

**CONFLICT OF NATIONAL INTEREST AND PUBLIC
OPINION IN NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS**

**An Assessment of the Debate on
Nigeria - Israel Relations
1973 - 1992**

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(MIAD/SOC.SC./99-2000/19107)

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DECLARATION

I, SANI Ahmed Kaura registration number MIAD/SOC.SC./99-2000/19107 declare that this thesis is my own words and was not submitted in any form for another Degree or Diploma at any other University or Institution and that the information derived from the published works of others was duly acknowledged by means of references.




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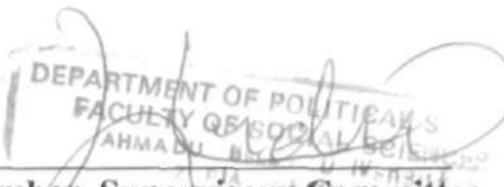
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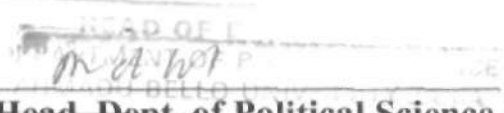
This Thesis entitled '**CONFLICT OF NATIONAL INTEREST AND PUBLIC OPINION IN NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS: An assessment of the Debates on Nigeria-Israel Relations, 1973-1992**' by SANI, Ahmed Kaura meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of International Affairs and Diplomacy, MIAD, of the Ahmadu Bello University, ABU, Zaria, and is approved for its contributions to knowledge and literary presentation.


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DEDICATION

I dedicated this work to my parents Muhammed Sani and Aminatu Antu who took great interest in my education at childhood in an environment that had great apathy for Western Education.

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I wish to acknowledge the profound contribution of so many people towards the successful attainment of this academic standard.

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to investigate the conflicting positions Nigeria's National interest and the opinion of the Nigerian citizenry maintained in matters of foreign policy and diplomatic relations. In other words, the thrust of this study was to showcase with specific reference to Nigeria-Israel relations (1973-1992) how the opinion of Nigerian Citizens is often at variance with the nation's national interest in the conduct of Nigerian foreign policy and diplomatic relations over the years since independence. It also seeks to analyse this conflicting position vis-a-vis the long drawn debate on whether or not Nigeria was to resume diplomatic relations with the state of Israel broken in 1973. In accomplishing this task, the research study relied on secondary data from textbooks, newspapers, magazines and conference communiques. The data was presented by direct and indirect reporting of some relevant portions in the published works of others who dealt with the subjects of Nigeria-Israel relations, Nigeria-Middle East Policy, the practice of Diplomacy in Nigeria and the conduct of Nigerian Foreign Policy and International Relations. The study made a thorough analysis and assessment of the various arguments advanced by individuals, groups, religious and other voluntary organisations, media houses, institutions, conferences and various regimes for or against normalisation of diplomatic relations with Israel. This research study discovered that except for a very few of them, the totality of the arguments and or opinion presented were grossly insincere to the ideals of the nation's national interest. Arguments advanced were either meant to serve sectional interest, religious interest or elite interest. Government which was suppose to be a defender of the nations interest and an arbiter in the controversy took side with the elite class. This was particularly so with the Government of General Ibrahim Babangida which restored relations with Israel in 1992 purely to

serve elites economic interest in the guise of defending the nation's interest. This decision was seen to have overtly served the interest of those who wanted the relation restored, but alas it wasn't the case. Contenders in the argument for and against including those who relied on Camp David Accords of 1979 all lost to elites interest. This study identified an overwhelming elite dominance in the arguments and final decision to restore relations with Israel in particular and in the entire conduct of Nigerias' foreign policy and diplomatic relations in general. The study therefore recommends a wider consultation before taking any major foreign policy decision in order to lessen drastically the conflict arising from such unilateral decisions in future. The public including University students should also be properly educated on the nation's foreign policy orientations, objectives and goals in order to foster an understanding of the nation's foreign policy and lessen the conflict between public opinion and National interest arising from such public ignorance. Certainly, the future of a responsive, enduring and successful Nigerian foreign policy and diplomatic relations depends largely on the domestic support government would be able to sustain in this endeavour.

CHAPTER ONE

1.00 **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Since 1992 when diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Israel was restored, the Nigerian public, academics, diplomats and public affairs commentators did try to reecho and assess the debates that transpired between various groups, individuals and government over the state of Nigeria - Israel relations since 1973. In other words, since 1973 when Nigeria severed diplomatic relations with Israel there was a heated debate at the domestic level which survived for 19 years and was brought under critical assessment by 1992 when the relations was restored. In any case, the assessment of this 19 years old debate is the thrust of this study.

The actors in this debate as stated earlier could not reconcile among themselves and this had helped to prolong the argument and the period of diplomatic severage between Nigeria and Israel. Nigeria-Israel relations had ever since from inception in 1960 been shrouded in controversy. The Political Parties of the first Republic found it difficult to reconcile on Nigeria-Middle East policy and what constitute the interest of the federation and its citizenry in this relationship. Nigeria under Balewa had a contradictory stand on Arab-Israel conflict because of the divergent and narrow regional interest underpinned by conflicting religious undercurrents. While the NPC and the Muslim North wanted Nigeria to throw its weight and support for the Arabs, the NCNC, the AG and the Christian South needed support for Israel. The leaders of the Political Parties made startling comments on Israel to reaffirm their respective stand on the issue of Nigeria's relation with that country. For instance, Sardauna of Sokoto Sir

Ahmadu Bello said of Israel, "To my mind it (Israel) does not-exist and it will never existI don't know where it is....." When Tafawa Balewa confronted him over the need to seek Israel help interms of foreign aid to Nigeria, Sir. Ahmadu said, "when we want help we know where to go for it". "Chief Michael Okpara, the deputy leader of NCNC said, "I myself 'am almost an Israelite. I love and admire Israel, for my part I shall always go to Israel". Chief Ladoke Akintola the deputy leader of AG and Premier of Western Region said, "you (Israel) can be assured of our friendship and support at any place and we promise never to withdraw this".¹

These were the words of the Party Leaders of the first Republic which constituted the very basic elements of potential conflicts over Nigeria-Israel relations. It constituted the basic foundation upon which all future crisis over Nigeria-Israel relations rest. The attempt by Balewa Government to strike a balance and maintain neutrality in the conflict was not practically feasible given the conflicting regional interest and divergent views of the leaders, and particularly when the leader of his party, the NPC, Sir Ahmadu Bello, vehemently opposed anything to do with Israel. It was for the same reason that Nigeria could not establish an embassy in Tel-Aviv even though Israel had one in Lagos. Therefore, the relationship had ever been so fragile before the OAU's formal directive on member nations to severe diplomatic relations with Israel due to the later's illegal occupation of Egyptian lands. Nigeria obliged to the OAU decision on 25th October, 1973 when it severed diplomatic relations with Israel. This decision attracted a heated debate at the domestic level, which involved all interest groups, government and

individuals.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study sets out to investigate the impact of the conflict of national interest and public opinion on Nigerian foreign policy and Diplomatic Relations with special emphasis on the debate on Nigeria – Israel relations, 1973 – 1992. The signing of Nigeria-Britain defense pact for instance marked the beginning of the clash between national interest and public opinion in the conduct of Nigerian foreign policy and diplomatic relations. In 1962 the government of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa signed a defense pact with Britain that in the event of any external aggression against Nigeria Britain shall come into the military aid of the country. However, the government had to withdraw from the pact due to an opposition mounted against this foreign policy decision led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo who said doing so would amount to Nigeria compromising its sovereignty and independence. Ola Toyin (1997) said, “..... the withdrawal of Nigeria from the Anglo-Nigerian Defence pact in 1962 was due to the resentment demonstrated by every strata of the Nigerian domestic sphere against the alliance ²”. However, the debate that ensued against the defence pack took the advantage of the nasty colonial experience Nigerians had from the British colonial authority. It appeared from the eyes of Nigerians that the action was like a reversal to colonial domination especially when independence was just a little two years old. This was the advantage Chief Awolowo, the leader of the opposition against the defence pact, took in his

argument to deceive innocent Nigerians and groups into the massive opposition (public opinion) against a genuine national interest. This is where the problem lies. Today, 2001 Obasanjo did sign the defence pact with Britain without due consultation with the citizenry.

