

REFLECTION ON POLITICS AND TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF SULTAN SA'AD ABUBAKAR III IN NIGERIA'S PEACE PROCESS (2006-2026)

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ABSTRACT

Since his emergence as the 20th Sultan of Sokoto, Sultan Sa'ad Abubakar III has been an advocate of promoting Nigeria's peace process particularly through Nigeria Inter-religious Council and the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. The strategies employed by the Sultan helps in the promotion of peace especially in the Northern Nigeria because his subjects see him as a permanent pillar of their existence despite some challenges he encounters in this regard. These challenges include lack of constitutional role to play in managing problems such as hate speeches, taking laws at hand, fall out of international crises, religious crisis, and political crisis because of outcome of elections. The study also highlighted external forces that resulted in the usurpation of traditional institutions powers, especially the British colonial onslaught. Qualitative methodology was chosen because it provides an enabling environment for an adequate interaction between the researcher and the key informants. There have been several studies on the role of traditional Institutions in the promotion of Nigeria's peace process. This study, however, focuses on bridging the gaps of the previous studies with emphasis on the 20th Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III who deserves to be provided with constitutional roles to play with a view to enhancing the promotion of Nigeria's peace process.

Keywords: Politics, Traditional Institutions, Sultan Sa'ad Abubakar, Peace-process.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Traditional institutions are important institutions of governance in Africa. They have been instrumental to the process of state formation and development both before and after colonization process. Sokoto Sultanate council is a good example of these institutions. In addition, traditional institutions are found in all

African communities (Mbwirire and Dube, 2017). On November 21, 2009 the Vanguard Newspaper published a report where the Sultan of Sokoto is rated as the fourth most powerful and influential monarch in the African continent. The Sultan of Sokoto, Sultan Sa'ad Abubakar III through his relations with the Nigerian Government, other Organizations

influences Nigeria's Peace Process in many ways.

Moreover, where true traditional chieftaincy institutions exist, government of those countries willingly or reluctantly accepted, knowingly or unknowingly, that the surest way to win the hearts of the people on major issues of the day is through the traditional rulers (Sunday Trust Newspaper, 2011). Although, recently traditional institutions have drastically changed because of colonialism, technological advancement, globalization, introduction of foreign religious systems and beliefs, changes in governance systems and structures among other factors their influence and relevance has remained significantly high (Mbwirire and Dube, 2017).

Many scholars have written on the roles of the traditional institutions. In this regard, (Boyd Jean and MaishanuHamzat M. 1991) conducted similar research on Sir SiddiqAbubakar III SarkinMusulmi; the father to his Eminence Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III where his role in Nigeria's peace process especially between Muslims and Christians was clearly defined.

It is against this background that the research is aimed at investigating the usurpation of traditional institutions powers because of the British colonial onslaught on the then Sokoto Caliphate, examining the relationship of Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III with the Nigerian Government and other Organizations and assessing his role in the promotion of Nigeria's peace process. Lastly, the research is to discuss challenges inhibiting the role of the Sultan in the promotion of Nigeria's peace process such as lack of constitutional role to play in managing hate speeches, fall out of international

crises, religious crisis, political crisis because of outcome of elections etc.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Traditional Institutions deserve some clearly defined roles to play in the Nigerian Constitution since their subjects see them as permanent pillars of their existence and they earn more respect and prestige from their communities more than political office holders. Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III has been actively involved in domestic, national, and international arena for the promotion of Nigeria's peace process, tolerance, and cohesion among intra sects and inter-religious beliefs. Specifically, the sultan has been playing the role of collaborating with Nigeria Inter-religious Council in promoting the national peace process. Nigerian Government always collaborate with the sultan among other Traditional Institutions in steering the promotion of Nigeria's peace process without the role being clearly defined and identified in the Constitution. The role Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III has been playing in the promotion of national peace process has yielded fruitful result since the larger population of the Muslim communities listen to him in all kinds of situations. However, there are challenges inhibiting his roles in the promotion of the Nigeria's peace process such as lack of constitutional role to play in managing hate speeches, taking laws at hand, fall out of international crises, religious crisis, political crisis because of outcome of elections. These are the basis of this research which is aimed at bridging the gaps of the previous research with focus on the 20th Sultan of Sokoto.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III with the Nigerian Government and other Organizations in Promoting Nigeria's peace process?
- ii. To what extent does Sultan Sa'adAbubakar influences Nigeria's peace process?
- iii. What are the challenges inhibiting the role of the Sultan Sa'adAbubakar in promoting Nigeria's peace process?

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Research

The main aim of this study is to articulate on the influence of the Sultan Sa'adAbubakar in promoting Nigeria's peace process.

- i. To ascertain the relationship between Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III with the Nigerian Government and other Organizations.
- ii. To investigate how Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III influences Nigeria's peace process.
- iii. To identify the challenges inhibiting the roles of the Sultan in promoting Nigeria's peace process.

