

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

9 November 1983

Israel's Return to Black Africa: Progress and Prospects

Summary

Israel has been a pariah in black Africa since the 1973
Yom Kippur War when most African states broke relations. Even
so, Tel Aviv has never stopped considering the sub-Saharan
region as an important arena in which it could ease its
diplomatic isolation and ensure favorable conditions for trade
and political influence. Prime Minister Shamir has long been
among the principal supporters of an active Israeli policy in
Africa.

Zaire and Liberia have resumed diplomatic relations with Israel during the past 18 months, motivated by their need for the security support and technical assistance that Tel Aviv will provide in return for recognition. Whether these moves signal a diplomatic breakthrough for Israel, or are simply isolated initiatives, is an important question for Tel Aviv. If Ivory Coast's President Houphouet-Boigny carries out his reported decision in principle to reestablish relations, and particularly if he were joined by other Francophone African leaders, this would bring Israel out of the periphery and closer to Africa's mainstream.

This memorandum was requested by Noel Koch, Principal Deputy Assistant
Secretary of Defense, ISA. It was prepared by Regional
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For black Africans, factors for and against relations with Israel are fairly evenly balanced. The same pragmatism that caused the African states to distance themselves from Israel ten years ago is now drawing them away from their erstwhile Arab benefactors. Africans have made it clear they are disillusioned with unfulfilled promises of Arab economic assistance and fearful of Libyan political ambitions in the region. On the other hand, African dependence on Arab oil supplies and promises by the Arabs of future aid still provide them with leverage, while ideology, Islam, and Third World institutions continue to pull some African countries into the Arab orbit. Probably most important is the anger Israel's continuing connection with South Africa raises among black Africans.

Both Africans and Israelis see a central role for the United States in Israel's effort to develop a diplomatic presence in Africa. Washington has played an active part in bringing the parties together so far, and Tel Aviv will continue to look to the United States to act as an intermediary with African leaders and to provide financing for Israeli projects.

In the short term, we believe widespread African recognition of Israel is unlikely. In the long run, many of the needy black African states will seek the side that offers the best prospect for economic and security support. In the meantime, Israel will continue to offer development and agricultural assistance and military training tailored to individual countries' requirements. It also will respond to African needs—within its budgetary limits—short of breaking its highly valued economic and strategic links with South Africa.

Israel's African Policy And Its Background

Israeli policy towards Africa represents an attempt to reconcile a number of conflicting elements:

-- Tel Aviv is trying to restore formal diplomatic ties with black African states--as it succeeded in doing with Zaire last year and Liberia a few months ago--by offering development and military assistance to targeted African governments.

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- -- Such offers of assistance, however, are constrained by budgetary considerations in Israel.
- -- Where relations have been established, a gap has almost immediately appeared between the Africans' seemingly limitless needs and expectations and Israel's limited economic resources, straining good will on both sides.

-- Tel Aviv's campaign to reestablish its position in black Africa is undercut by its relationship with South Africa.

Until the early 1970s, 33 black African states had diplomatic relations with Israel. The Africans welcomed Israel's offers of agricultural, military, medical, and other technical assistance. Israel developed thriving trade in the region and was able to count on African support at the United Nations and within the Organization of African Unity in preventing these bodies from becoming anti-Israeli forums.

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African support of Israel had already begun to erode, however, before the Yom Kippur War of October 1973 because of Arab offers of financial assistance and of oil at below-market prices and African sensitivity to Israel's growing ties with South Africa. This trend culminated during and immediately following the war when almost all black African governments severed their ties with Tel Aviv in a display of solidarity with the Arabs--even though a number were reluctant to do so. The only exceptions in black Africa were Lesotho, Swaziland, and Malawi--all of which had close ties with South Africa.

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Although Israel had no alternative to rapid disengagement from black Africa after 1973--withdrawing most but not all of its advisers and assistance programs--links with a number of African states gradually began to resume on an unofficial and discreet level, notably in Ivory Coast and Kenya. In many countries, admiration for the quality of Israeli assistance survived the trauma of the 1973 break, as did commercial ties. By the late 1970s, Tel Aviv again was openly courting a number of African states--in particular, Zaire, Liberia, and the Central African Republic--and suggesting ways to meet some of the Africans' security and economic needs in return for diplomatic recognition.

