

Foreign Aid and Voting Patterns at the United Nations: The Israeli Case in Africa

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Abstract

Unlike previous studies in the field of foreign aid and political interests, which have focused primarily on the United States's attempt to gain political support at the United Nations (UN) through foreign aid, this article focuses on the correlation between the foreign aid provided by Israel to seven African countries and those countries' voting patterns in the UN with regard to Israel affairs. This research argues that foreign aid is a key instrument in Israel's effort to strengthen its ties in Africa. Its findings highlight a positive correlation between foreign aid and political support, as expressed by African countries' voting patterns at the UN.

Keywords: foreign aid, Israeli foreign aid to Africa, Israel-Africa relations, political support at the UN, UN voting patterns, UN General Assembly

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Introduction

The State of Israel was the 59th country to be admitted to the United Nations (UN). Yet despite its status as one of the oldest UN members, from the 1950s onwards, Israel has been subjected more often to criticism and condemnation in UN institutions than any other state in the UN.¹ This study analyzes the tools used by Israel to cope with the “battles of legitimacy”² that take place between it and the Palestinians at the UN. Specifically, it examines whether foreign aid increases political support as expressed by countries’ voting patterns in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The article focuses on the effect of Israeli aid on the voting patterns of seven African countries, raising two main arguments: (1) in contrast to the 1950s and 1960s, the motive behind the foreign aid that Israel currently provides to African countries is primarily political; and (2) Israeli foreign aid in Africa increases political support, as reflected by positive voting patterns in the UN arena.

The contribution of this research lies in the examination of the impact of Israeli foreign aid on African countries’ voting patterns at the UN. Although previous studies have dealt with the correlation between foreign aid and voting patterns at the UN,³ the case of Israel and its attempts to gain political support at the UN has not sufficiently been investigated in the research. In fact, with the exception of Mandler and Lutmar, who have discussed Israeli aid to the Philippines, Ukraine, and Chad, as well as to Africa in general,⁴ the

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- 1 Joshua Muravchik, “The UN and Israel: A History of Discrimination,” *World Affairs*, Vol. 176, No. 4 (2013), pp. 35–46; Yaron Salman, “The UN and Israel: From Confrontation to Participation,” *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2020), pp. 37–53.
 - 2 Daniel F. Wajner, “‘Battling’ for Legitimacy: Analyzing Performative Contests in the Gaza Flotilla Paradigmatic Case,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (2019), pp. 1035–1050.
 - 3 Axel Dreher, Peter Nunnenkamp, and Rainer Thiele, “Does US Aid Buy UN General Assembly Votes? A Disaggregated Analysis,” *Public Choice*, Vol. 136, No. 1–2 (2008), pp. 139–164; James Raymond Vreeland and Axel Dreher, *The Political Economy of the United Nations Security Council: Money and Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Bernhard Reinsberg, “Do Countries Use Foreign Aid to Buy Geopolitical Influence? Evidence from Donor Campaigns for Temporary UN Security Council Seats,” *Politics and Governance*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2019), pp. 127–154.
 - 4 Leah Mandler and Carmela Lutmar, “Israel’s Foreign Assistance and UN Voting – Does it Pay?” *Israel Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2020), pp. 99–121; Carmela Lutmar and Leah Mandler, “Israel’s Foreign Aid to Africa & UN Voting: An Empirical Examination,” *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1515/peps-2019-0035>

correlation between Israeli aid to individual African countries and those countries' voting patterns has not received much attention. In this article, we will attempt to fill in the theoretical gap on the subject.

This study examined the voting patterns of South Sudan, Rwanda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Ghana, and Ivory Coast in 171 decisions made at the UNGA between 2012 and 2020. The focus on African countries stems from the importance attached by Israel to the continent, as expressed in the words of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who, before his visit to Uganda in February 2020, declared that "Israel is returning to Africa."⁵ Practically speaking, this importance takes two main forms: first, Israel operates an embassy in each of these countries (with the exception of South Sudan, whose Israeli ambassador resides in Jerusalem), and second, they are a focal point of Israeli foreign aid.