Through foreign policy is generally regarded an elite affair particularly in developing nations. Public interest is not in any way devastating. Where it is intentionally infiltrated and adulterated by elite interest it loses its credibility and objectivity to be so considered as an expression of a genuine public opinion. This is where it clashes with the national interest especially where the government in power refused to listen to such an opinion which it considers devastating to a genuine interest in the context of the matter under decision or already decided as in the case of the defence pact of 1962 (already signed).

The insincerity of this expressed public interest against Anglo-Nigerian defence pact was indicated by the treasonable actions of Chief Awolowo and the consequent 1966 Coup de'tat which toppled the first Republic and ignited the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970). The defence pact, if allowed, could have withered away the expression and particularization of this opposing sentiments against the first republic. The military could not have dared toppling the government and causing confusion in the polity which later culminated into a civil strife and war.

This was the rudiment of the case with Nigeria-Israel relations, 1973-1992. The problem lies in the insincerity of the opinion expressed in the debate for or against the normalisation of diplomatic relations with Israel

against all genuine national interest of Nigeria. The government in successive regimes up to 1992 refused to listen to such public interest expressed from both the divide of the opposition (Christians and Muslims) not because it did not respect public opinion perse but because both the arguments were insincere and ran counter to the ideals of the Nation's national interest. Successive regimes consistently kept on telling Nigerians that normalisation of relations with Israel could not be immediately possible owing to the Zionist regime's connection with and support for the white minority regime of South-Africa. Yet arguments from both sides of the divide continued to give the debate a religious taste. Professor Isawa Elaigwu however rightly observed that the debate on the resumption of diplomatic ties with Israel was approached from two false premise, Northern Nigeria regarded as being an Islamic entity and the state of Israel considered as a Christian entity³. It can quickly be added here that the falsity of the premise or the approach to the argument also hinges from the religious under currents of this debate as if the reason for the severing of diplomatic relations in 1973 or even the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1960 was religion. This all goes to show the insincerity of the public interest often expressed for or against a foreign policy decision of the Nigerian nation. Beneath all this act of insincerity and conflict lies the elite interest which seemed to influence the arguments from both sides of the religious divide.

This is essentially the problem which this study identified and wish to tackle from the academic perspective using all available literature accessible.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study can be outlined as follows:-

1. To bring together and compile various arguments from different groups and persons on whether or not Nigeria should restore diplomatic ties with Israel.
2. To expose the motives behind various arguments of the various interest groups in the controversy.
3. To assess the credibility or otherwise of the various arguments surrounding the debate.
4. To identify and examine the points of conflict between National interest and public opinion in this debate.
5. To suggest on better methods and techniques of utilizing public opinion without hampering the basic elements of Nigeria's National interest.
6. To recommend ways of lessening the conflict between national interest and public opinion in the pursuit of Nigerian Foreign Policy & Diplomatic relations.

JUSTIFICATION

The rationale and significance which justify this study lies in the overall interest of Nigeria and the OAU in the Middle-East crisis. The Middle-East appears as a sub-continent bedevilled in one crisis or another, the most long surviving being the Israel-Palestinian conflict. There were wars fought

between Iraq and Iran, Iraq and Kuwait, Iraq and USA, and the war in Lebanon, all in the Middle-East. The spate of crisis in the Middle-East was so complex that some see it as a conspiracy of Arabs against fellow Arabs, and that Arabs themselves frustrate efforts at reconciling these conflicts or bringing them to an end by their sheer hypocrisy. Samir Amin (1978:49) stated inter alia, "The Arabs themselves openly betrayed the Palestinian cause in 1947-1948. Emir Abdallah of Trans Jordan was soon negotiating the annexation of the West Bank to his desert kingdom....."⁴

However, this crisis in the Middle-East has caused a great concern to the international community that nations across the globe make deliberate move to articulate Middle-East policies to promote their interest in the crisis. The United Nations, the O. A. U. and the Arab league are International Organisation highly concerned with the Middle-East crisis. Of particular significance to this study is the OAU's commitment towards the Middle-East. The OAU found itself in a very difficult situation for eight of its members are of Arab descent who do not want to see their brothers in difficulties. The countries are Libya, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan and Somalia.

Secondly, and given the above background, Nigeria-Middle East policy is so significant in Nigerian Foreign policy that studies that boarder on it or part of it stands the test of time. For it helps to further an Understanding of Nigeria's position in the Middle-East crisis. The Nigeria-Israel relations in particular is a significant milestone in the history of Nigerian Foreign policy. This relationship or lack of it at diplomatic level has revealed the extent of the commitment of Nigeria towards South-African liberation and independence, for Nigeria's refusal to restore relations with Israel was

purely for South-African cause.

Thirdly, the discipline of International Relations stands to benefit a lot from the findings and recommendations of this research. This is more so in the area of public opinion and the influence of the Elites Class in the conduct of foreign policy and international relations. It is the submission of this research that Government is part of the elite class, which conspires against the opinion of the mass populace or the citizenry in the act of inter-state relations so much that national interest suffers elite domination.

Therefore the discipline on International relations shall seek to investigate further this act of elite dominance and highlight the positive impact of giving public opinion a chance in inter state relations. Most of the literature in International Relations tends to rather hopelessly lay weight on the purported dominance of the leader and the societal elites in the act of foreign relations (or policy) without necessarily pointing, in clear perspective, to the ills made to the field because of total disregard to public opinion.

METHODOLOGY

This research work relied on secondary data to offer the necessary assessment of the debate. It therefore derived its data from textbooks, newspapers, magazines and conference communiqués.

The data presentation is by direct quotation (direct reporting), indirect reporting, personal analysis and assessment of the various reports/writings of authors that dealt with the subject of Nigeria – Israel relations, Nigeria – Middle East Relations, the practice of Diplomacy and International Relations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There may not however be readily available a theory of diplomacy by which this subject can be adequately hammered to a successfully academic conclusion. However, some analytical tools and other established levels of analysis as profounded by Ola Toyin (1991) can combine to aid and guide in the explanation of the situation with Nigeria-Israel relations 1973-1992. The traditionalist approach to the study of International relations can also be used to explain what happened, why it happened and how it happened and the likely trend future debates on similar matter could take. Prominent scholars known for adopting this theoretical approach include Raymond Aron, Stanley Hoffman and Hans Morgenthau.⁵

Therefore this study will wish to within the context of the traditionalist approach adopt three levels of analysis to base the issue before it and be able to ensure an empirical and detailed study of the subject.

- These are:
- i. Individual Decision makers level
 - ii. Nation state or linkage level
 - iii. Systemic or World system level

At the individual decision makers level which presupposes the overwhelming influence of a leader over foreign policy decisions we shall seek to identify, analyse and examine how personality dispositions, professional background and other characteristics of the leadership under

Generals Yakubu Gowon and Ibrahim Babangida had affected the decisions to sever and resume diplomatic relations with Israel respectively. Whether such traits had any effective influence over such foreign policy decisions shall be identified (in 1973 and 1992)

At the nation state or linkage level of analysis which presupposes that domestic (public) opinion, views and comments influence the pattern of state behaviours in its relations with other nations, we shall seek to analyse the influence of the debate which took individuals, groups and organisations 19 years to conclude to the final decision by Babangida administration to restore diplomatic relation with the state of Israel in 1992.