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Formal Ties

Apart from the three states with which Israel maintained diplomatic relations, Tel Aviv's formal presence in black Africa over most of the past ten years was restricted to "Interests Sections" in foreign embassies in Togo, Ghana, the Ivory Coast (covering Upper Volta, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Gabon), and Kenya. In the Ivory Coast, the Israeli diplomat in charge of Tel Aviv's interests at the Belgian Embassy has enjoyed direct

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	Help Monrovia establish a shipping line.	2
srael's Pri	ncipal Targets	
a widesprollowing Zapreign Mini Stained a Stained a	aeli invasion of Lebanon in early June 1982 spoiled any chance ead restoration of African ties that Tel Aviv had hoped for ire's initiative. Nonetheless, during the past year, the stry under Yitzhak Shamirwho now as Prime Minister has high interest in the areasent a number of delegations to n countries and targeted for special attention certain states I economic and political influence. These included:	
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elations wi nterests se stablishing	nt Houphouet was one of the last African leaders to break th Israel in 1973, and he allowed Tel Aviv to maintain an ction in Abidjan. Israel has raised the possibility of a technical assistance program with the Ivorianswho would eli agricultural helpif diplomatic relations are resumed.	
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o withdraw n them. Ev amthe cou	rian President has so far successfully rebuffed Arab threats support for development projects if Israeli firms are employed en so, promised Saudi and other Arab funding for the Soubre ntry's largest investment project—would probably not	
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	et has long been friendly to Israel, but he found the Begin	

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Security considerations might play a part in leading Houphouet to act. He is deeply concerned about Libyan trouble-making in Chad, Upper Volta, and elsewhere in the region. He almost certainly would like	
Israeli intelligence to supplement the security support France has traditionally supplied his country.	25 X ′
<u>Nigeria</u>	
Nigeria is Israel's largest trading partner in black Africa and Africa's most populous state. Nigeria also is of major interest to the Israelis because of its potential influence with other black African states. It is the prime mover behind the Economic Community of West African States, West Africa's largest economic organization, and is the region's principal oil producer. The Israelis would like Nigeria to guarantee oil to those African states that fear economic reprisal from the Arabs if they resume relations with Israel.	25X1
Nigeria was reluctant to break diplomatic ties with Israel in 1973, but since then Tel Aviv's continued political and economic ties with Pretoria and Nigeria's desire to secure Arab support for African efforts to end white minority rule in South Africa have hardened Lagos's attitude towards Israel. Nigerian President Shagari is also concerned over the likely domestic consequences of any move to restore diplomatic ties with Israel. In particular, he does not want to risk losing support among fellow Muslims who dominate his National Party and represent over 50 percent of the population.	25X′
There is a substantial Israeli commercial presence in Nigeria on which Tel Aviv hopes to build, although the Israelis have been hard-hit by Nigeria's current economic downturn. Israeli exports to Nigeriamainly chemicals, medicines, agricultural products, and technical expertisetotaled \$43.1 million in 1982. The Israeli government recently agreed to sell Nigeria some \$5.4 million worth of paramilitary and riot control equipment.	25X′
Israeli construction firms secured \$1 billion worth of contracts in 1981 alone. One of the largest Israeli companies, Solel Boneh, whose earnings in Africa totaled about \$500 million last year, has signed agreements with a number of Nigerian states and recently was awarded a substantial contract to work at Abuja, Nigeria's new federal capital.	25X1
Although encouraging significant commercial ties with Israel, Lagos has taken a firm stand against resuming diplomatic links at this time.	25X1
We believe Lagos would not regard	

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the prospect of Israeli security assistance to be as compelling a quid pro quo for recognition as do the smaller, weaker African states.	25 X 1
Kenya	
During the presidency of Jomo Kenyatta (1964-78) Kenyan relations with Israel were warm, despite the rupture of formal ties in 1974. The connection has cooled considerably, however, under President Moi. During his chairmanship of the OAU, Moi has concentrated on expanding Kenya's ties with the Arab states, and the OAU has roundly condemned Israel for its policies in the Middle East.	25 X 1
According to the US Embassy in Tel Aviv, Israeli officials still are hopeful that recognition by Kenya lies further down the road. They point but that Kenya is one of Israel's largest trade partners in black Africa. Israeli exports to Kenya in 1982 were over \$10 million, according to IMF figures. Tel Aviv hopes Moi will turn towards closer ties with Israel now that he is divested of his OAU responsibility and his hand has been strengthened domestically in September's national elections.	25 X 1
We believe other factors make this prospect doubtful. Moi forced Israel's longtime main advocate in Kenya, Constitutional Affairs Minister Charles Njonjo, out of his government this summer. Moi also recently visited Saudi Arabia in quest of aid. Kenya probably is content to maintain lucrative commercial ties with Israel without changing the diplomatic status quo.	25 X 1
Ethiopia	
The other major sub-Saharan African state with which Israel has a long history of political ties is Ethiopia. In the eyes of the Israeli government, the Horn of Africa is of major strategic importance because of Arab control of the Red Sea and Israel's need for guarantees for its ships to pass the Bab al-Mandeb and its commercial airline to overfly Ethiopian airspace on flights via Nairobi to and from South Africa. The Israeli government is concerned also for the well-being of Ethiopia's 20.000-member Jewish community.	25 X 1
lember Jewish Community.	25X1 25X1