The article conducted an analysis of seven individual African countries' voting patterns at the UNGA in 2012 and 2020. This line of analysis was based on Peterson's argument that the UNGA is the venue where states present their perspectives on prominent global challenges,⁶ as well as on an argument made by Avi Granot, a former Israeli Ambassador to Ethiopia, pointing out Israel's high sensitivity to its image in international institutions, mainly the UN.⁷ Thus, the current study relied on the databases of the UN, the United States State Department, UN Watch, the OECD, and MASHAV (the Israel Foreign Ministry's Agency for International Development Cooperation). It is comprised of several sections. First, the discussion will provide a theoretical review on the link between foreign aid and voting patterns at the UN. Then, it will present Israel's case, with an overview of its foreign aid to Africa, its position at the UN, and its need for political support in UN institutions. The empirical section will include an analysis of the impact of Israeli aid on the voting patterns of seven African countries at the UN. Finally, the article will present its findings and conclusions.

5 Noa Landau and Lee Yaron, "Netanyahu and the Sudanese Leader Met in Uganda; Prime Minister's Office: We Will Lead to Normalization of Relations," *Haaretz*, February 3, 2020, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.8492262> [Hebrew].

6 M. J. Peterson, *The UN General Assembly* (London: Routledge, 2006).

7 Interview with the author, January 29, 2023.

Foreign Aid and Voting Patterns at the UN

The literature distinguishes between two main categories of foreign aid – official development assistance (ODA) and humanitarian assistance (emergency aid). The main purpose of ODA is to reduce the levels of poverty and its primary causes. In general, it may be argued that the scope of ODA stems from the interests of the donor countries. On the other hand, humanitarian aid is more limited in duration; it is considered rapid relief and mostly provided after acute incidents of natural disaster or conflict, which implies politically unconditional emergency aid. In the context of humanitarian aid in cases of conflict, Kertcher has suggested that threats to people and order of life are considered humanitarian crises. In his book on UN peacekeeping operations during conflicts, he argues that since the 1990s, humanitarian crises have been a central theme of the UN, especially in the work of the UN Security Council (UNSC). From a humanitarian point of view, the UN plays a central role in dealing with humanitarian crises resulting from armed conflicts; according to Weiss, humanitarian values have become central to foreign policy since the 1990s. Thus, Weiss maintains that the expansion of the UNSC's activities in the humanitarian crisis of the 1990s resulted from what he defined as a humanitarian “impulse,” the understandable human desire to help people in life-threatening situations during an armed conflict.⁸

The main difference between the two categories of aid listed above lies in the fact that humanitarian aid usually does not depend on political considerations, while ODA, as mentioned, is also linked to the interests of the donor countries. In other words, while humanitarian aid is perceived as altruistic, ODA is perceived as more political.⁹ It is important to note that the distinction between the two categories is not entirely dichotomous; in practice, humanitarian aid is often related not only to the needs of the

8 Chen Kertcher, *The United Nations and Peacekeeping, 1988–95* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016). See also: Thomas G. Weiss, “The Humanitarian Impulse,” in David M. Malone (ed.), *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), pp. 37–55.

9 Günther Fink and Silvia Redaelli, “Determinants of International Emergency Aid – Humanitarian Need Only,” *World Development*, Vol. 39, No. 5 (2011), pp. 741–757; Mandler and Lutmar, “Israel’s Foreign Assistance and UN Voting.”

target countries, but to the interests of the donor countries. For example, the United States and Britain provided more emergency aid in cases of natural disaster to countries that supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq than to countries that did not. France also grants bilateral assistance to countries that have adopted the French language as an official language or that are politically affiliated with France due to their former colonial status; this assistance serves as a tool for disseminating French culture and language.¹⁰ Drury, Olson, and Van Belle have found that American aid from 1964-1995 in cases of disaster stemmed, at least in part, from political motives.¹¹ Likewise, Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor argue that in the cases of the United States, France, Japan, and Sweden, foreign aid stems from ideology, culture, and security calculations rather than altruism.¹² No discussion of donor countries' interests and humanitarian aid in cases of internal conflicts would be complete without addressing Weiss's argument that "calculations about vital interests by governmental decisionmakers explain intervention, which is unlikely to succeed unless there is a demonstrated willingness to take casualties and stay the course."¹³ Weiss's argument shows that even in cases of internal conflict and civil war, humanitarian aid is often contingent on the interests of the donor countries.