At the systemic or world system level of analysis which presupposes a profound influence over a state affairs by the issues and circumstances prevailing in the international system, we shall seek to analyse the rationale in abiding by the OAU resolution which directed (or influenced) all African States to sever diplomatic relations with Israel over the latter's conflict with the Arabs of the Middle-East and Egypt.

Thus, concludes the theoretical framework of analysis in the study of the debates in Nigeria-Israel Relations, 1973-1992 and the recurring conflict of national interest and public opinion which characterised the controversy.

PROPOSITIONS

This research study shall seek to investigate the following propositions built around the Political, Economic and Religious arguments.

1. To assess the political arguments presented by successive regimes since 1973 to 1992 and determine among other things whether such arguments reflect the national interest of the nation or were diversationary tactics meant to serve other interest.
2. To assess the economic arguments presented by individuals and organizations and determine among other things whether such arguments actually altruistic and whether it reflected the opinion of the public citizenry or was meant to serve elite interest.
3. To assess the religious arguments presented by religious organizations, religious leaders and sectional interest and determine among other things whether such arguments validly explained the motive and reasons for the break and resumption of Nigeria's relations with Israel respectively.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This study shall focus on the impending debate or the entire controversy that surrounded the resumption or otherwise of the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and the state of Israel. The study shall therefore cover the period between 1973 to 1992 defining the Span period within which the

arguments took place. It took 19 solid years for the Nigerian academia, the peasants, the Northerners, the Southerners, the religious leaders, opinion leaders, the press, the elites, groups and organisations, political parties and successive regimes to argue this matter out until finally in 1992 when the military Government of President Ibrahim Babangida restored diplomatic relations with Israel.

The study shall therefore limit itself to the import of these arguments from which it shall carry out its assessment. The study hopes to be thorough, concise and objective in its assessment of various opinions expressed in this debate by the different interest groups and the government itself. The study shall also make conclusions and offer suggestions or recommendations for further study and research on the subject matter.

This study had limitations by way of time and accessibility to the former heads of state - General Gowon, General Obasanjo, General Buhari, Alh. Shehu Shagari and General Babangida - who would have offered useful information about Nigeria - Israel relations 1973-1992 particularly Generals Gowon and Babangida during whose times the relation was severed and restored respectively. Talking with them would have given elegance to the research even though the views of their regimes are adequately chronicled in various literatures and shall be thoroughly assessed accordingly.

All efforts to reach any of these former heads of state proved abortive.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

There are some basic concepts fundamental to this study that may keep reoccurring in the course of discussing the subject of this research. Such

concepts, though familiar to tutors, students of International studies as well as those interested in the study of Nigerian Foreign policy include: Foreign policy, diplomatic relations, conflicts, National interest and public opinion. There is need for this study to offer some clarifications of these concepts especially as they relate to the study.

i. **FOREIGN POLICY**

According to Marshal, C. B. "Foreign policy of states take form in the course of action undertaken by authority of states which are intended to affect situations beyond the span of their jurisdiction⁶. This definition might seem a little obscure to the intentions of this research study. Perhaps the definition of the concept as offered by Ola Joseph Toyin and Paul Pindar Izah might be more accommodating to the cause of this study. Ola Toyin sees foreign policy as "concerned with an analysis of the action of one state towards another"⁷. Toyin further reiterated that the action a state adopts towards another in the area of foreign policy could result from domestic pressure or demands. P.P. Izah agreeing with Douglas Anglin submits that, "foreign policy is largely a projection of domestic policies or politics⁷, and therefore "obviously the study offoreign policies requires a much greater understanding of domestic determinants....".

Osita Agbu (1999) stated that "it is generally accepted that a nation's foreign policy is a reflection of its domestic circumstances"⁸. Therefore the concept of foreign policy as explained in the above

definitions falls within the ambit of the requirement of this study, i. e. looking at foreign policy in the context of the interplay of domestic forces.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS (or DIPLOMACY)

Diplomatic Relation is an institutional mechanism for brokering and maintaining peace between two or more nations. Usually, the embassy is the institution established to carry out this assignment between nations. In other words, diplomacy is the peaceful instrument used by individual nations in their relations with one another and for the protection and furtherance of their respective national interest abroad. Therefore, the importance of diplomatic relations is for the preservation and promotion of International peace and security, for “a diplomacy that ends in war is a failure”⁹.

The term diplomatic relations as employed and used in this study connotes that process of inter relationship between two or more sovereign states which seeks to protect and promote the interest of the interacting parties, politically, economically, socially and culturally.

ii. **NATIONAL INTEREST**

Joseph Garba (1995) said, “..... the pursuit and protection of its national interest..... is the ultimate objective of any nation’s foreign policy”¹⁰. Therefore the term national interest is used to describe a group of Core Values which a nation as an actor in the International System seeks to uphold, protect and promote. Any bit of

foreign policy action or diplomatic relation is aimed at furthering the realisation of these core values. The interacting influence of core values in a nation's foreign policy is what determines a nation's national interest. Ola Toyin described core values as those foreign policy objectives tied to the survival, preservation and the continued existence of the state¹¹. The national interest of any nation is tied to the survival of its core values. No nation can compromise its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity as the greatest ingredients of its values and the foundation of its national interest.

Therefore the term national interest is used in this study to refer to the uncompromising values upheld by any nation and which it seeks to protect, preserve and promote as an actor in the international system and in its relations with other sovereign nations of the international community.

iv. **PUBLIC OPINION**

The term public opinion is used as a concept in foreign policy formulation and implementation. The concept of public opinion in foreign policy was according to Emmanuel O. Ojo first used in the writings of Michiavelli where he suggested that a wise Prince will not ignore public opinion. Rousseau too, according to Ojo, relates public opinion in his social contract to an act in a democratic process¹².

Although there is dispute among scholars of social science as to what public opinion really is, this study, without prejudice to all other

definitions and explanations of public opinion offered by scholars, and in the context of the subject under this study, craves to hold the concept of public opinion to refer to the collection of individual wishes and expressions over a public matter/subject which final decision rest in the government in power. These individuals could be of any class or a combination of classes within the socio-economic and political strata of the society; whether the wishes, expressions and aspirations offered by these individuals were informed or uninformed does not matter to this research study.

Infact, the study would seek to distinguished between ‘mass’ opinion and ‘Elite’ opinion as factors in foreign policy decisions even though Sanerwein J. A. maintained that it was rather an exaggeration to pretend now a days that there exist ‘public opinion’ in the intellectual sense outside that of the elite ¹³.

7. **CONFLICT**

The Longman dictionary (1978:) defined the term conflict as a war, battle, struggle or the meeting of opposing ideas or beliefs, disagreement, quarell or argument over an issue or matter ¹⁴. The definition of the concept of conflict as offered by the Longman Dictionary falls within the domain of the requirement of this study.

Certainly, the concept of conflict as is intended to be used in this study is that which connotes an opposing view, belief and idea over a subject of societal interest. The opposing view could come from

individuals and groups, organisations and professionals within the society in an effort to influence and sharpen the decision of the government which is the ultimate arbiter or decision maker.

In this wise, the study is faced with the task of examining two conflicting phenomenal interest, one influenced by the public and the other by the government over an issue of diplomatic relation that generated a heated volume of debates for about two decades.

The controversy in the debate for the resumption of diplomatic ties with Israel could best be summed up as a 'conflict' between National interest and public opinion over a matter which final decision rest on the government of the day.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one of this study, presents an introductory note to this study, entailing its background and what it seeks to achieve while chapter two reviews the available literature on Nigeria – Israel Relations, the Nigeria Foreign Policy and International Relations as well as the practice of Diplomacy.