1.5 Conceptual Clarification

The basic concepts that have been used in this study are going to be defined conceptually under this section.

1.5.1 Politics

The term politics has no universally acceptable definition. Scholars have defined the concept differently. For instance, (Valeri 2010, p. 41) assured that the concept of politics originated from a Greek word "polis" meaning; everything that concerns or belongs to the "polis" or city state. Since the city-states no longer exist, the modern form of this definition is what concerns the state. Therefore,

whatever is related to the state whether formal or informal (such as traditional institution), events (such as conduct of an election) or phenomena such as conflict is an aspect of politics. He added that some scholars of political science define politics as the process by which scarce resources are allocated within a social unit (be it a city, a state, a nation, or an organization) for the purpose of providing human needs and desires.

Modern view of politics related to this study gives more emphasis to struggle for power. For instance, according to Wasby as cited in (Mahajan 200:86) "To some, politics involves power, authority and influence". However, Max Wever cited in (Mahajan 2008, p. 86) observed that "Politics is the struggle for power or the influencing of those in power".

1.5.2 Traditional Institutions

Traditional institutions are the custodian of their people's norm, cultures, and practices (Mustapha & Bukar, 2019, p. 8). They are hereditary in nature in most communities, and it is difficult for someone not from royal lineage to ascend the throne in most African societies. The mode of selection of traditional institutions is not the same in all Africa societies and in Nigeria, it differs from one ethnic group to another in all the communities that made up the country. For instance, while in the Benin Kingdom, Edo State, it is only the first male child of a reigning king that can succeed him, but in other communities every male child of both the reigning and past kings are eligible to be selected as King. Traditional institutions are the symbol of the native people's rights, privilege, laws, customs and traditional (Mustapha & Bukar, 2019, p. 8) According to Orji and Olali, (2010) traditional institutions encompass chief-in-council, elders-in-council and traditional title holders who were given traditional

chieftaincy title because of their contributions to the growth and development.

1.5.3 Concept of Peace Process

Peace processes are pivotal moments for every society, during which the institutions of the State and its relationship with the population are (re-)defined by the conflict actors, sometimes in consultation with civil society and the general public. Mediators often support this negotiation process by helping the opposing actors to develop agreements they can all accept. (According to Ndeche and Iroye 2022, p. 22),

On a general note, Max Weber cited in Mahajan (2008, p. 86) observed that “Politics is the struggle for power or the influencing of those in power”. The British officials in Nigeria mounted and imposed rules and laws through the traditional rulers who only served as mediators between the people and the British officials. Though, the cultures and traditions of the Nigerian citizens were cherished and reserved by the British government to accept and welcome them by the citizens of the country. However, this system worked out well because of the support of the traditional rulers who claimed that since their cultures and traditions were not interfered with, they have no problem with the British authorities (Teslim, 2019) cited in Ali and Ahmed (2019, p.56). In another development, Zeleke (2011) cited in Ali and Ahmed (2019, p. 56) observed that traditional rulers serve as another institute of conflict resolution in any nation where the state legal system is weakening to fully provide the judicial requirements of the country. Conflict itself is very central in politics. However, (Ali & Ahmed 2019, p. 57) maintained that traditional rulers play an important role in the society by

advising the elected leaders in different areas, these include economic policy, security issues, equal sharing of goods and services, recommending aspirants for elections or appointment to serve the community, demand for good governance and general wellbeing of the people among others (and of course promotion of national peace process).

1.6 Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature. The research, therefore, is to employ a qualitative method. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researchers to gain insight into the organizational structures and settings, social processes, and poignantly underscores the importance of the personal narratives on the lived experiences of the respondents (Strauss, 1994). The inductive properties of flexibility and amenability available in qualitative methodology allow the researchers to discuss the issue through their personal and lived experiences as Nigerians through acquired knowledge about traditional systems of governance. In essence, the research, extracts its arguments from documentary sources of data such as legal frameworks and other related policies, journals, textbooks, articles, magazines, dissertations, research reports, and relevant materials and publications from the internet related to the study. It will further demystify the discourse (made it easier and clearer to understand) with relevant theoretical framework, result/findings, discussion, and conclusions that are largely derived from extant literature and field survey on the subject matter and subsequently, interview will be conducted for the stake holders.