The existing literature in the field of foreign aid usually addresses donor countries' motives, especially their political interests. In general, there is a greater tendency to provide aid to countries whose voting pattern at the UN aligns with the donor country's policies. For example, in his classic 1962 paper laying the foundations for the study of foreign aid, Morgenthau mentions several forms of foreign aid (humanitarian foreign aid, subsistence foreign aid, military foreign aid, bribery, prestige foreign aid, and foreign

10 Alberto Alesina and David Dollar, "Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?" *Journal of Economic Growth*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2000), pp. 33-63; Jean-Sébastien Rioux and Douglas A. Van Belle, "The Influence of *Le Monde* Coverage on French Foreign Aid Allocations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (2005), pp. 481-502.

11 A. Cooper Drury, Richard Stuart Olson, and Douglas A. Van Belle, "The Politics of Humanitarian Aid: U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, 1964-1995," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (2005), pp. 454-473.

12 Peter J. Schraeder, Steven W. Hook, and Bruce Taylor, "Clarifying the Foreign Aid Puzzle: A Comparison of American, Japanese, French and Swedish Aid Flows," *World Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (1998), pp. 294-323.

13 Weiss, "The Humanitarian Impulse," p. 37.

aid for economic development).¹⁴ Among these, he argues, only humanitarian aid is not political in nature. More recently, Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor have almost completely rejected the possibility that donor countries may hold altruistic motives in cases of aid to African countries.¹⁵ Among the many political motives for aid, one of the most prominent is the attempt to gain political support in the UN arena; the literature on this issue is often focused on American aid as a tool to influence voting patterns in the UN by “buying votes.” For example, Dreher, Nunnenkamp, and Thiele have argued that the United States uses economic aid to gain political support, measured through voting patterns, in the UNGA.¹⁶

In addition, Woo and Chung have maintained that the United States not only provides assistance to countries that already support it in the UNGA, but also has an incentive to aid countries with policies not similar to its own in an attempt to “buy their votes.”¹⁷ In this context, Alesina and Weder have argued that even corrupt regimes receive foreign aid, including from the United States; it is not inconceivable that this aid is at least partially motivated by the advancement of political interests.¹⁸ Moreover, Reinsberg has found that countries use foreign aid as a tool of influence in order to gain political support for their election as temporary members of the UNSC.¹⁹ As stated above, the present study corresponds with this literature. However, unlike previous studies, which have mostly dealt with the motives of prominent donor countries such as the United States, this article concentrates on Israel’s aid in Africa.

14 Hans Morgenthau, “A Political Theory of Foreign Aid,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (1962), pp. 301–309.

15 Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor, “Clarifying the Foreign Aid Puzzle.”

16 Dreher, Nunnenkamp, and Thiele, “Does US Aid Buy UN General Assembly Votes?”

17 Byungwon Woo and Eunbin Chung, “Aid for Vote? United Nations General Assembly Voting and American Aid Allocation,” *Political Studies*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (2018), pp. 1002–1026.

18 Alberto Alesina and Beatrice Weder, “Do Corrupt Governments Receive Less Foreign Aid?” *American Economic Review*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (2002), pp. 1126–1137.

19 Reinsberg, “Do Countries Use Foreign Aid to Buy Geopolitical Influence?”

The Case of Israel's Aid in Africa

This article is focused on Israel for two primary reasons: the complex relations between Israel and the UN, and the foreign aid dimension in Israel-Africa relations. These may be understood in the context of Israel's status as a small country with limited natural resources.

Israel-UN Relations

Israel's attempt to influence voting patterns in the UNGA is driven by the discrimination it appears to face in the UN. Peterson has explained the UN's bias against Israel in light of the assembly's support for the Palestinians' aims, arguing that "in the late 1970s [...] strong Arab and African support meant that the Group of 77 would not accept any proposal regarding Palestinians that the PLO opposed."²⁰ Indeed, historically, Israel's relationship with the UN has been mixed – the more involved the UN has been in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the more its institutions have tended to adopt the Palestinian narrative. A number of examples follow.