Chapter three presents foreign policy and political arguments underwhich the government is shown as the most active participant in these arguments. Chapter four presents the economic and religious arguments of the debate pointing out the increasing Israel economic penetration which some see as enough reason for Nigeria to reconsider its relations with Israel.

The fifth chapter is a careful exposition of the role of the elites in the entire controversy and what they stood for in the entire argument. It points that the Elites ended the winners while public sentiments for or against the normalization of Nigeria – Israel relations remained in the background.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The meat of this study is the examination of the debates that surrounded the controversy over whether or not Nigeria should resume diplomatic relations with the State of Israel severed by Nigeria way back in 1973 and in doing so highlight the persistent conflict between National interest and public opinion throughout the ever beaming and hot debate which took about two decades (1973-1992). In doing so, the study will seek a consultation of earlier compilations or works on this subject or related to it in order to understand the extent to which it was discussed on the body literature of Nigerian foreign policy and International relations.

The most recent extensive study on Nigeria - Israel relations was that carried out by U. M. Birai (1996) wherein he examines the role of religion in Nigeria-Israel relations. In that book titled **DOMESTIC CONSTRAINTS ON FOREIGN POLICY: The Role of religion in Nigeria-Israel Relations 1960-1996** U. M. Birai, an Associate Professor of Political Science, described Nigeria-Israel relations as ever complex, suspicious and

fragile right from the onset of the relation in 1960 through to 1973 when Nigeria broke diplomatic relations with Israel.

According to Birai conflicting regional interest demonstrated by leaders of the regions and their allies had hindered the capacity of the then coalition government of Tafawa Balewa to make any meaningful impact of Nigeria-Israel relation. He summed up by identifying religious undercurrents as the principal factor behind the complexity of the relationship especially as it affected the long delay in the resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel (1973-1992), 19 solid years, even though successive governments had continued to hinge the delay on Israel's connection with South-African racist minority regime as the principal reason of the government's inability to resume relations with Israel.¹

Professor Birai wondered how South-Africa-Israel argument could have any credibility when outside the palace of diplomacy the state of Israel was allowed to expand its economic interest in Nigeria, going deep into some important economic sub-sectors of the nation such as Agriculture "where they (Nigerians) are involved in partnership with big capitalist farmers especially retired Generals" ². Birai further stated that the picture that emerged concerning the extent of the penetration of Israeli economic interest in Nigeria is one of formidable presence of Israel companies in the most

sensitive and lucrative sub-sectors of the Nigerian economy after the oil sector into which the federal and State Governments allocated substantial part of their annual budgets since the end of the civil war ³.

Taking on a wider and broad theme Joseph Garba (1985) in his book 'Diplomatic Soldering' over viewed Afro-Arab relations which he described as ever frustrating, unyielding and un-encouraging ⁴. He pointed out that the Arabs who regarded black Africans to the South as inferior perhaps due to their colour were pushed to the wall in their war with Israel and sought for the cooperation of the rest of black Africa. The black Africans cooperated and this resulted to mass severing of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1973 leaving Malawi as the only African country that maintained relations with Israel. The rest of African countries considered credible the demand by the Arabs for Israel's withdrawal from Arabs occupied territories particularly the territory of Egypt.

According to Garba the Arabs as a mark of gratitude to this African gesture promised to offer assistance especially to those African countries who would had lost Israel's technical and other related assistance as a result of breaking relations with Israel. The Arabs also promised to offer interest free loans to augument African economy. However, these packages of pledge were not to be fulfilled. It left Africans to their foolish decisions. In other words the Arabs made foolish of the nationalistic actions of these African countries ⁵. This was too bad. Garba argued that there was no need for African countries South of the Sahara to continue to devote so much of Africa's time and energy to the Middle-East and Palestinian questions

without any reciprocal concern from the Arab league over African liberation and Apartheid in South Africa ⁶. Till today most black African countries are not at ease with the level of commitment of Arab countries to African Affairs. Africa is worried with the Afro - Arabs continued cultural rigidity and political arrogance in favour of the Middle East against Africa.

Joseph Garba, faced with these package of political and economic frustrations, had seen no reason for African black countries having any sympathy for North-African Arab countries in their Middle-east crisis particularly as it affected Arab-Israel conflict.

Perhaps this same argument could have been embraced against resumption of diplomatic ties with Israel by Nigeria on the profound reason that it was all or after all a Middle-East affair to which the Arabs of North-Africa originally had perpetually lay their weight against the liberty, freedom and economic development of black Africa. However, Israel's economic penetration of Nigeria might had neutralised that indignation identified by Garba and caused a stunt in the growth and viability of the debate against the restoration of the diplomatic relation with Israel. Here, professor Birai's revelation of continued expansion of Israel's economic penetration in Nigeria to the toll of over 14 companies lent credence to this assertion.

Still the author Joseph Nanven Garba (1995) in his book **FRACTURED HISTORY: Elite shifts and policy changes in Nigeria**, traced the weak foundation of Nigeria-Middle East relations particularly as it affected Nigeria-Israel relations where he revealed that, "Our policies on the

Middle-East were rather ambivalent. Whilst the federal Government (1960 - 1966) maintained diplomatic relations with Israel, one of the regional premiers (North) refused to recognise the Jewish State".⁷

Joseph Garba in this book dealt extensively with Nigeria-Israel relations particularly in their breakage of diplomatic relations and the debate that immediately followed over whether or not Nigeria should resume diplomatic relations with Israel. He described Nigeria's relations with Israel 1973-1992 as a period of foreign policy dilemma which confronted succeeding Nigerian leaders. According to Garba there was no any single issue in the conduct of Nigerian foreign policy that generated so much heated debate and as contenting as was the issue of Nigeria's relations with Israel ⁸.

However, Joe Garba like many others argued that the entire debate on the resumption or not of diplomatic relations with Israel "represented... a veritable cornucopia of religious interest"⁹. He wondered just like Professor Birai why Nigeria had continued to sever diplomatic relations with Israel despite Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1979 and hinging such diplomatic adavance an Israel's military and nuclear relations with racist South-African minority regime. He described such a shift of purpose from Egypt to South-Africa as "...merely a political Shibboleth"¹⁰. However, it may be argued here that such a shift might be justified as an action taken to serve Nigeria's interest in the pursuit of its foreign policy principle in Africa; commitment to the total decolonisation and liberation of the African continent. In international relations, foreign policy actions and decisions may be interlocked to serve purposes and interest other than that

which was initially intended. America did not withdraw from the Persian Gulf when Iran-Iraq war ended. It remained there to serve its further interests in the Middle-East. It used the same base to attack Iraq over its crisis with Kuwait.

Like many other writers before him Joe Garba further rolled out the increasing number or height of Israel economic interests in Nigeria despite the diplomatic deadlock. It would seem as the government (or rather succeeding regimes) were playing on the intelligence of the warring interests in the debate for allowing this seeming unofficial economic diplomacy to take place. No wonder then Okere Linus Chukwu - Emeka dismissed this seeming deceptive precedence when he says, "A foreign policy which regards Israel as a diplomatic pariah but enjoys lucrative business with the same is (highly) inconsistent" ¹¹.

However, Joe Garba in dire analytical diplomatic frustration linked the whole matter to the whims of the elites who manipulated the ugly situation to promote their business and political interests using the mass citizenry as instruments. He said, "Neither Nigeria's relationship with Israel nor her membership of the OIC was of fundamental importance to the teeming and disaffected millions of Nigerians who were preoccupied with eking out a living; but it was a matter of great importance indeed to the elite" ¹².

