nigeria. The offer was accepted by all the governments of the Federation except we in the North who rejected it outright. I made it vividly clear at the time that Northern Nigeria would prefer to go without development rather than receiving an Israeli loan or aid. We took this step only in good faith as Muslims... I have only given these examples to show how genuinely we in Northern Nigeria have been at times suffering and how single handed we have been working for the cause of Islam and which we shall continue so long as our lives last...”
(NAK/PRE/280/114, 1964)

Indeed, as the Sardauna alluded to in his letter, the Northern Region was not in a position where it would be selective in the loans and aids it accepted. In fact, the region was in dire need of assistance to catch up with the better-developed southern regions. The North began the early independence period with very little capital or technology for development. And part of the challenge of the first five years, therefore, was to mobilize capital, both domestic and

international. Indeed, for the Sardauna to achieve the goals of the region's development plan he had to announce a 10 per cent reduction in salaries to all ministers and other political officers as well as abolish many other allowances (Paden, 1986, p. 499). In fact, throughout the First Republic, a series of austerity budgets were put in place, each stressing the need for prudent expenditure of limited public funds (Paden, 1986, p. 499). The point being made here is that resisting aid and assistance from Israel at this time was a huge sacrifice by the Sardauna's government, one which was borne out of a staunch commitment to Islam.

It is worth mentioning also that apart from the refusal to recognize Israel as a country and the persistent resistance to Israeli loans and technical aid, the Northern Region's hostility towards the Jewish nation also extended to the treatment of Israeli expatriates and emissaries. Under Sardauna's regime Israelis were not allowed to visit any town outside Kaduna, Kano, and Jos. Maiduguri in the extreme northeast and Sokoto in the extreme northwest was particularly forbidden to the Israelis for fear that such 'holy places' would be desecrated (Aluko, 1981, p. 84). In fact, it was not until 1972 when Mr Yissakhar Ben-Yaacov, former Israeli ambassador to Nigeria, visited both cities that the restrictions on the movement of Israelis throughout the country ended. Indeed, on his visit to Amman, Jordan in late 1964, Sir Ahmadu Bello had again boasted that 'there was no Israeli infiltration in Northern Nigeria' (Aluko, 1981, p. 81). All this attitude sharply contrasted to the Sardauna's relationship with Arab nations and their emissaries with whom he shared an amorous.

Commitment towards 'Pan-Islamism' and Efforts at Making Nigeria a Centre of Islamic Radiation in Black Africa

During the First Republic, Sir Ahmadu Bello considered himself to be the leader of all Muslims in Nigeria. This was not quite right, however, as it was the Sultan of Sokoto that traditionally should make such a claim. Throughout his political career, Sir Ahmadu had reinforced his ancestral link with the Bello lineage (as distinct from the Atiku) and had through this strengthened his candidacy to the succession to the sultanhip. While becoming a sultan never materialized, the symbolism of a link to the originator of the 1804 jihad, Usman dan Fodio, helped consolidate his status in Northern Nigeria. In the same vein, the international Muslim community was also encouraged by the Sardauna's association with the major legacy of Islam in Nigeria (Paden, 1986, p. 389).

In June 1961, he went on a tour of the major Muslim states in the Middle East and Asia, emphasizing the need to create a unified international Muslim community (ummah). Ahmadu Bello was perhaps one of the most important facilitators of an international Muslim ummah during this period. This is most evident in his correspondence with the King of Saudi Arabia, King Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in August 1961. The Sardauna writes,

"Further to our meeting with your Minister for Foreign Affairs at Jeddah on my way to Nigeria from Amman on 20th July, I have the honour to inform Your Majesty that since our discussions during the last pilgrimage session, I have had the privilege of visiting the undermentioned Muslim countries. In each place, I seized the opportunity of discussing the question of visiting Muslim unity..." (NAK/PRE/181/6, 1961).

The letter also detailed the Sardauna's visit to Sudan, Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon, the United Arab Republic, and Jordan and how well the idea of a Muslim community was well received by their

leaders. King Saud was of course impressed with this development, and it is no surprise that in less than a year, on May 18 1962, the World Muslim League was fully constituted as a result of such effort.

Back home, the 'Christian South' was not pleased with the Sardauna's actions. The Daily Times, for example, strongly criticized the Northern Region's Premier, pointing out that because of Nigeria's internal politics, a confederation of Muslim states was unacceptable to Nigerians. It also called attention to the fact that Nigeria's Africa policy aimed to establish firm relations with 'fellow black Africans' and 'then to stretch pan-Africanism to those whose heads are geographically in Africa but whose hearts are not in the continent' (Daily Times, 1961, p. 1). By this sentiment, the media outlet was trying to encourage Sir Ahmadu to exert his influence in making North African Arab countries more committed to pan-Africanism rather than pushing Nigeria into an Islamic political confederation. Immediately afterwards, the Northern government issued a clarification stating that what the Premier had meant was he was seeking 'a unity of mind on cultural and spiritual matters and not a plan for a political confederation of Muslims States' (Daily Times, 1961). But the Sardauna, rather than accepting this face-saving explanation by his government, seemed to gather momentum in pushing for an Islamic summit and a resurgence of a Pan-Islamism.