The reason for the adoption of the qualitative methodology is that it provides an enabling environment for adequate

interaction between the researcher and the key informants.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted traditional authority in contrast to legal-rational authority as the main framework for the study. On this note, (Baldwin and Holzinger 2019, p. 1758-1760) assert that the first common framework used to understand traditional leaders is Weber's typology of authority (Weber, 1958). In this typology, traditional authority is explicitly conceived as an alternative to legal-rational authority. In contrast to the latter system, where outcomes are the result of well-defined law that applies equally to all, under traditional authority, power is based on connections to the ruler and appeals to custom. Insofar as these ideal types are conceived as exclusive of one another, this framework predicts traditional institutions will limit the rights of citizens, augment biases against historically marginalized groups, and undermine the rule of law. Similar predictions emerge from recent research that models customary justice systems as having built-in biases against marginalized groups and emphasizing the restoration of social order above punishment for violation of individual rights (Aldashev et al., 2012; Cooper, 2018; D'Aoust and Sterck, 2016). Insofar as equal rights and established rule of law are necessary for democracy (O'Donnell, 1993), these theoretical frameworks make pessimistic assessments about the effects of traditional institutions on democracy. Citizens living under traditional leaders become "subjects" not "citizens," to use the terminology of Mamdani (1996). They are expected to have limited recourse against abuses of power and limited protections from predation by the state or other citizens. Research in this vein has focused on documenting shortcomings of

traditional institutions compared with an ideal of equal rights for all. In particular, scholars have documented the weak rights provided to marginalized groups, especially women, under traditional systems (Chanock, 1985; Charrad, 2001). Other marginalized groups have also been found to have weak protections in traditional systems. For example, in Zimbabwe, Baldwin, Muyengwa, and Mvukiyeh (2016) (show that reforming traditional institutions so they are more inclusive improves the rights of the chiefs' opponents).

However, in other settings, customary institutions have been found to perform better than existing alternatives in protecting women's rights and establishing rule of law. For example, in Afghanistan, citizens express stronger support for women's rights in villages where traditional shuras are strong (Murtazashvili, 2016). Afghani citizens also expect customary councils to perform better than elected councils in reducing social divisions and furthering reconciliation, suggesting traditional institutions may in some instances outperform alternatives in providing rule of law (Jochem, Murtazashvili, and Murtazashvili, 2016). These latter findings indicate the problem with frameworks that assume traditional institutions always perform worse than alternative institutions in protecting rights. Their relative performance will depend on both their own quality and the quality of the alternative. Traditional authorities are not always regressive, and modern alternatives are not always egalitarian. Dualistic frameworks, such as Weber's, obscure important variation. The views of various scholars were discussed with a view to accommodate several perspectives. Therefore, the concepts have no universally accepted meanings. (However,

the meanings that are directly related to this study were not excluded). The theoretical framework applied to the study; Traditional Authority in contrast to Legal-Rational Authority due to its relevance in explaining the role of the Traditional Institutions in promoting Peace Process.

2.1 The Military Dimension of the 'Sultanate's' Response to the British Colonial Onslaught

According to (Clausewitz 1918), war is the continuation of politics by other means. In this regard, Caliph, or 'Sultan' Abdulrahman's (d. 1902) addressed to the then British High commissioner in Nigeria as cited in (Muhammad and Zagga 2005, p. 73) stated thus:

I do not consent that any one from you should dwell with us. I will never agree with you. Between you, and us there are no dealings except as between Muslims and unbelievers-war as God Almighty enjoined on us. There is neither power nor strength except with God, the mosthigh.

In simple terms as posited by (Muhammad and Zagga 2005, p. 73), the caliph's or 'Sultan's' response amounts to a blood and unequivocal rejection of the British suzerainty over the Caliphate or 'Sultanate' and the civilization it represented (westernization and secularism). To accomplish its imperial objectives, therefore, the British resorted to the use of several stratagems. The most prominent of these was the use of force.

By 1903, the caliphate was invaded by the British Colonialists. There was fierce resistance by Sultan Attahiru I (12th Sultan of Sokoto) both at Giginya in Sokoto and Burmi in Gombe. Eventually, the British took over the political administration of Nigeria and the Caliphate was Balkanized into Emirates

and later provinces. Subsequently, most of those Emirates became states in the federation of Nigeria. However, the Sultan maintained his status as the 'spiritual leader of Nigerian Muslims' and the most influential traditional ruler today (Sokoto State Government of Nigeria 2007, p. 20).

However, (Wagwuet'al 1997, p. 27) observed that in 1903, the area Northern Nigeria was conquered by the colonial authorities; this conquest affected the sovereignty of the Emirate or 'Sultanate' council, mostly on the area of appointment or election of their Sultan. The power and rights to elect a new Sultan of their choice as enshrined in the Islamic law were forcefully taken away from them.

In a nutshell, the following proclamation of the then High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria clearly signifies that the political role especially with regards to leadership choice of the 'Sultanate' was completely eroded and left with only advisory role as cited in (Wagwuet'al 1997, p. 28). Every Sultan and Emirs and the Principal Officers of the state will be appointed by the high Commissioners throughout the country. The Commissioners will be guided by usual laws of succession and the wishes of the people and the chiefs but will set them aside if he desires for good cause to do.