In December 1970, the UNGA passed Resolution 2535, recognizing "the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine" and their right to self-determination. In October 1974, Resolution 3210 invited Yasir Arafat to take part in the discussions of the UNGA, and Resolution 3237 (November 1974) granted the PLO observer status in UN institutions. Furthermore, Resolution 3379 (November 1975), which determined "that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination," constitutes a major turning point in the deterioration of relations between Israel and the UN.

Moreover, the structure of the assembly includes 193 member states, among them over 100 Muslim, Arab, and non-aligned states. While Israel has positive bilateral relations with some of these states, there is nonetheless an automatic majority of votes to condemn Israel. Year after year, the UNGA consistently rules against Israel (including one resolution on "Assistance to the Palestinian People" that was "Adopted by Consensus" without a vote). In the years 2012–2015, the UNGA issued 97 condemnations, of which 83 were against Israel; in 2016, 20 of the 26 condemnations were against Israel; and in 2017,

20 Peterson, *The UN General Assembly*, p. 56.

21 out of 27 were against Israel.²¹ In 2018, the UNGA passed 21 condemnations against Israel and only six condemnations against Iran, Syria, North Korea, Crimea, Myanmar, and the United States.²² In 2019, the UNGA passed 18 condemnations against Israel and seven condemnations against Syria, Iran, North Korea, the United States, Myanmar, and Crimea (which had two condemnations).²³ In 2020, the UNGA passed 17 condemnations against Israel and six against the rest of the world, while in 2021, the UNGA passed 14 condemnations against Israel and five against the rest of the world.²⁴

It is important to mention that in general, motives for voting may be influenced by geopolitical, economic, and regional interests, as well as bilateral relations. Moreover, in the case of African countries, voting patterns may be affected by the inner dynamics of the African Group bloc, by economically driven policies (“economic diplomacy”), or by other value-driven policies that are not necessarily material (“liberation diplomacy”). Kertcher has explained this through the development of the concept of “the dispositive of terrorism.” In his analysis, Kertcher argues that in the case of the war on terrorism, the United States’s focus on the new dispositive of the “War on Terror” influenced both UNGA and UNSC

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- 21 “This Year’s Tally: 22 U.N. Resolutions on Israel, 4 on Rest of World Combined,” *UN Watch*, December 27, 2012, <https://unwatch.org/this-years-tally-21-u-n-resolutions-on-israel-4-on-rest-of-world-combined/>; “2013 at the UN: 21 Resolutions Against Israel, 4 on Rest of the World,” *UN Watch*, November 25, 2013, <https://unwatch.org/this-years-22-unga-resolutions-against-israel-4-on-rest-of-world/>; “2014–2015 UNGA Session: 20 Resolutions Against Israel, 3 on Rest of the World,” *UN Watch*, January 22, 2015, <https://unwatch.org/2014-2015-unga-session-20-resolutions-israel-3-rest-world/>; “The U.N. and Israel: Key Statistics from UN Watch,” *UN Watch*, August 23, 2016, <https://unwatch.org/un-israel-key-statistics/>; “2017 U.N. General Assembly Resolutions Singling Out Israel – Texts, Votes, Analysis,” *UN Watch*, November 10, 2017, <https://unwatch.org/2017-unga-resolutions-singling-israel/>
- 22 “2018 U.N. General Assembly Resolutions Singling Out Israel – Texts, Votes, Analysis,” *UN Watch*, November 15, 2018, <https://unwatch.org/2018-un-general-assembly-resolutions-singling-israel-texts-votes-analysis/>
- 23 Salman, “The UN and Israel”; “2019–2020 U.N. General Assembly Resolutions Singling Out Israel – Texts, Votes, Analysis,” *UN Watch*, November 19, 2019, <https://unwatch.org/2019-un-general-assembly-resolutions-singling-out-israel-texts-votes-analysis/>
- 24 “2020–2021 UNGA Resolutions on Countries,” *UN Watch*, December 16, 2020, <https://unwatch.org/2020-2021-un-general-assembly-resolutions-singling-out-israel-texts-votes-analysis/>; “2021–2022 UNGA Resolutions on Israel vs. Rest of the World,” *UN Watch*, November 29, 2021, <https://unwatch.org/2021-2022-unga-resolutions-on-israel-vs-rest-of-the-world/>

voting patterns in their resolutions on terrorism. Kertcher's study examines the diplomatic discourse on "emergencies" of terrorism in the Middle East in the UNSC from 2006 to 2009, concluding that voting patterns may be influenced by a variety of motives even with regard to issues on which there is ostensibly consensus, such as the war on terror.²⁵