Meanwhile, Sir Ahmadu Bello was unperturbed by all the opposition to his actions; he remained undeterred in his romance with the Muslim world. By 1964 he had succeeded in elevating Nigeria's stature in the Islamic world so significantly that after he visited Jordan, Jerusalem, Cairo, and Baghdad in August, the local Iraqi press became enthralled by the Sardauna's commitment to the Muslim world, and was thoroughly impressed with Nigeria, which was identified as 'the centre of Islamic culture in the black continent' (Nigerian Citizen, 1964). By this time, the Premier's international reputation had also soared high 'as the "peacemaker" in the Islamic world' (Enwerem, 1995, p. 44). At about the same period he was elected Vice-President of the World Islamic League, and his advice was sought by world leaders who saw him as an authority on unity and solidarity among Muslim nations (Enwerem, 1995, p. 44). Evidence of such clout can be seen in the way he brokered peace during the Yemen crisis in 1965 (Paden, 1986, p. 543).

Apart from the Sardauna's commitment to 'Pan-Islamism', one of the factors that had endeared Sir Ahmadu to Muslim leaders was his domestic actions. Bello had always been devoted to preserving (or restoring) the pre-colonial Islamic background his forefathers had established. According to the man himself,

"...the restoration of the pre-1900 era, modernized, polished, democratized, refined but not out of recognition, reconstructed, but still within the same framework and on the same foundations, comprehensive by all and appreciated by all. The train, the car, the lorry, the aeroplane, the telephone, the dispensary, the school, the college, the fertilizer, the hypodermic syringes, have transformed Uthman dan Fodio's world but the basis is still there" (Chukwuma, 1985, p. 208).

In his letter to the Secretary-General of the World Muslim League in May 1962 the Sardauna had been clearer in this regard when he asserts,

“...As you have known for two hundred years my family have (sic) been associated with the spread of Islam and I only want to assure you my fullest cooperation for continued effort to strengthen Islam day by day (NAK/PRE/280 Vol. I., 1962).”

Indeed, the Sardauna used this profound dedication to Islam to, apart from receiving recognition and admiration from Muslim leaders, solicit financial support from these Islamic countries. In reference to the advancements, he had made to the cause of Islam, the Premier announced at the same World Islamic League forum in November that,

“Dear brothers, you can see that the programme on which I am working is not a matter for any individual. It requires a large scale international organization as is done by the Christian Missionaries, I am therefore appealing to all of us to come together and work out a master plan with all its implications, financial or otherwise especially as there are other forces working against us” (NAK/PRE/280/114, 1964).

Ahmadu Bello's objective was realized as many Islamic countries heeded his plea for assistance. Some of such assistance had even been trickling in shortly before his public appeal. For example, sometime in July of 1963 the Chief Imam of Medina, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, opened the £100,000 Sultan Bello Mosque in Sokoto (Paden, 1986, p. 543). In June of the following year, Prince Faisal, on behalf of the Saudi Arabian Government, donated £60,000 to continue the work of promoting Islam (Paden, 1986, p. 543). Ayub Khan of Pakistan had since 1961 made pledges to the Sardauna on financial assistance and technical aid. He redeemed this promise by sending doctors and engineers to Northern Nigeria and also, through the Pakistan State Bank, assisted in training Northern Nigerians in banking (Paden, 1986, p. 543). The Premier and his Northern Region also enjoyed other special treatments from Muslim countries. For example, protocol arrangements were waived between Northern Nigeria and Morocco.

The Premier of the Northern Region was within his right to have solicited aid and assistance from his Muslim associates. Section 69 of the 1960 constitution had given regional governments the right to solicit loans and aid both domestically and externally. However, the bonding that the Sardauna had with these Muslim countries had an implication on their interaction and perception of the rest of Nigeria. Given that the North was unapologetically pro-Arab, and the southern regions of the country were opposed to such disposition, Muslim countries too retaliated in displaying their affinity towards the Sardauna's region and their disdain for the southern regions. For example, shortly after Sir Ahmadu Bello in 1961 had made guarantees in the Middle East that he would not allow Israel to take part in any developmental program in Northern Nigeria, in 1962 the Jordanian government banned any exports from Nigeria that were produced by companies either owned completely by or in partnership with, Israeli concerns (Akinyemi, 1970, p. 121). This strategy of showing disfavour to the southern regions was also adopted by Egypt when in January 1962 the Nigerian contingent to the Commonwealth Education Conference held in India had a stopover in Cairo to change planes. The Egyptian government invited both the Federal and Northern Ministers of Education to stay in Cairo as guests of the government but ignored the Western and Eastern Ministers (Personal Communication, Bolaji Akinyemi, External Affairs Minister, 1985-87).