Garba concluded that the decision to restore ties between Nigeria and Israel was partly taken to counterbalance Nigeria's membership of OIC and partly to serve elite interest who had continuously pushed for re-establishment of the ties owing to their serious economic and business

links with the Jewish State. This could be true of the elite economic interest in the issue because some revelations were made on Sultan Dasuki's business link with the Zionist regime as having constituted the principal factor which necessitated the Babangida regime to restore the diplomatic ties in 1992. In some quarters the diplomatic action was seen more on the economic grounds rather than political as was in the case of OIC. Everybody in this country was living witness to the turbulent circumstances under which Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki was installed the 18th Sultan of Sokoto in 1988 and four years later Nigeria-Israel relation was restored after a lot of media revelations over the monarch's connection with the Zionist regime.

Foreign policy is often an extension of domestic politics or policies. Foreign policy actions are often determined by domestic determinants or forces. P. P. Izah (1991) said International action (were) began to be fed by events and tendencies within societies. Israel's economic interest were so vast in the early 90's and so the pressure began to mount high and particularly from a clique close to the Babangida administration. It wasn't surprising because quite a number of works in Nigerian Foreign policy emphasized the dominating role of foreign policy elite especially the head of government himself¹³. It could still be within the purview of Nigeria's national interest to remain economically relevant in its relations with other sovereign states and Babangida may have used that as excuse to promote the interest of the elite corps. Even though leaders could vary in terms of style they are generally guided by a broad term called the national interest, P.P Izah (1991). Babangida may had acted within the import of the nation's interest

which was at his liberty and peril to interpret and apply. In any case, this became the landing spot of the entire debate, where it was laid to rest.

Emmanuel O. Ojo (1999) in his contribution to the work edited by Hassan Saliu titled, 'Selected Themes in Nigerian Foreign policy and International Relations' did offer some discourse on some selected foreign policy issues that exposed the often recorded conflict of National interest and public opinion. Ojo raised issues like the OIC controversy and the Nigeria/Cameroun boarder crisis where there was a heated argument over these burning issues. The Nigerian public and the Government looked at these issues differently. For instance the OIC issue according to Ojo was given a religious stance by both Muslims and Christians. While the Muslims saw the attempt at registering Nigeria in this body as proper and legitimate, the Christians on the other hand saw it as an attempt to Islamise the country; whereas the government saw it purely on economic perspective, and attempt to broker economic cooperation with member states (of the OIC) ¹⁴.

Ojo said, "The nexus between public policy (serving national interest) and public opinion is pretentious in the sense that the degree of acceptability of government programmes and policies both domestic and foreign are measured in terms of how acceptable they are to the civil populace. Whenever a policy meets the demand of the people, they reciprocate by giving support to such policy which normally boosts the legitimacy of the government" ¹⁵. In foreign policy and International relations the government reserves the exclusive right to protect and promote the nation's national interest, an interest that was not defined by the public that constitute the population of that nation. Therefore a room is created for conflict between a

national interest unknown to the public and the public opinion shared by the nations populace. This is the contention as referred to by Ojo. In taking major foreign policy decisions and for government to avoid conflicting public opinion running counter to national interest, public opinion must gain prominence at conceptual stage. Public impact is necessary as a measure in articulating an acceptable foreign policy action. This is the view of Ojo although he admitted that it is not always easy to discern the role of public opinion both at foreign policy making stage and implementation because “foreign policy making is shrouded in secrecy”¹⁶.

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CHAPTER THREE

FOREIGN POLICY & POLITICAL
ARGUMENTS

The subject of controversy was whether or not Nigeria which severed diplomatic relations with the state of Israel in 1973 should resume diplomatic ties. The debate took 19 solid years to wind-up with the resumption of diplomatic ties in 1992 by the regime of President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. Actors in this debate that raged a heated controversy included the government itself through successive military and civilian regimes who had had to explain their respective positions over the diplomatic severage, various individuals (Elites), interest groups e.g. religious organisations who did so through their religious leaders (the Imams and Pastors). Voluntary Organisations e.g the Nigeria-Israel Association, NIA, the academia and the press. In all, the arguments could be seen as an amalgam of divided domestic forces struggling to determine a states action towards the external environment. The circumstances that led to the earlier decision to severe diplomatic relations with Israel had nothing to do with domestic politics, hence lacking any domestic influence. However, as the nation got aware of the action, citizens hijacked the situation and got divided over the issue taking all refuge, genuine and flimsy excuses to justify their positions in an effort to convince the government of the day to either remain severed or resume relations with the state of Israel.

The debate toiled grounds which abound on politics, economics, religion and foreign policy. This bulk of argument will be classified and discussed under the following headings:

as a result of and in response to great pressure mounted by a cross-section of Nigerians interested in the resumption of diplomatic ties with Israel Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, then Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, NIIA, sent a memo to the National Assembly wherein he stated in part , “of all other groups, regions, continents, peoples, or what have you in the world, it is only the Arab countries who have joined Africa in the diplomatic isolation of South-Africa. This is not an issue that should be brushed aside lightly”². In effect, Professor Akinyemi was advising the National Assembly against taking any decision to restore relations with Israel reminding them of Africa commitment towards South-African liberation and the Arabs solidarity towards that movement.

At the 14th OAU summit in 1977 speaking generally on the Middle East crisis and particularly the Israel question in the long crisis, General Obasanjo, then Head of State, pressed further the unending endemic crisis within which the state of Israel stood as a cog in its resolution. The Nigerian position expressed by Obasanjo represented an argument against the possible restoration of diplomatic ties with Israel unless peace was maintained. He emphatically opined, “while we demand for freedom, justice, and equality for our brothers in Southern Africa, let us not forget the just struggle of the Palestinian people and the government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt, a sister OAU State, whose land continued to be occupied by Israel despite repeated calls by the International Community for withdrawal from these occupied lands”. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo reiterated

that "Nigeria will continue with this support and looks forward to the day when Palestinians will have a homeland of their own to the day when Egypt will have all her territory back...."³.

General Muhammed Buhari as the Head of State had in 1984 at the Patrons Dinner organised by the Nigeria Institute of International Affairs, NIIA, argued more stringently against any possible re-establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel provided it (Israel) continued to dine with South-Africa. Buhari emphatically stated, "Nigeria can find no justification at present for restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel. The overwhelming evidence of Israel military, nuclear and economic collaboration with apartheid regime in South Africa is a good ground to believe that the underlying reason for which Nigeria severed diplomatic relations with Israel in the first instance is still relevant.... if Israel wishes to have full diplomatic relations with Nigeria restored, she must review her present collaboration with South-Africa and take serious steps to come to terms with her Arab neighbours"⁴. General Buhari lambasted the Israel - South Africa connection thus, "it is inconceivable that a people (Israelis) who have themselves been victims of racial horror and genocide can turn to provide instruments of death and depression to a regime dedicated to the destructive principle of racial superiority"⁵.

There was one contending issue or evidence which kept on re-appearing in government's argument on which it relied for continued isolation of Israel. That was the issue of Israel - South - Africa connection. To the opponents of Israel's isolation the argument hadn't had to hold weight for

two reasons. That Southern-Africa-Israel connection did not form part of the initial reason OAU passed resolution for diplomatic isolation of Israel. Secondly, the Israel-Egypt conflict over Egyptian territories allegedly occupied by Israel which was the principal reason for OAU's decision for Africa to diplomatically isolate Israel in 1973 was altered in 1979 with the emergence of Camp David Accord which brought the conflict to an end, and ensured the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Egypt and the state of Israel. According to this counter-argument therefore Nigeria should have immediately re-established relations with Israel after Camp David Agreement or Accord between the two warring nations. According to this argument 'Nigeria cannot be more Christian than the Pope'⁶. That is to say it could not have been more committed than Egypt which had now re-established relation with Israel courtesy of Camp David Accord of 1979.