Another notable example of discrimination is reflected in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).²⁶ Israel is discriminated against in the deliberations of the Human Rights Council, inter alia, through Article 7, which allows critical discussion of issues related solely to Israel. Of the ten sections on the Council's agenda, this one is permanent and focuses specifically and consistently on Israel; therefore, it has far-reaching effects and implications for the actions of the Council.²⁷

Sometimes, Israel is presented as an "apartheid state" in the UN arena. In the years 2000–2014, 84 UN documents were compiled that referred to Israel as an apartheid state, along with 48 other documents that linked the separation fence to the term "apartheid."²⁸ Moreover, out of 52 Israel-related affidavits submitted to the Human Rights Council by civil society organizations in 2016, 45 condemned and/or criticized Israel, as well as criticizing the United States over the regular use of its veto right to defend Israel in the UNSC.²⁹

25 Chen Kertcher, "The Dispositive of Terrorism During the War on Terrorism: The UNSC's Approach to Concrete Terror Emergencies in the Middle East," *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (2021), pp. 555–577.

26 Salman, "The UN and Israel."

27 Eytan Gilboa, "American Contributions to Israel's National Security," *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2020), pp. 18–37; Michal Navoth, "From a UN Commission on Human Rights to a Human Rights Council: A Structural Change or Human Rights Reform?" *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 1 (2006), pp. 112–118; Michal Navoth, "Israel's Relationship with the UN Human Rights Council: Is There Hope for Change?" *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, Vol. 601 (2014), <https://jcpa.org/article/israels-relationship-un-human-rights-council/>; Salman, "The UN and Israel."

28 Michal Hatuel-Radushitsky, "Israel and Apartheid in the International Discourse," *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 18 (2015), pp. 93–105 [Hebrew].

29 Michal Hatuel-Radushitsky, "The Civil Society Component of National Security in an Era of Civil Power: The Case of Israel in the UN Human Rights Council in 2016," in Carmit Padan and Vera Michlin-Shafir (eds.), *National Security in a "Liquid" World* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2019), pp. 119–130 [Hebrew].

Israel's attempt to influence voting patterns and gain political support from African countries in the UN arena should be understood against this background. International legitimacy, the degree of support given by actors to other actors, indicates the degree of international consent in relation to a particular actor or in relation to his actions.³⁰ In Finnemore's words, "Legitimacy can only be given by others."³¹ In his classic article, Claude argues that politics is not only a struggle for power, but also a competition to gain legitimacy; he points to the important political function played by the UN in actors' attempts to gain collective legitimacy.³² Claude defines collective legitimization as actors' need to gain political support from as many other actors as possible for their actions/positions³³ and sees the UN as a central (although not the only) international institution where legitimization of this kind may be ensured. This article is fundamentally in agreement with Claude's argument, as it addresses Israel's aspiration to gain political support in the UN arena through an attempt to influence voting patterns in the UNGA. As an interim summary and against the background of Israel's need for legitimacy, the next discussion will review Israeli foreign aid throughout the history of Israel-Africa relations.

Israeli Foreign Assistance to Africa

The case of Israeli foreign aid is interesting because compared to other donor countries, Israel is a small country lacking in natural resources. Nonetheless, it attaches great importance to grant foreign aid as a "first-class diplomatic tool in order to advance Israel's foreign and security policy objectives" and "an important and unique tier of Israeli relations

30 Ian Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Ian Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (1999), pp. 379–408; Ian Hurd, *After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Daniel F. Wajner and Arie M. Kacowicz, "The Quest for Regional Legitimation: Analyzing the Arab League's Legitimizing Role in the Arab Spring," *Regional & Federal Studies*, Vol. 28 (2018), pp. 489–521; Wajner, "'Battling' for Legitimacy."