We believe that Ethiopian diplomatic recognition is unlikely, although the Israeli government continues to hope that Addis Ababa eventually will reestablish formal ties. The present regime's close links to the Soviets, who are adamantly opposed to an Israeli political presence in Ethiopia, suggest that a change in policy is unlikely anytime soon. On the other hand, Ethiopia's longstanding ties with Tel Aviv and its anger over Arab support for Eritrean dissidents are factors that could work in Israel's favor over the longer term.

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If any one of these important sub-Saharan African states resumed relations, Tel Aviv believes that others would follow. Because Israel's prospects are best in Ivory Coast, we believe other moderate Francophone states are the most likely candidates.

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Central African Republic

The CAR severed diplomatic relations with Israel in October 1973. Although the pro-Western government in Bangui is not dependent on the Arabs for oil--its main supplier is Gabon--it is in dire economic straits and has hesitated to jeopardize present and future levels of Arab assistance by reestablishing formal ties with Israel. Moreover, Bangui does not want to give Libya a pretext for stepping up subversion within the country. On the other hand, Tel Aviv has campaigned strenuously for CAR recognition, Minister of Defense Sharon visited there in 1981, and President Kolingba would welcome Israeli assistance. As a result, during the last year the CAR has seemed on the point of recognition several times. At present, however, Kolingba seems content to explore the possibility of expanding Israeli construction activity and other commercial and economic links--but nothing more.

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Gabon

Pro-Western Gabon cut off diplomatic relations with Israel in October 1973 in response to Arab demands. As black Africa's second largest oil producer, Gabon is less vulnerable than most African states to Arab pressures. Although a nominal convert to Islam, President Bongo is interested in expanding Israel's role in Gabon's economic development. Gabonese-Israeli trade has increased over the past few years, and Bongo would welcome increased investment and agricultural development. While claiming that his government is one of the most moderate in Africa on Middle East questions, Bongo has said that Israel's military presence in Lebanon makes resumption of relations in the near future virtually impossible. Bongo supports the Camp David accords, but he also has criticized Israel's position on the Palestinian issue and Jerusalem.

Guinea

Guinea, where Islam is the official religion, severed relations with Israel in reaction to the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. In the late 1970s, however, President Toure, once one of Africa's most radical leaders, began to seek alternatives to his links with the Eastern bloc. The Guineans recently have indicated interest in the possibility of an Israeli agricultural assistance program. Guinea has only limited trade relations with Israel.

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Factors Working In Israel's Favor

Disillusionment With The Arabs

A number of factors continue to work in favor of Israel's return to black Africa. Probaby most important is the general African disillusionment with unfulfilled promises of Arab aid. African leaders expected the OPEC countries to compensate them during the 1970s for a four-fold increase in oil prices in return for cooperation against Israel and in the spirit of Third World brotherhood. The Arab states failed, however, to provide significant economic assistance to most African countries or to make concessions on oil prices. As of 1983, Arab donors altogether account for only ten percent of total capital inflows to the region and rank well below Western sources of official assistance. They have concentrated their aid in a few states with sizable Muslim populations—among them Somalia, Senegal, and Guinea—and channeled it mainly into sectarian projects, such as the construction of mosques and Islamic schools.

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Fears of Libyan subversion also have enhanced the Israeli position as a supplier of internal security assistance, particularly in West Africa. When Liberian Head of State Doe visited Jerusalem this summer, the Israelis cultivated Monrovia's apprehensions about Libya. A number of other African governments with similar fears—including Togo, Central African Republic, and Zaire—have also shown interest in Israeli military assistance

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Informal Ties

Tel Aviv has long encouraged trade and investment by private Israeli business as alternatives to official assistance. As a result, the businessmen/entrepreneurs has replaced the diplomat/technical assistant in the 1980s as the principal representative of Israel in Africa. The heads of Israeli firms in African capitals often have served as informal representatives of the