2.2 Relations of the Sultan of Sokoto and Nigerian Government

The relationship between Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III with the Nigerian government at all levels has been cordial as different administration collaborates with him and other traditional institutions for promotion of national peace process. For instance, (Abba et'al 2017, p. 490) asserts that Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III would always remind the political leaders also that ultimately, it would be their sence

of responsibility that would guide the people, bring peace and provide security for everyone. (politicians had quite a few times in the country's history exploited some societal weak points to gather cheap support from local communities, usually in order to attain power or escape responsibility while in office). It is significant to note that the Jos crisis of November 2008 began as a political dispute over the control of Jos North Local Government, but quickly escalated into a fully blown Muslim -Christian conflict. Good governance always prevents such conflicts, when the rights of every citizen are respected, and the society collectively enjoys harmony and development, quality leadership is the gateway for peace and development:

We must insist on (good governance) and refuse to be used as pawns in a game, which only promises to yield misery and underdevelopment for our people. We must make bold to state that the greatest service a politician would render to God is to imbibe and act on the external values the Almighty had put forth and to work, with fairness and justice, for the betterment of the life of the people. Any deliberate effort to curry God's favor through short-cuts can only produce a paltry harvest. The message of good governance and its scriptural basis must be carried to every mosque and every church. These will no doubt enable us to acquire a common conscience and perceive issues beyond the parochial concerns of our respective communities. Therefore, (Abba et'al 2017, p. 491) maintained that... the Sultan had often counseled opinion that the cultivation of such a vision should really begin with the reassertion of the core values of the society, in order to inspire everyone to work with devotion and sincerity:

The fundamental task, in my considered opinion, is the reestablishment of the primacy of values and our national life. We must be a nation of values and our leaders must embody and be guided by the (Core Values) we share as people. Above all, Nigeria's rich cultural and religious traditions and its vast intellectual heritage provide a common substratum upon which the nation's core values could be predicated. In a lecture I delivered at the Columbia University, New York in November 2007, I drew attention to some of the core values, personal as well as institutional, which had a pride of place in the minds and actions of my ancestors, Sokoto Caliphate leaders. Most of these are commonly shared by other polities and peoples that came to constitute our great country, Nigeria. These core values invariably include probity and the fear of God; tolerance and moderation; mutual consultation and the promotion of public good.

A good leader must, therefore, look into the nation's community of values, like those that gave birth to the Sokoto Caliphate, which its founding leadership embodied and championed. Among these were religion, wisdom and learning, as well as honesty and the qualities of clemency, generosity, kindness, piety, patience and gratitude as asserted by Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III. In fact, the leader should cultivate absolute trust between him and followers, as he leads them in unity and consensus, with justice and equity, while making their welfare his utmost concern all the time. Altogether, Sheikh UsmanuDanfodiyo had summarized the situation, when he warned the leader, in a quotation that has always attracted the attention of scholars, since he wrote it down two hundred years ago: ("A kingdom can endure with unbelief, but it cannot endure with injustice").

2.3 Role of Sultan Sa'ad Abubakar III in Nigeria's Peace Process

Many Scholars posited that traditional institutions play important role in peace process) For example, (Igbokwe-Ibeto and Ogbuagu 2021, p.8) asserts that traditional rulers often give advice to modern politicians in such questions as economic policy, security, culture and customs, and general wellbeing of the citizens. Because of long experience of the dynasties, the monarchs and kings often have the ability to give wise advice in many questions related to the ruling. Order and peace are the vital conditions for the economic development of any country. Government administration relies on local traditional leaders who can support order and peace in their domains. Often traditional leaders settle land disputes and resolve minor conflict, they are more successful in these issues than many modern politicians. Their function is not to give the conflict a chance to escalate into any hostility. In cases of land disputes, the rulers try to be the guarantors of peace and solve the disputes in the most peaceful way. More so, traditional leaders are considered role models and spiritual leaders for the communities. This helps them to play essential role in the formation of communities of good citizens (Agu, 2018). The government tries to pretend that they don't exist yet when there is crisis be it religious, ethnic, communal, land or political crisis, they run to them for help. No doubt, traditional institutions will be with us for long. It is our link with our past. As Justice Oliver WendelHolness (1841-1935) said: "Historic continuity with the past is not a duty, it is only a necessity". A constitutional amendment has become necessary to give the traditional rulers important roles in governance (Teniola, 2016). The public values the role traditional authorities play

in managing and resolving conflict and their leadership qualities and accessibility to ordinary people (Logan, 2013). The powers of traditional institutions are derived from the norms and values of their societies (Ezema,2020).

The sultan of Sokoto is very influential in administration of northern Nigeria's Islamic religious life. On the 21st of November 2009, the vanguard newspapers reported that the Sultan of Sokoto was rated as the fourth most powerful and influential monarch in the African continent. It is therefore on this note that this section of this study investigates the role of the sultan in promoting Nigeria's Peace Process particularly among the Muslim communities and even beyond.