Walking a tightrope: Federal Government Disposition to Nigeria's External Relations

Data also reveals that the activities of the Northern Region, under the Sardauna, contrasted with the foreign policy of the Nigerian government that favoured a friendly relationship with both parties in the Middle East conflict. Indeed, as Lecours (2002) reminds us, this is sometimes one of the challenges with paradiplomacy, as regional interests sometimes conflict with those of the central government. In other words, the doctrines of national interest, sovereignty, and territorial integrity have predisposed the central governments against paradiplomacy (Lecours, 2002). However, during Nigeria's First Republic, in a federal state where the personalities of the regional governments were strong and the centre was weakened by the constitution, it was difficult for the Federal Government at times in balancing the separate interests relating to the nation's external relations, even though Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa himself tried separating religion from his policies (Personal Communication, Jubrin Chinade, Retired Diplomat, 1964-99).

In striking this balance Balewa's government first made sure that officially there was no religious character imposed on Nigeria's foreign policy. He reaffirmed this after he publicly told the Sardauna off when the latter counselled the Federal Government against accepting Israeli loans and having any sort of diplomatic ties with the Jewish nation. The Prime Minister openly declared that 'Nigeria and Israel were friendly and would cooperate for their mutual development. He again definitively added, 'it will be the end of happiness in this country when religion is brought into politics' (Nigerian Citizen, 1960c). While making this proclamation, however, he was unable to deter his kinsman and party leader from his hostility towards Israel to the extent that Israeli emissaries were not welcomed in the North during the Sardauna's tenure. Aids and technical assistance from Israel, which would have benefitted the underdeveloped North were also rejected by the regional government without the Prime Minister's intervention.

While Sir Abubakar at least succeeded in rebuffing Sir Ahmadu's attempt to influence the Federal Government's position on Israel, he sided with the Sardauna on his efforts at pan-Islamism. Having rejected the possibility of an Islamic confederation based on the geographical dispersion of the different Muslim countries, he endorsed the Northern Premier's call for a Muslim summit of all Islamic nations. He had also ignored the consequences of the Sardauna's active involvement in the Middle East politics, to the extent that Arab countries in many ways saw Northern Nigeria as different from the rest of the country. This was evinced by the warmth shown to representatives from the North as opposed to the relative cold shoulders shown to representatives from the Eastern and Western Regions as earlier discussed in this study. In defence of the Sardauna's obsession with Pro-Arab politics and Pan-Islamism, the Prime Minister had erroneously stated that any region had the right to invite a foreign head of state as long as this was cleared with the Federal Government. This was erroneous in the sense that such invitations of key Arab/Middle East players at the expense of others (Israel) bordered on the nation's foreign policy disposition, which was an exclusive preserve of the Federal Government.

The tightrope Balewa tried to walk was even more obvious in the voting pattern of Nigeria at the United Nations General Assembly. So as not to offend any segment of the country Nigeria never committed to either side on the Arab/Israeli issue. Between 1960 and 1965 the Arab/Israeli issue was presented before the Special Political Committee of the United Nations every year. Aggregately, eighty-six days were spent in deliberations, but Nigeria made only a two-minute speech encouraging both sides to show a spirit of compromise (Akinyemi, 1970, p. 123). Also, on all the seventeen occasions votes were taken, Nigeria voted six times for pro-Arab resolutions,

four times for resolutions that did not favour either side and abstained the seven other times. The pro-Arab resolutions Nigeria voted on were those which only dealt with the plight of refugees in a sympathetic way, while the abstention votes had to do with political resolutions which demanded concessions from Israel without guaranteeing its political existence (Akinyemi, 1970, p. 123).

Perhaps the most telling balancing act of the Federal Government was its decision to allow Israel to open an embassy in Lagos, while Nigeria did not open an embassy in Tel Aviv. This decision, which persisted for the next thirty-two years, was a clever one on the part of the Balewa government. Lagos was in the Deep South and such a move would not have upset the Christian South that was already pro-Israel. The decision not to open an embassy in Tel Aviv was made to appeal to the Northern Muslim elite.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is clear that the pre-colonial and colonial background of Nigeria, vis-à-vis religion, helped shape the nature of Nigeria's external relations during the First Republic. This was most evident in the manner in the Northern regional government under Ahmadu Bello conducted its external relationships and the pressures this had on the Federal Government. With a theocracy having been established in the North in the 19th century, it was only natural that the Islamic influence on the Sardauna's policies, and how they affected the nation's external relations, will dominate our discussion in this essay. Indeed, Enwerem (1995, p. 57) has suggested that an understanding of modern Nigeria hinges on a close study of the politics of the North, which are those of Ahmadu Bello. Paden agrees with this assessment when he states that, 'an understanding of Ahmadu Bello is so crucial to an understanding of Nigerian political history' that 'not to understand him is not to understand Nigeria, whether one agrees with him or not' (Paden, 1986, p. 6) The disposition of the two southern regional governments, however, sharply contrasted to that of the North. Though policies and outlook to external relations in these regions were largely dominated by secular ideas, opposition to Northern Islamic-oriented policies gave these southern leaders legitimacy in their largely Christian constituencies. Indeed, this contradistinction between the North and the South accounts for some of the tendentious tendencies bordering on Nigeria's foreign policy in later years (Faseke, 2019).

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