This counter-argument was debunked by Professor Gabriel Olusanya and the Kuru Conference on Nigeria Foreign policy in 1986. Olusanya held that justice is indivisible, and that Israelis were caught in the jungle and so must not be allowed to get away with Palestinian question and South-African link. Similarly, the Kuru conference of 1986 supported the continued severing of relations with Israel for the strong reason that it was within the purview of the principles of Nigerian Foreign policy and with it the national interest to vehemently oppose colonialism and racism wherever it was practised all over the world⁷. For this reason therefore it was not out of place for Nigeria, a champion of the Black race, to oppose Zionist racist policy in order to serve its basic foreign policy principle.

The New Nigerian in its editorial argument over the Camp David Accord sought to challenge the moral justice of such decision by Anwar Sadat, the then President of Egypt, against the entire opinion of the Egyptians. The New Nigeria queried, "we seek for a distinction between Anwar Sadat Government which signed the Camp David Peace treaty and the wishes of the Egyptian people. Sadat was declared traitor by his own people after Camp David. His people alleged that he sold their dignity and aspiration"⁸. Professor Gabriel Olusanya argued further, "Resumption of Egypt-Israel ties was not enough. Nigeria's action in 1973 was OAU's decision and not Egypt's. Nigeria must demonstrate its exemplary leadership in Africa"⁹. Therefore the Camp David argument of those who opposed the isolation of Israel was seriously debunked and made weaker.

It was General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida who in his considered opinion argued that the elusive peace in the middle East and particularly in Israel-Arab relation was owed to the failure of International Community and the disrespect to the resolution 242 of the United Nations. Babangida emphatically averred, "we in Nigeria support the United Nations Resolution 242 which guarantees both the Israelites and the Palestinian their respective rights and call upon both the Israelis and Palestinians to consider the peace options within the said UN Resolution"¹⁰. This rather soft line of argument later resulted in the resumption of diplomatic ties with Israel in 1992. The trend of government argument of earlier regimes was reversed by IBB.

The question now remains who was serving whose interest in this political argument engaged by successive Heads of State in their respective

times up to 1992 when the matter was exhausted and finally put to rest by Babangida. Were all the argument anchored around the import of National interest or was there any attempt to serve ulterior motive of one or more persons, or group of persons? An attempt will be made to respond to these burning questions.

The foreign policy pronouncements of the regimes before Babangida's (Murtala-Obasanjo, Shehu Shagari, Buhari) seem to have taken one line of argument, that of looking at the issue beyond Egypt to a broader African perspective which had remain the centre piece of Nigerian foreign policy since independence. These arguments passed the test of Nigerian foreign policy prowess on the international system as having been constant and firm on the African cause at all times. The fact that Israel-South-Africa connection was not party to the factors that necessitated Africa's Israel isolation did not in the perception of these former leaders incapacitate Nigeria to use the slightest chance and opportunity to press for the liberation of its South-African brothers, and to oppose all international alliances and cooperation meant to assist the racist regime. The argument fall within the ambit of Nigeria's National interest given the African centricity of Nigerian foreign policy. However, the argument of General Babangida did not pass the test of our Nigeria's national interest. Babangida shifted blame or rather rebuked the international community for failing to install peace in the Middle-East sub region especially in the Arab-Israel conflict. This argument was rather diversionary and misleading because if action cannot be taken against identified individual nations such as Israel fuelling the continued

annihilation and digress of Blacks in South-Africa, then one wonders how best Nigeria's national interest could be served. Babangida's action in restoring relations with Israel was certainly a service to elite interest who continued to mount pressure for the resumption of relation in order to develop and sustain their business link with Israel. More of this business link will be discussed under the economic argument.

Political parties of the Second Republic were not left out in making policy pronouncement as regards or in response to this seeming sporadic debate within the polity. The Nigeria People Party, NPP, of Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe resolved not to restore diplomatic relations with Israel unless it stopped servicing the war machines in Southern Africa. The Unity Party of Nigeria, UPN, in 1979 said its government when elected would unconditionally restore diplomatic relations with Israel because according to UPN Nigeria needed Israel expertise badly. In 1983 electioneering campaign the same UPN made a U-turn and promised that the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel would not be automatic. According to Chief Awolowo the views of Nigerians and the overriding national interest would be considered if and when such a review was necessary. The PRP on its part vowed to maintain the isolation of Israel for its Zionist regime. The NPN and GNPP were more careful and tactical in their response to this controversy. They vowed to always respect the decision of the OAU and be committed to its cause. In 1983 the NPP carried in its manifestos thus, "An NPP Government will draw a line between purely African and Middle-eastern affairs, distinction will be made between what is purely

African and what is purely Arab affairs, not to set Nigeria involved in Arab-Israel affairs as a partisan instead of Peace maker”¹¹. The NPP here was directly opposed to Nigeria’s isolation of Israel. In any case, these second Republic political parties contributed to the debate notwithstanding their style of responses. Nigerians, particularly fellow politicians fully grasped the import of these declarations by their respective parties hence the tacit and strong pressure that greeted the Second Republic government of Shagari over Nigeria-Israel relations. However, these political parties seemed to have built their responses around the sentiments of their respective geographical origins. The GNPP, PRP and NPN taking on Northern Nigerian sentiments while the UPN and NPP taking on Southern Nigeria sentiments. The UPN dangled from both sides of the divide in 1979 and 1983 to no avail in order to win a political sympathy.

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CHAPTER FOUR

1. ECONOMIC ARGUMENT:

Lack of sustainable alternative programme of economic aid package and investment from the Arab World left the Nigerian economy totally opened to Israel which was ready to exploit every advantage. Nigeria, like other African Countries, was unsure of the extent of Arab commitment to her socio economic development¹.

This was the basis of the argument opposing the continued isolation of Israel by Nigeria in Official diplomatic circles. Star actors in this argument were Godwin Dabo, the President General of Nigeria - Israel Association, NIA, and General Joseph Nanven Garba, the erstwhile Foreign Affairs Minister of Nigeria 1975-1978. According to them Nigeria should have considered the volume of trade and other economic activities and transactions the state of Israel had with Nigeria before and after the breakage of diplomatic relations between the two countries. They argued that the volume of Israel economic penetration into Nigeria in the areas of water resources, construction and engineering sub-sectors, agriculture and other social services such as education had been unparalleled in the history of Nigeria - Israel relations 1960-1973 and were enough to service the return of the relations. Joseph Garba wondered why Nigeria allowed many Jewish companies to operate in Nigeria but refused to restore the diplomatic relations. Garba expressed his worries over the entire Afro-Arab relations which according to him did not yield any fruits economically. He said, "I became deeply concerned by this tendency to devote so much of Africa's valuable time and energy to the Middle-East and Palestinian questions without any reciprocal concern from the Arab league over African liberation

and Apathied in South-Africa. Nor had economic development in Africa managed to elicit any interest from the Arab nations who had vast financial resources to invest in Europe and the United States. This lack of interest was blatant when no Arab Foreign Minister attended the first OAU Extra-ordinary council of ministers meeting in Kinshasha, Zaire, called to discuss Africa's economic problems in December, 1976."²

The import of Garba's argument was that the solidarity of Africa towards the Arabs over Israel was unfounded or baseless given the isolative attitude of the Arabs themselves towards black Africa in favour of Europe and America on the political and economic front. The Arabs neither supported Africa in its struggle against apartheid South-African regime (they did later in the 80's) nor came to the aid of Africa in its economic development projects. The argument therefore could not see why at the Micro-level Nigeria could not restore diplomatic relations with Israel which has economic investments in the country. Godwin Dabo reported that the total volume of trade from Israel to Nigeria from January - October 1990 was far in excess of ₦8 billion, and that 43% of all the contracts in Nigeria were executed by Jewish Organisations. The NICON Noga Hilton Hotel, the Five star edifice in Abuja is according to Dabo an eloquent testimony of Israel presence in Nigerian economy³. According to him, Israel had contributed an average of 19 out of every ₦1,000 worth of imports into Nigeria in five of the nine commodity sectors, the dominant items of which were chemicals, machinery and transport equipment and manufacturing products. As at 1991 there were over 100 Israel firms in Nigeria summed up

the argument of Mr. Godwin Dabo, the president-general of Nigeria-Israel Association, a non-governmental organisation charged with the responsibility of promoting a better understanding and co-operation between Nigeria and Israel. The NIA under Dabo played a prominent role in the debate that finally saw the resumption of Diplomatic relations with Israel.