In an interview with SultanSa'adAbubakar III with regards to his role in Nigeria's Peace Process, he revealed that when he became the Sultan of Sokoto in November, 2006, some of the major problems he found on the ground were the effects of the Kaduna Riots and a disturbing atmosphere of mistrust, fear and hostility, especially among the leadership of Nigeria's two major religions, Islam and Christianity. We could have taken the easy path by embracing the traditional routines: interminable meetings and fruitless declarations. Instead, we chose to take the difficult path, the path of positive engagement, which would engender meaningful discourse, improve communication and understanding and change of dynamics of our operating environment to the trust and confidence.

Furthermore, the Sultan, lamented that the Nigeria Inter-religious Council {NIREC} is a permanent and independent body established in 1999 to provide religious leaders and Traditional Institutions with a variable forum with the aim of promoting peaceful interaction and understanding

among the leadership and their followers as well as foundation for sustainable peace and religious harmony in the Country. He maintained that the Organization source it funds directly from the office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation. He also posited that the Council (NIREC) is a product of Nigeria's ethno-religious crises and was composed of twenty-five members each from the two religions and co-chaired by himself, in his capacity as the President General Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, and the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria {CAN}. (The approach of NIREC according to the Sultan was simple and practical. Firstly, we affirmed the sanctity of human life, Muslim and Christian, and instead that anybody who takes the law into his hands, regardless of the circumstances, must bear the full legal consequences of his action). That was why when a female student of ShehuShagari College of Education Sokoto in the person of Deborah Yakubu was murdered, on May 13th, 2022, we called on the Nigerians to remain calm. and ensure that peaceful coexistence prevail. We equally, urged the security agencies to bring the perpetrators of the unjustifiable incident to justice. His Eminence Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III added that there cannot be a justification for such gruesome murder. Deborah Yakubu was murdered, and all those behind her death must be brought to justice. We equally forwarded our condolences to her family and friends. On this note, without the intervention of his Eminence Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III, in calming the situation, there was high tendency that ethno-religious crises may happen in some parts of the country as a result of the murder of one of the adherents of Christianity.

Secondly according to his Eminence, we must pay attention to the other dimensions

of our conflicts. As many were preparing to declare a religious war in Jos, for example one of the major roles we have been playing in Nigeria's Peace Process is that we labored hard to draw attention to the other dimensions of the crises. It was a conflict between Muslims and Christians quite alright, but it was not a conflict between Islam and Christianity. When former President Goodluck Jonathan called for a parley among stakeholders, we made bold to declare the Jos Crisis as a political crisis).

Thirdly, we adopted a tactical approach to conflict resolution. Whenever, there is a break-out of violence, we work together to restore law and order and ask the quarrelsome questions later. We take this approach to minimize loss of life and ensure that the crisis is contained in the primary area it occurred.

Fourthly, we devised a meeting scheduled that took us to almost all parts of the country. It was heartening to many to see us working together (with CAN leadership) and preaching co-existence and religious harmony even in areas which never registered on ethno-religious conflict).

The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council has a membership of Fifty members, made up of equal representation from the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and the Christian Association Of Nigeria {CAN}. It provides a veritable forum for Christian and Muslim leaders to come together, exchange ideas and work collectively to resolve problems between the adherents of the two major religions. there has been a renewed determination on the part of religious leaders to develop a genuine understanding of the complexity of the Nigerian religious environment and evolve a true partnership in the task of overcoming sectarian challenges and

promoting religious harmony. The decision of NIREC to rotate its meetings within Nigeria's six geo-political zones has also yielded much benefits. For the first time, our teaming followers see us interacting with one another and working together with respect and mutual understanding, to address the common problems affecting our respective communities.

According to his Eminence, it is their hope to extend the activities of NIREC to every state and local government of Nigeria hoping that with this effort, the council will be able to engage in peace monitoring and ensure that local disputes do not snowball into major ethno-religious crises. NIREC is also willing to join hands with the various groups in the Niger Delta as well as with other stakeholders to find lasting solutions to the crisis in the area. That during his visit to London in 2016, he also had the opportunity to visit the Archbishop of Canterbury where they had very useful exchanges and series of interfaith meetings are being planned in both London and Rome to engender greater understanding and cooperation between the world's two greatest religions.

As the president general of the Nigerian supreme council for Islamic Affairs, sultan Abubakar has earned accolades for himself as the people's sultan not just the sultan of Sokoto or sultan of Nigeria Muslims but sultan of the people. This assertion was made by Professor Ishaq Akintola, Director Muslim rights concern (MURIC) on 30th November 2021 during a public lecture presentation at Sultan Mohammad Maccido Institute for Qur'an and general studies in commemoration of the Sultan's fifteenth years Anniversary.

Professor Akintola added that sultan Saad Abubakar III has strengthened the NSCIA in many ways. First and foremost, his open-door policy and active

participation in programs organized by Muslims in the south has endeared him to millions of Muslims in the country. This has also cemented the unity of the ummah (community) in no little way and the old mantra of North-South dicotomy it's fast becoming an old song. This has also restored confidence in the NSCIA to a large extent.