31 Martha Finnemore, "Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn't All It's Cracked Up to Be," *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (2009), p. 61.

32 Inis L. Claude, Jr., "Collective Legitimation as a Political Function of the United Nations," *International Organization*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1966), pp. 367–379.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 370.

with both developed and developing countries.”³⁴ Israeli foreign aid is provided through MASHAV, which, since its establishment in 1958, has assisted more than 140 countries around the world, including countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel.³⁵

Israeli foreign aid began to gain momentum after then-Foreign Minister Golda Meir visited the African continent in 1958; in the 1950s and 1960s, Israel provided aid to African countries at the beginning of their independence, including Ghana, Ethiopia, and the Christians in South Sudan.³⁶ Assistance in the fields of agriculture, medicine, education, engineering, planning, and architecture has been a key tool in the establishment of Israel’s ties in Africa. Until the mid-1960s, Israel sent diplomatic missions to 32 countries on the continent, including more than 1,800 experts in medicine, education, infrastructure, and agriculture, and thousands of Africans participated in specialized training courses conducted in Israel.³⁷ By 1967, 29 of the 96 diplomatic missions launched by Israel took place in Africa. In fact, in the 1960s, Israel was perceived as one of the international powers in the field of humanitarian aid.³⁸ The impressive scope of Israeli aid in Africa stemmed in part from the views of David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir, who understood foreign aid as central to Israeli foreign policy. Aid was motivated by a number of considerations, including political interests, moral commitment, and Zionist ideology, the latter of which articulated the Jewish people’s aspirations to be *Or LaGoyim* (a light unto the nations) and

34 “MASHAV – Israel’s National Aid Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Marks 60 Years Since its Establishment,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, September 29, 2020, https://www.gov.il/he/departments/general/mashav_mfa [Hebrew].

35 Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Israel on Frontline of International Aid,” https://embassies.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/Spotlight/Pages/Israel_on_frontline_international_aid.aspx

36 Michael Bar Zohar, “David Ben-Gurion and the Policy of the Periphery 1958: Analysis,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *Israel in the Middle East* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2009), pp. 191–197; Yotam Gidron, *Israel in Africa: Security, Migration, Interstate Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

37 Naomi Chazan, “Israel and Africa: Challenges for a New Era,” in *Israel and Africa Assessing the Past, Envisioning the Future* (Tel Aviv: Africa Institute, 2006), pp. 1–15; Zach Levey, “Israel’s Entry to Africa, 1956–61,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2001), pp. 87–114.

38 Aliza Belman Inbal and Shachar Zahavi, *The Rise and Fall of Israel’s Bilateral Aid Budget, 1958–2008* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University – Harold Hartog School of Government and Policy, 2009); Zach Levey, “Israel’s Strategy in Africa, 1961–67,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2004), pp. 71–87.

promote *Tikkun Olam* (repair of the world) through their assistance in the African nations' process of independence.³⁹

After their severance in the 1970s, Israel-Africa ties experienced a slow renewal in the 1980s, expanding in the 1990s and gaining momentum on the initiative of then-Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman in 2009. Today, Israel has diplomatic relations with more than 40 sub-Saharan African countries and operates embassies in 11: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, South Africa, Angola, Rwanda, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon. Recently, against the backdrop of the Abraham Accords, potential for the normalization and expansion of relations has grown, and Israel has developed contact with Chad, Morocco, and Sudan. A key component in Israel's renewal and reinforcement of ties in Africa is the foreign assistance that it provides in the areas of communications, health, agriculture, infrastructure, and security.⁴⁰

In conclusion, despite MASHAV's limited budget – which falls short of the OECD's requirement of 0.7% GDP from its members for foreign aid, comprising only 0.07% of Israel's GDP (\$276 million in 2020)⁴¹ – Israel's civilian activity in Africa is extensive. As surveyed above, Israel faces a constant onslaught of condemnation and criticism in UN institutions; it is my claim that Israel's desire to gain political support in the UNGA constitutes one of the most significant motivations for Israeli foreign aid. In the following discussion, the study will analyze the links between Israeli aid and the voting patterns of seven African countries in the UN arena.