Israeli government, meeting regularly with political leaders and diplomats.	25 X 1
Several thousand Israeli citizens, mostly businessmen, are living in Africa with their families. In Nigeria alone, the Israeli community is estimated to be as high as 4,000. Kenya, Gabon, CAR, Ghana, Cameroon, Togo, Ivory Coast, and Upper Volta also have large numbers of Israeli residents.	25 X 1
Israel's trade union organization, the Histadrut, has had an important role in maintaining and developing extensive ties in more than 20 African countries and in filling some of the void in diplomatic communications. The union's Afro-Asian Institute has trained some 6,000 Africans since its inception in 1958 and is now focusing particularly on the younger generation of African labor leaders.	25 X 1
Israeli trade with black Africa has more than doubled in recent years and includes dealings with nearly 30 states. According to official Israeli statistics, Tel Aviv's total trade with black Africa was over \$100 million in 1982. Israeli exports to Africa include electronic equipment, industrial parts, fertilizers, chemicals, and a variety of agricultural products. African goods imported by Israel include coffee, cocoa, timber, minerals and seeds.	25X1
Overshadowing this expansion in trade has been the role of Israel's construction industry—a major beneficiary of expanding commercial ties with Africa. Contracts between Israeli firms and African governments for 1981-84 totaled \$2 billion, most of them for road, agricultural and hotel construction.	25 X 1
Africa offers a limited market for Israeli arms sales, which focus on advanced technology and training. Sales to sub-Saharan countries are a small proportion, however, of worldwide Israeli arms sales. Israel's largest black African customers are Kenya and Zaire.	25X1

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Barriers to Recognition

Arab Pressures

Notwithstanding African disappointment with the overall level of Arab aid, one of Israel's major handicaps in Africa is the leverage that Arab oil and promises or ruture assistance still provide. Fear of retribution by Arab states—upon which most black African states depend for their oil—remains a strong disincentive to reestablishing ties with Tel Aviv. Although many states indicated in the early 1970s that they would renew diplomatic ties once Israel had withdrawn from Egyptian territory, they continue to balk because of recent trends in the Middle East—the Israeli

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invasion of Lebanon last year, the continuing Israeli military presence there, and the failure to resolve the longstanding issue of a Palestinian homeland. We believe that for some states—particularly in West Africa—these are merely excuses, reflecting Arab pressure.	25 X 1
On the heels of Israel's recognition by Zaire and Liberia, the Arab states began a campaign to dissuade other African countries from following suit. The Khartoum-based Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), which had given \$411.4 million between 1974 and 1981 to Zaire out of a total of \$774.1 million in all of Africa, has suspended its activities in black Africa. The Gulf Cooperation Council of Foreign and Economic Ministers (GCC), which includes representatives of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and the UAE and has supplied approximately \$2 billion in aid to African countries, voted recently to sever all relations—including economic—with governments that resume ties with Israel.	25X1
When Head of State Doe announced plans to locate the Liberian embassy in Jerusalem, Arab countries called for reprisals against Monrovia. They threatened to boycott Liberian registered shipping, which transports oil from the Persian Gulf and earns Liberia some \$12 million annually.	25X 1
African Disapproval of Tel Aviv's South African Ties	
Israel's relations with Pretoria complicate its campaign to rebuild its diplomatic presence in sub-Saharan Africa. African leaders usually cite this relationship as the principal reason for continuing non-recognition.	25 X 1
The widespread African rejection of Israel in 1973 created a backlash in Tel Aviv that was conducive to closer ties with Pretoria. Tel Aviv evidently concluded that it had little to lose by cultivating this relationship. Under Israeli governments since then, particularly that of Prime Minister Beginwho was once president of the Israel-South African Friendship Leaguebilateral military, scientific, and economic links have grown.	25X 1
Black Africans tend to believe the worst about the Israeli-South African connection. They widely assume, for example, that scientific and military exchanges between Israel and South Africa include cooperation in nuclear technology for secret nuclear weapons programs in both countries.	25 X 1
For most black African leaders, Israel's economic relations with South Africa are also a continuing provocation. South Africa is Israel's	