Additionally, professor Akintola stated that a good example of how the substance active engagement and succeeded in warming the hearts of majority of Nigerian Muslims towards the NSCIA is the way the Muslim rights concern (MURIC) changed its perception of the umbrella organization soon after sultan Abubakar came on board.

More to the points, according to professor Akintola, in his open-door policy, the sultan increased the membership of key committees and co-opted new faces from various organizations across the country. He also created new committees. For example, the moon sighting committee of the NSCIA was created to address the issues of controversies during the two major Muslims festivals. These committees have succeeded in drastically reducing division among Muslims during festivals or Muslim public holidays.

In a brief face-to-face interview with professor Akintola, he informed the researcher that sultan Muhammad Saad Abubakar III was the first sultan to leave the safe heavens of the Sokoto sultanate to interact first-hand with Muslims south of the Niger. He traversed the whole of Yoruba land attending Islamic programs. He was in Oshogbo, Ibadan, Ondo, Akure etc..not only that, but he was also palpably visible in the South-East and south-south. Enugu, Owerri, Port Harcourt, etc..have played host to his eminence Akintola added.

2.4 Challenges Confronting Sultan Sa'ad Abubakar III in Promoting Nigeria's Peace Process

As Religious Leaders and Traditional Institutions who have no role to play constitutionally, his Eminence Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III asserts that challenges on their role in Nigeria's Peace Process are inevitable.

Firstly, according to him is building sturdy bridges of understanding between Islam and Christianity and between Muslim and Christian communities in Nigeria. Inter-religious dialogue should be serious and sustained and should be handled not by religion entrepreneurs who subsist on these ventures but by the apex religious organizations involving all the significant strata of the nation's religious hierarchy. He stressed the need for them as Religious Leaders and Traditional Institutions to endeavor to carry the message of tolerance and mutual understanding, which these dialogues teach, to the mosques and churches).

Secondly the exercise of restraint on the part of politicians especially in the cause of campaigns and political mobilization. The message here is that one can ride to political victory by fanning the embers of religious and ethnic hatred and animosity but stand a good chance of being consumed by the resulting inferno. Severe actions should also be imposed on politicians who promote religious intolerance both by the political parties and the Independent National Electoral Commission).

Thirdly, according to his Eminence, is the fight against poverty and want, especially in the Northern States, to enable the residents of these states, Muslim and Christian, live decent and productive lives. The involvement of non-governmental

organizations as well as Nigeria's International developmental partners the campaign for job creation and poverty alleviation, will go a long way in ameliorating the problems of poverty and hunger).

Fourthly, is the effective management of religious disputes and conflicts by the security agencies. Many of the major crises had humble beginnings, usually as minor disputes between individuals and communities, which are badly managed. It is also important for security agencies to maintain their professionalism and neutrality in handling all aspects of religious conflicts and establish proper liaison with traditional authorities as well as religious leaders and scholars. It is also imperative for security agencies to monitor the activities of extremist religious organizations without antagonizing genuine ones. Additionally, according to him, the need for capacity building which will further sensitize and provide the requisite skills to the relevant security agencies to better manage this category of conflicts should also receive the urgent it deserves.

Finally, according to his Eminence Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III CFR mni, is the managing the fall-out of international crises, the religious implications of which the environment is quite sensitive to. For example, the Danish cartoon saga was one of them. While it is essential for Nigerians to imbibe the culture of peaceful demonstrations, and some progress is being made in this direction, it is important for international organizations to open active dialogue on religious rights and freedoms and on what constitutes proper behavior in a globalized, multicultural and religiously sensitive world. The call for restraint and sensitivity becomes all the more critical especially in the artistic field,

where the supposed victim has no right of reply. Moderation and toleration according to his Eminence, do not presuppose the absence of rights and freedoms. They are pre-suppose individuals who possess unfettered rights and freedoms as well as the ability to use them but who choose to exercise them responsively to avoid hurting the rights and sensibilities of others.

In another development, on July 26, 2016, the Wilson Center Africa Program, in partnership with the International Interfaith Peace Corps and the U.S. Agency for International Development, was honored to host Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, the 20th Sultan of Sokoto. The Sultan – the spiritual leader of the Muslim community in Nigeria (and millions more in the sub-region), a revered leader in Northern Nigeria, and a highly regarded figure in the country – reflected on key issues Nigeria including Nigeria's place in the Muslim world, religious tolerance and Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria, his work and advocacy for the empowerment girls and women in Muslim-majority Northern Nigeria, the fight against Boko Haram, and his views on the prospects for Nigeria's future. Following welcome remarks on behalf of the Wilson Center by Dr. Andrew Selee, Executive Vice President of the His Eminence the Sultan of Sokoto a special opportunity to hear from one of Africa's leaders on peace, development, religion, and interfaith tolerance in a time of raging and often polarizing debate about such issues and the interface between Islam and terrorism. His Eminence began with a discussion of Nigeria's place in the Muslim world. As the most populous black nation in the world and one of the most populous Muslim countries (with 85-90 million Muslims), the religious leadership of Nigeria commands an important role in