There was however a counter argument against this position. Professor Olusanya reiterated that of all the economic arguments in favour of the restoration none yet was able to count or reveal the loses made by Nigeria in the years it severed relations with Israel and none yet could reveal the gains Nigeria had in its relations with Israel from 1960-1973. According to Olusanya even the overblown arid farming expertise of Israel was not indispensable to Nigeria for it could be found elsewhere e.g. Australia⁴.

2. RELIGIOUS ARGUMENT:

The religious arguments in Nigeria - Israel relation was actually real since 1960. Of the three major political actors of the first Republic only the Sardauna of Sokoto Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of Northern Region was opposed to Nigeria's diplomatic relations with Israel obviously for religious reasons. The Sardauna could not even receive the foreign aid from Israel to which he earlier told the then Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa, that "if we need help we know where to get it," and then ordered the Prime Minister to take it to where it was needed (certainly to the South)⁵. This was the extent of the Premier's opposition which certainly represented the position of the Muslim North, and which gave the then Federal Government tough

time in its effort to reconcile divergent interest on Nigeria -middle East relations.

However, religious argument which manifested itself - between 1973 to 1992 over whether or not Nigeria should re-establish relations with Israel took the turn of a fight between Muslim and Christian population represented by different voices across the Nigeria polity and geography. There were the voices of Muslim North and Christian South, Imams and Pastors, Students religious organisations, Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, and Juma'atul Nasril Islam, JNI, News Dailies originating from geographical North or South, and voices of individual Muslim and Christians.

In his contributions on behalf of CAN at the All-Nigeria Foreign Policy Conference at the Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic studies, NIPSS, Kuru in 1986, Rev. Gabriel Ganaka stated that the interest of Christians on the need to restore relations with Israel was on the area of consular services in Israel which Christians may demand while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Ganaka argued that OAU solidarity with Egypt was no longer relevant as the two enemies had come to terms vide camp David Accords⁶. Godwin Dabo, the NIA president, now talking as a Christian faithful threatened delegates to the 27th OAU summit in Abuja to be wary of the wrath of God awaiting those who were opposed to Israel, a nation which according to Rev. S. F. Salifu, CAN Secretary - General of Northern States, should be the spiritual barometer of all Christians⁷. This argument was further buttressed by Rev G. O. Faronbi of the Four Square Gospel Church of Nigeria quoting this Biblical verse:

And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curses thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed⁸.

However, Archbishop Okogie rather sat on the fence arguing that he wondered why Nigeria allowed the influx of Jews into the country daily but refused to restore diplomatic relations with Israel. The Reporter, a Northern based News Magazine concurred with Okogie's argument but however added that it was still an act of injustice against the Palestinians Muslims and by extension Nigerian Muslim brothers if South-African whites could not be allowed into the country (Nigeria) at all in solidarity with the largely Christian black South-Africans. This would mean there was an act of practical and psychological lopsidedness in the treatment of these matters of racism. This argument was concurred by Professor Olusanya, though a Christian, while delivering an address to members of the Association of Christian Lawyers of Nigeria when he stressed that it was all a matter of justice and fair play, that Nigerians couldn't be crying for justice in South-Africa and refusing to recognize it somewhere else in Palestine. Such was the height of objectivity with which Olusanya saw the matter.

The Kuru Conference of 1986 toed in the same principled line of argument when it stated in the conference communique thus:

We believe that Nigeria's relation with Israel should be clearly placed on a principled basis consistent with our opposition to racism and colonialism. Therefore given the racist nature of Zionism and its links with apartheid South-Africa, the time has not come for resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel⁹.

The Muslim students Society, MSS of Nigeria contended that the Israel - Arab quagmire had taken a full Islamic dimension. It was no longer political but religious. The MSS referred to the annexation of Jerusalem in which placed the Masjid Al-aqsa (The Holy Mosque) by Jews in 1967 and recently proclaimed the city of Jerusalem as their (Jews) eternal capital in spite of the Pope's intervention in 1985 declaring it a neutral city (for Muslims, Christians and Jews). On this premise, the MSS argued that Israel ought not expect the return of diplomatic relations with it from countries that respect and could not ignore the views of their Muslim population. The MSS expressed confidence that Nigeria was not of the countries that ignore the views of a large segment of their population. The MSS then challenged the then Sultan of Sokoto Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki to take immediate steps to prevent the possible resumption of the diplomatic ties with Israel¹⁰.

On the whole, the religious sentiments expressed in the debate on Nigeria - Israel relations could be said to lack any iota of relevance over the very reason why Israel was diplomatically isolated by Nigeria. It was an act of a supra system, the OAU, which was/is a congregation of countries with vast Muslim and Christian population, and more so that the middle East for which reason the decision was taken by OAU is overwhelmingly made of Muslim countries. Perhaps, Professor J. Isawa Elaigwa may be right when he pointed out that the whole debate here in Nigeria was approached from a wrong premise. According Elaigwu approaching the Saga of Nigeria-Israel relations from a religious stand point capping Northern Nigeria a purely Muslim entity with no views other than Islamic, or the State of Israel as purely Christian was wrong. He contended that the two enclaves were of mixed religious faiths while the matter of Nigeria - Israel relations was purely a political matter in the realm of Nigerian Foreign policy and

diplomatic relations. The views as expressed by Elaigwu could be quite convincing for a less extremist mind of the fashion of this research work..

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CHAPTER FIVE

The Elites and the Debate on Nigeria-Israel Relations:

Joseph Nanven Garba, the erstwhile Nigeria's Federal Commissioner of External Affairs 1975 - 1979 succinctly noted, "Foreign policy cannot be a mere projection of ideals and ideas, nor a reflection of individual values, idiosyncracies and pet theories. Rather its formulation and execution most represent a concerted effort at promoting the national interest. It also entails recommending policy options that do not necessarily please public opinion, but which serves the nation well".¹

This treatise by Garba has both in principle and in practice fully accommodate the sentiments, personalities and decisions that featured in the debate on Nigeria - Israel relations 1973 - 1992. In other words the treatise in the opinion of this work clearly illustrates or sum-up the character and tune which the debate took to the final day when relations was restored by President Babangida in 1992 obviously serving and denying an interest.

Evidences adduced for and against the restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel especially the religious sentiments which expressly featured in the controversy did not in anyway influenced Babangida's decision. Nor were the reasons against the restoration maintained by successive regimes before Babangida's were of any material evidence to convince Babangida against the decision he took in 1992. It appears he neither served public interest nor the nation's interest expressly guarded by his predecessors. Instead, he took refuge in some pet theories and idiosyncrasies of the executive to justify his decision².