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leading commercial partner in Africa, although in overall terms for either country the estimated \$245.2 million trade between them is relatively small.	25X1
Israel's Domestic Economic Constraints	
Israel's technical assistance budget for Africa has been severely downgraded in recent years because of Tel Aviv's economic problems. Only Kenya, Malawi, Lesotho, and Swazilandand now Zaire and Liberiaare included; in each case, the programs are small and have only a few	
technical assistants assigned to them.	25X1
Tel Aviv has succeeded in expanding the scope of its assistance somewhat, however, by providing technical expertise for projects funded by third countries, such as Canada, the Netherlands, and Sweden.	25X1
The same economic constraints apply to military assistance, although Israel is still able to provide training to local security services. Rifles have been offered to the Botswana police, but costs and internal Botswanan politics seem to have stalled the program. Military equipment has been delivered to Zaire, some purchased by Kinshasa and some given by	
Israel. Israel now faces a very real budgetary dilemma, however, in trying to fulfill its commitments to equip Zaire's Kamanyola Division in Shaba Region. Kinshasa has made several requests for US financial support for this program. Tel Aviv's inability to meet Mobutu's expectations for	
free training and equipment risks souring the relationship, according to US Embassy reports from Tel Aviv.	25 X 1
<u>Outlook</u>	
The Israeli government views the reestablishment of formal relations with large numbers of African states as a long term goal. In the short term, the Israelis will focus their efforts to regain recognition on a few target countries, such as those in the Francophone community where there is the highest coincidence of political importance, trade potential, and strategic location. They will try to avoid a widespread exchange of commitments with Africa's small, neediest states, although they will welcome recognition from any quarter—and provide whatever incentives they	

Although a number of Francophone states in West Africa--Ivory Coast in particular--have seemed on the verge of recognition over the last few months, the Israelis have no assurance of success. There are many examples of discussions between Israel and African governments collapsing abruptly after months of steady progress. Moreover, fear of Libyan

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retaliation, pressure from the Arab League and the Saudis, or heavy-handed Israeli military actions in the Middle East could lead President Houphouet or any other African leader close to recognition to reconsider. Senegal may look back with regret at the loss of the excellent technical assistance Israel provided in the past for agriculture, but economic and religious ties with the Arab world probably will act to prolong its break with Israel indefinitely.

As black Africa's most powerful state—and one on which the Arabs have little economic leverage—Nigeria could be the key to any regional rapprochement with Israel. Were Lagos to restore diplomatic ties, the rest of West Africa probably would follow. President Shagari has made it clear, however, that until Israel changes its policies in Lebanon, Nigeria will have no interest in recognition. Even then, South African—Israeli ties will remain a stumbling block.

The Israeli economic situation will compel Tel Aviv increasingly to seek third party participation in development schemes and multilateral funding for projects in which its technical expertise can be applied. This could limit Israel's options and reduce the effectiveness of the Israeli tactic of offering technical and military support in exchange for recognition.

Israeli-black African commercial ties will probably also suffer from the worsening economic conditions in Africa. Heavily committed Israeli exporters already are feeling the results of Nigeria's recession, for example, and are having trouble collecting several million dollars in debts. Israeli businessmen facing similar problems in Zaire will be reluctant to expand their investments without capital-repatriation guarantees from the Israeli treasury, which they may not receive given Israel's own budgetary constraints.

Ties with South Africa will continue to complicate Israel's future in black Africa. Indeed, over the long run, Israel may have to choose between its interests in South Africa and any hope of a substantial diplomatic presence in black Africa.

Implications for the United States

Israel wants US diplomatic help in restoring its position in black Africa. Tel Aviv will ask US diplomatic missions to continue to serve as channels of communications for it with African governments, as they did during negotiations with Zaire and Liberia over the past two years and are currently doing with President Eyadema of Togo. Tel Aviv will also ask the United States to encourage other states, such as France and Egypt, to support the establishment of diplomatic ties between Israel and the Africans. Moreover, Tel Aviv will look to the United States to be active

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on its behalf among black African states during the yearly ritual of Arab and radical Muslim challenges to Israeli credentials before the United Nations and other international organizations. According to the US Embassy in Tel Aviv, Israeli officials will seek US support for joint assistance programs in Africa that could combine US resources and Israeli expertise. Israel will request US financing for development and agricultural projects it hopes to provide key African
The close identification of Israel with the United States in the eyes of many black African leaders will have a positive effect on US-African relations where it is associated with welcomed forms of bilateral assistance, as in Zaire and Liberia, although unrealistic expectations could cause strains. For some moderate states, Israel's strong connection with the United States may in itself be a persuasive argument for
establishing closer ties with Tel Aviv.

The close identification of Tel Aviv with Washington is less useful when Israeli activity can be linked with South Africa or anti-Arab politics. In states like Nigeria and Senegal, both Islamic ties and anti-South African views play major roles in foreign policy formulation. In such states as Zambia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, Tel Aviv's close ties with South Africa are probably the decisive factor in opposition to Israel. In both cases, Washington's identification with Israel can provoke criticism of the United States in international forums and, under certain circumstances, could damage US bilateral relations with these African states.

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SUBJECT: Israel's Return to Black Africa: Progress and Prospects

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