the greater Muslim world. Moving the discussion toward religious intolerance, His Eminence posed several questions: Why is there such severe religious intolerance? Why is there so much violence around the world in the name of religion? How do we defeat the few among us who decide to take people's lives in the name of religion, be it Christianity or Islam? Simple skirmishes exacerbated by religion have created a worrying situation on the ground in Nigeria, he noted. Cross-religious engagement and dialogue, however, offer the solution to intolerance, providing options for religious leaders and everyday citizens to combat this issue. The Sultan of Sokoto encouraged Nigerians who practice the Islamic faith to read and understand their scripture, stressing that Islam abhors the killing of individuals. Creating peace and stability within a nation and living peacefully beside one another requires understanding, founded in trust, collaboration, and discussion. Multi-sectoral movements and organizations, such as the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), which His Eminence and the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja John Onaiyekan co-chair, and the Nigeria Inter-Faith Action Association (NIFAA); bring together both Christian and Muslim religious communities on issues such as combatting disease and poverty and offer a platform for establishing trust. For example, he said, the NIFAA is working in partnership with the United States' Center for Interfaith Action (CIFA) to eradicate malaria across the country. Mosquitos have no religion, he quipped, and so are common enemies.

His Eminence then discussed the issue of leadership and politics and the often-troubling consequences resulting from merging the two. The electorate is not comprised of Christian and Muslim votes, he noted, and citizens should avoid voting

based on their religious sentiments. It is also important to understand that religious leaders also often function as traditional leaders in Nigerian society, often holding greater legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry than political institutions. It is important, therefore, that these leaders put together organizations that reach out to the common man, while also serving to advise the government. Turning to the topic of education, the Sultan stressed that education is the most important thing to give any child, whether a girl or a boy, and stated that the caliphate itself was founded on knowledge. Referencing the Sultanate Council's plans to establish an all-women's medical university in Northern Nigeria, the Sultan declared his full support for women's education, outlining barriers to female education such as poverty and cultural norms. There is nothing in Muslim scripture that says girls should not go to school, he said. Reflecting on Boko Haram, Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III stressed the misperceptions and misinformation that frequently surround the terrorist group. He argued Boko Haram is not part of a plan to eradicate Nigerian Christians, noting that more Muslims than Christians have died at the hands of Boko Haram fighters. People are angry about corruption and government failure, and when their voices were stifled, many turned to radicalization and violence. In recent months, however, Boko Haram has seen defeats at the hands of the increased force of the Nigerian. The actions of a few do not represent those of the majority, he reiterated, and it is these misperceptions that often lead to violence. To defeat an enemy, Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III noted, you must know them. And to love your neighbor, you must understand your neighbor. The Sultan concluded his remarks by discussing the broader notion of division, stating that the more division

one creates, the more problems one creates for oneself. Leaders must listen to those they are leading, he said, and try their best to unite, rather than divide, their followers. It is through dialogue that we can listen, learn, and ultimately solve problems together. (Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III and Monde Muyangwa 2016, p. 2-5)

While affirming the role and effort of Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III in promoting Nigeria's peace process during an interview, SarkinFadanSokoto; the Chief of Staff to Sultan Sa'adAbubakar, AlhajiKabiruAminuTafidain an interview lamented that the past seventeen years had not been bed of roses for Sultan, because there were so many challenges but then there were also a lot of successes recorded. No leader in the past has done so much to bring the two religions together (Islam and Christianity). But Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III is being foremost in this struggle to find a lasting peaceful coexistence between these two major religions in Nigeria. He added that in his own view, the major achievement of his Eminence is his Inter-religious activities and how he has been able to hold the NIREC together. In another development, the Chief of Staff to the sultan revealed that in his own wisdom, the Sultan of Sokoto brought all Muslims sects together and they all feel very comfortable with him, which hitherto, wasn't the case among them. But now they sit-down together and they worship together.

(In his own view, the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Matthew Hassan Kukah attributes causes of conflicts and disputes among the adherents of Islam and Christianity to sectionalism, fanaticism, injustice, and religious intolerance. He maintained that most of these challenges at times are because of misunderstanding our religion, when we should know we are

dealing with Nigerians, not religion. We shouldn't quarrel on how we worship God. He later applauded the effort of Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III in holding and strengthening the NIREC in promoting Nigeria's Peace Process. Bishop Kukah further revealed that no Country, business, family, or Organization has a future if it doesn't figure out how to manage its diversity. He, therefore, appealed to the Nigeria's Political leaders especially President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to make the dream of NIREC realistic by rising to the Challenge of uniting different ethnic groups and identities in the Country, adding that religion, ethnicity, and gender are not the problem but rather how to manage the nation's diversities).