39 Avi Beker, "'Tikkun Olam' in Africa," in *Israel and Africa: Assessing the Past, Envisioning the Future* (Tel Aviv: Africa Institute, 2006), pp. 34–42; Levey, "Israel's Entry to Africa, 1956–61."

40 Kobi Michael and Yaron Salman, "Discussion of Israel's Foreign Policy," *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2020), pp. 123–129.

41 OECD Data, "Net ODA," <https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm>

Israeli Foreign Aid in Africa and Voting Patterns at the UN: An Empirical Analysis

This empirical analysis consists of two parts. First, we have examined the voting patterns of South Sudan, Rwanda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Ghana, and Ivory Coast in prominent anti-Israel decisions at the UNGA from 2012 to 2020. The analysis is based on primary sources from UN databases, as well as information from the US State Department and UN Watch reports.⁴² As part of this examination, we have conducted a content analysis of 171 prominent condemnations of Israel made at the UNGA. Voting countries were sorted into four categories: against the decision (and implicitly in favor of Israel); in favor of the decision (and implicitly against Israel); abstention; and absent. It should be emphasized that in most cases, political support through voting patterns is expressed through abstention and/or absence, rather than direct voting for Israel. Therefore, absences and abstentions are considered positive voting patterns from an Israeli point of view. Second, in order to explain the trends in voting patterns, we analyzed Israeli foreign aid to these countries in order to reveal any potential correlation between Israeli aid and voting patterns in the UN. As shown above, voting patterns at the UN may be influenced by a wide range of geopolitical, economic, and regional interests, as well as the quality of the historical bilateral relations between the actors in question. This is certainly important to any analysis of African countries' voting patterns, which may have reasons beyond the factors mentioned above, and which therefore cannot be treated as identical. Thus, since we cannot access sources to confirm countries' motives for voting, the study has adopted a more cautious approach while seeking a correlation.

Voting Patterns of African Countries in Israel-Related Affairs, 2012–2020

The UN's resolutions on Israel are almost always linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. African countries' voting patterns on resolutions of this kind may be divided into two main types. The first refers to resolutions on key Palestinian issues, such as Jerusalem, the

42 UN Watch, "The U.N. and Israel: Key Statistics"; UN Watch, "2018 U.N. General Assembly Resolutions Singling Out Israel."

Palestinian right to self-determination, and assistance to Palestinian refugees. In the context of these issues, and in contrast to the voting patterns of other African countries, Israel currently receives support from South Sudan, Cameroon, and Rwanda, and partial support from Ivory Coast and Ghana. In this context, two votes are particularly noteworthy. The first of these was Resolution A/RES/67/19 (Status of Palestine in the United Nations), in November 2012, which proposed to upgrade the status of the Palestinians in the UN from a non-member observing entity to a non-member state observer. This resolution won the support of 138 countries, including all African countries with which Israel has diplomatic relations except Cameroon and Rwanda, alongside three other countries that abstained and three countries that were absent (Liberia, Madagascar, and Equatorial Guinea). The second was a vote on the right of Palestinians to self-determination (Item 71-A/75/477 DR II) held on December 16, 2020. This item was supported by 31 African countries, while South Sudan, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Togo abstained, and six African countries were absent, among them Rwanda and Ghana.⁴³

The second type of resolution includes other Palestinian issues, such as the operations of the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency), Palestinian refugees' properties and revenues, and especially decisions with regard to the various committees on the Palestinian question.⁴⁴ Here, Israel enjoys a much higher degree of support among African countries (mainly through absence and abstention). For example, in a December 10, 2020 vote on the work of the Committee for the Examination of Israeli Operations with regard to the human rights status of Palestinians (Item 53-A/75/412 DR I), a majority of African countries supported Israel: 18 states supported the decision, 11 were absent (including Ghana and South Sudan), 11 abstained (including Cameroon, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Ivory Coast) and one voted against the decision.⁴⁵ In addition, in a December 2, 2020 vote on the Committee for the Advancement of the Palestinian People's Rights (Item 38-A/75/L.32), Israel received support from 21 African countries: 17 countries were absent (including

43 UN Watch, "2020–2021 UNGA Resolutions on Countries."

44 These committees include the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), the Division for Palestinian Rights, and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People.