The point was that restoration or no restoration was completely an elite affair tailored to their economic and political gains. The popular religious views expressed from both sides of the religious divide were ignored. Neither the Christian group nor the Muslim group could claim

victory. They, including the preceding regimes who remained firm and constant in upholding the principle of freedom and liberty, denouncing all forms of racism and colonialism in Southern Africa, all lost of an elite interest. Hence explained the avowed conflict in the pursuit of public opinion and national interest in Nigeria foreign policy and diplomatic relations. Babangida, a third world leader, only played into the hands of the elites whose interest always outweigh that of the public citizenry and seek to manipulate national interest to their advantage. Otherwise Babangida's regime couldn't have been more nationalistic and focused in the pursuit of Nigerian Foreign policy than the regimes of Murtala/Obasanjo or Buhari/Idiagbon who rather chose to maintain the principles of Nigerian foreign policy as it affects the freedom and liberation of African Peoples which they believed served the nation's interest well. Public opinion, the press and ideology are according Izah weak domestic factors compared to the influence of the elites in Foreign policy whose attitude and perception of Nigeria Foreign policy is different from that of the public. Quite a number of works in Nigeria Foreign policy emphasized the dominating role and freedom by elites in foreign policy especially the head of government. Babangida was a member of that elite corps whose personal socio-economic and political outlook must brought to bear on the destiny of the Nigerian nation both at domestic and international levels.

The rising profile of Israel companies in the sub-sectors of the Nigerian economy between 1985 when Babangida assumed the mantle of leadership and 1992 when he sought to restore diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Israel could evidently corroborate this assertion. Babangida received F. W. De-klerk on a state visit to Nigeria in 1992 and some months later he restored relations between the two countries. Babangida also applied for

security co-operation between the two countries where in after new faces of security forces evidently from Israeli were seen around strategic points around the seat of government and other locations. Some retired Generals eg. Murtala Nyako, Olusegun Obasanjo etc. got it opened for them to obtain and utilise the over amplified Israel expertise in agriculture to service their elite farms. This was the extent to which Babangida, serving an interest other than the public's or nation's brokered the return of the diplomatic relations. However, in the diplomatic circle, the decision was said to be taken in the nation's national interest.

The dilemma and conflict of a Nigerian Foreign service officer arise from this show of elite manipulation of the nation's foreign policy. As rightly pointed out by George Kennan, an America Diplomat, the foreign service officer is taught and encouraged to believe that he is serving the National interestin its external relations. He finds himself working, nevertheless, for people to whom this was not the main concern. Their main concern was domestic politics, and the interests they found themselves pursuing in this field of activity are usually in conflict with the requirements of a sensible national diplomacy (or national interest). The Nigerian Foreign policy practitioners who were conversant with the developments in this debate, and who were made to prepare the document leading to the resumption of diplomatic ties between Nigeria and Israel were subjected to this similar dilemma and crisis of interest in the pursuit of Nigerian foreign policy and diplomatic relations caused "..... by the pernicious effects of the constant shifting of elites in power".

This study therefore discovered that Nigeria's national interest had not always been pursued and served by Nigeria's foreign policy practitioners. They rather fall victims to be whims of the elites for whom that was no the

main concern; and whose main concern was to exercise maximum influence in the interpretation and implementation of Nigeria's national interest goals without due regard to public sentiments on such major foreign policy matters as the Nigeria - Israel imbroglio.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

The ultimate objective of any nation's foreign policy is the pursuit and protection of its national interest, and that in interstate relations there are no permanent friends but only permanent interest. That is to say that friendship between two nations remains for as long as the relationship protects the interests of the two nations. Where a nation's interest is abused or not protected in a relationship that has either been in existence or is about to be brokered, the affecting state would seek to withdraw from that relationship.

The above summative is necessary and relevant in the context of the controversy that trailed Nigeria - Israel relations flagged-off in 1960. The diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Israel was entered into on the very fact and reason that such an action serves the national interest of both countries. Where the national interest of one party was abused, Nigeria in this case, in 1973 it sought to sever the diplomatic relation. Though the decision to sever diplomatic relations with Israel was unanimously taken at an OAU summit it could still be rightly said that such decision served the interest of member states. This was so because all black African nations at their individual political capacities opposed all forms of colonialism and racism anywhere in Africa. It was equally within the ambit of OAU charter for member States to come to the aid of any other member state suffering from any form of inter-state crisis or conflict. Severing diplomatic relations

with Israel by all African countries, save Malawi, to express the continent's dismay over the invasion of Egypt's territory by Israel was certainly one of them.

However, the spill-over effect of this OAU decision on the Nigerian domestic environment which also partook in its implementation degenerated into a heated controversy that lasted 19 years. Interest groups and the mass media hijacked the atmosphere, including successive regimes between 1975 - 1985 who used it to press for other fresh demands in Southern Africa, all lost to the elite corps who eventually influenced the return of the diplomatic relation via President Babangida, himself a member of the elite corp. Although some people saw it as a balancing act to the OIC controversy, it nevertheless threw a greater light into the powers of the elites in and outside government. The elite are a clique inside-out of a society who seek to manipulate issues and events to service their whims and caprices to the chagrin of the masses. It is therefore a truism that the failures and success of any nation reflect the aspiration and political astuteness of the elite in that country. If the elites are dishonest, selfish, myopic and pre-occupied with gamesmanship, their example will affect the standards of the national character of its citizens. If conversely the elites are not swayed by nepotism, egocentrism, are progressive, nationalistic and enterprising, their qualities can constitute the very hallmark of leadership. The controversy in Nigeria - Israel relations was therefore the design of the Nigerian elite corps who watch with keen interest how the masses and down-trodden abused and torn themselves apart serving faceless monsters.

Their dividing lines and opposing camps notwithstanding, the elites have common grounds, that of consistently dominating the affairs of their environment for the achievement of their personal goals and aspirations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations of this study shall be based on the serious premise that a foreign policy based on any consideration other than the national interest is flawed. In the same vein, domestic forces can never be ignored in the articulation of a nations foreign policy. Where domestic realities are neglected there is bound to arise conflict of any damaging magnitude, as the case may be, between public opinion and the so-called national interest.

Therefore since the success of all public policies are measured by the degree of acceptability they received from the public citizenry, this study recommends thus:

1. That there is need for the government to make wider consultation through and by whatever medium before it takes any major foreign policy decision. This will drastically lessen the conflict arising from such undue negligence.
2. That since issues of religion have become a permanent feature in the socio-political life of Nigeria, government should always make a deliberate move to reconcile religious forces that may otherwise have tinker with its foreign policies and actions.
3. That the objectives, principles and goals of Nigerian Foreign policy be part of the University Under-graduate curriculum as an elective course which basic aim is to produce generation by generation a corp of Nigerians who are literate in the foreign policy pursuits and destiny of the Nigerian nation in its relations with the external environment.

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1.00 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Since 1992 when diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Israel was restored, the Nigerian public, academics, diplomats and public affairs commentators did try to reecho and assess the debates that transpired between various groups, individuals and government over the state of Nigeria - Israel relations since 1973. In other words, since 1973 when Nigeria severed diplomatic relations with Israel there was a heated debate at the domestic level which survived for 19 years and was brought under critical assessment by 1992 when the relations was restored. In any case, the assessment of this 19 years old debate is the thrust of this study.

The actors in this debate as stated earlier could not reconcile among themselves and this had helped to prolong the argument and the period of diplomatic severage between Nigeria and Israel. Nigeria-Israel relations had ever since from inception in 1960 been shrouded in controversy. The Political Parties of the first Republic found it difficult to reconcile on Nigeria-Middle East policy and what constitute the interest of the federation and its citizenry in this relationship. Nigeria under Balewa had a contradictory stand on Arab-Israel conflict because of the divergent and narrow regional interest underpinned by conflicting religious undercurrents. While the NPC and the Muslim North wanted Nigeria to throw its weight and support for the Arabs, the NCNC, the AG and the Christian South needed support for Israel. The leaders of the Political Parties made startling comments on Israel to reaffirm their respective stand on the issue of Nigeria's relation with that country. For instance, Sardauna of Sokoto Sir