Lastly, the Bishop of Sokoto Diocese in an interview called on the Federal Government to give much priority in the fight against poverty, saying that poverty doesn't discriminate between religions, tribes, and other identities.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Summary of Major findings

This study investigated the relationship between Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III with the Nigerian Government and other Organizations in Promoting Nigeria's peace process such as Nigeria Inter-religious Council as well as the challenges confronting the role of SultanSa'adAbubakar III in that regards.

The study found out that the relationship between Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III Nigerian Government and other Organizations is cordial in the sense that the Sultan has been preaching for national peace particularly through the Nigerian Interreligious Council which is being funded by the Federal Government where

he serves as Co-Chairman. Their activities through the NIREC have helped in engendering better Muslim -Christian relations.

It has been observed that Sultan Sa'adAbubakar has been playing important role in the promotion of national peace process harmoniously. Although he lacks constitutional role which will enable him to discharge such responsibility diligently, presently his roles are mainly advisory.

That challenges such as exercise of restraint on the part of the politicians especially during their campaigns and political mobilization, effective management of religious disputes and conflicts by the security agencies and of course managing the fall-out of international crises are the major obstacles bedeviling the role of Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III and other Traditional Institutions in the promotion of national peace process.

3.2 Conclusion

By taking everything into account, colonial rulers, some of the nationalists as well as military rulers should be held responsible for forcefully and gradually taken away the roles of the traditional institutions in politics and peace process by the right of conquest which the colonialists initiated. This could be observed from the time when the Caliphate was conquered by European powers and subsequently installed some of the nationalists during the colonization of the country.

Sir Ahmadu Bello Sardauna of Sokoto who then Premier of the northern region was specifically quoted in many places threatening some of the then northern traditional rulers to either dance to the tune of colonial masters or be dismantled. In

this regard, as noted earlier, (Paden 1986, p. 438) asserted that in 1962, having established standards of local government the Sardauna gives ultimatum to all local authorities and traditional leaders (the Sultan inclusive): comply with the new regulations or suffer the consequences. These consequences may be dissolution of the NA, or removal of any personnel from the NA, including Emirs and Chiefs. Although, other factors such as western civilization also contributed a lot in the decline of the Sokoto Caliphate's role in politics.

In another development, the Sultan of Sokoto, Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III among other traditional institutions in the country has been widely considered as instruments of promoting Nigeria's peace process and many other vital roles because of their cordial relationship with the Nigerian Government. Under democratic setting for example, the Independent Electoral Commission relies heavily on the local institutions on voter's registration sensitization. Additionally, Federal, states and local government also use the institution in making awareness of many government policies and programs.

Although, lack of constitutional role to play in politics has remained the significant centralizing force in undermining the efficiency and effectiveness of the Sultan in promoting Nigeria's peace process, in this regard, therefore, not to talk of the 'Sultanate council', even political office holders and the (politicians themselves are clamoring for the involvement of the entire traditional rulers in the governance process). This is expected to help a lot in providing solution especially on the current security situation in the country.

3.3 Recommendations

The existing cordial relationship between Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III with the Nigerian Government and other Nations and Organizations should be sustained. This will enhance the capacity of his role in preaching for peace among the Muslim Communities across the country by organizing more national and international conferences, seminars, and symposiums on the need for peaceful coexistence among various political, religious, and tribal groups.

Constitutional role should be provided for Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III and at least other first class Traditional Institutions in Nigeria with a view to playing more roles in promoting Nigeria's peace process. This could be done by amending the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria by the legislature.

That challenges such as exercise of restraint on the part of the politicians especially during their campaigns and political mobilization, effective management of religious disputes and conflicts by the security agencies and of course managing the fall-out of international crises need to be addressed. This could be done through collaboration between the Federal Government of Nigeria and Nigeria Inter-religious Council under the able leadership of his Eminence; Sultan Sa'adAbubakar III CFR mni as Co-Chairman of the Organization and the President Christian Association of Nigeria {CAN}.

The powers of appointment and removal of the Sultan should not be in the hands of the political office holders. This is with a view to avoid frequent removal of the Sultan because of personal problem between the Sultan and the State Governor

or President as it had happened between General Sani Abacha and Sultan Ibrahim Dasuki through the then Sokoto state Governor; Col. Yakubu Mu'azu, his Royal highness; Alh. Haruna Jokolo Vs the Former Governor of Kebbi State Alhaji Adamu Aliero and his Royal highness Allhaji Muhammadu Sunusi II Vs Former Governor of Kano State Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje. Instead, the powers of selection of the Sultan should be left with king makers who impeach the existing Sultan or select the new Sultan whenever the need arises.

The issue of inadequate funding of the Sultanate Council also needs to be addressed by the Federal and Sokoto State Government in view of the role the Sultan plays in promoting Nigeria's peace process.

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