45 UN Watch, "2020–2021 UNGA Resolutions on Countries."

Ghana and Kenya), and four abstained (including Cameroon and Rwanda).⁴⁶ Finally, with regard to a December 2, 2020 decision on the “Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat” (Item 38-A/75/L.33), most African countries demonstrated political support for Israel: 9 abstained (including Cameroon, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, and South Sudan), and 18 were absent (among them Kenya and Ghana).⁴⁷

When it comes to votes on Israeli affairs that do not deal directly with the Palestinian case (such as votes on “the Syrian Golan,” “oil slick on Lebanese shores,” or “toward a nuclear weapon-free world”), African countries are more likely to abstain and even absent themselves. For example, in 2020, two different votes were held on the issue of the Golan Heights. In the December 10, 2020 vote on “the occupied Syrian Golan” (Item 53-A/75/412 DR IV), 14 African countries were absent (including Ghana and South Sudan), five abstained (including Cameroon and Rwanda) and one was opposed (Liberia). Likewise, in the December 2, 2020 vote on “the Syrian Golan” (Item 37-A/75/L.29), 23 countries were absent (including Ghana and Kenya) and six abstained (including Cameroon, Ivory Coast, and Rwanda).⁴⁸

Moreover, in years when significant military clashes took place in the Gaza Strip, African countries’ support for Israel in the UN was especially striking in contrast to the widespread condemnation of Israel on social media. For example, in December 2012, a month after Operation “Pillar of Defense” (*Amud Anan*) in the Gaza Strip, Resolution RES/67/121 condemned the impact of Israeli actions on the human rights situation of Palestinians. Ten African countries (including South Sudan) absented themselves from the vote on this resolution, while six abstained (including Cameroon and Rwanda). An additional example is RES/69/93, a 2014 resolution on the impact of Operation Protective Edge (*Tzuk Eitan*) on Palestinian human rights in the Gaza Strip. Eight African countries abstained from the vote (Ghana, South Sudan, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Rwanda, alongside Togo, Madagascar, and Malawi) while Kenya was among the nine absent countries. 19 condemnations of Israel were passed in 2014; of these condemnations,

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

Rwanda was absent and abstained 12 times, Kenya was absent 15 times, Ivory Coast was absent and abstained from 16 decisions, Ghana was absent and abstained from nine decisions, and Ethiopia abstained from two decisions. In June 2014, former Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman paid a visit to each of these countries in order to strengthen bilateral ties with Israel. The importance of the visit may be discerned from his statement on the visit:

Relations with African countries have a strategic importance for Israel, from a security, political, and economic point of view [...] In 2009, I visited Africa [...] and since then we have seen the positive results in strengthening cooperation in areas that are important to both Israel and African countries.⁴⁹

Indeed, as is evident from Appendix 1, an analysis of individual voting patterns that reflect bilateral relations has shown that South Sudan, Rwanda, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, and Ghana consistently support Israel, mainly through absence and abstention. This also holds true of several other countries not included in this analysis, such as the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea (except in 2017), Madagascar, and Sao Tome Principe. Their support is expressed, among other things, through dissidence on issues that are generally the subject of widespread agreement in the UNGA. For example, in 2009, as part of a proposal to establish an independent investigation examining Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip at the beginning of that year, among the eight abstentions were Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Kenya, and among the eight absent were Ivory Coast and Rwanda.⁵⁰

In addition, while 28 African countries did not support the United States's 2018 initiative to pass a condemnation of Hamas rocket attacks on Israel, among the seven

49 "Foreign Minister Lieberman Will Visit Africa," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, June 9, 2014, https://mfa.gov.il/MFAHEB/PressRoom/Pages/FM_Lieberman_to_leave_on_state_visit_to_Africa_090614.aspx

50 Benjamin Augé, "Israel-Africa Relations: What Can We Learn from the Netanyahu Decade?" *Études de l'Ifri, Ifri*, November 4, 2020, <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/etudes-de-lifri/israel-africa-relations-what-can-we-learn-netanyahu-decade>; Gidron, *Israel in Africa*.

countries that voted in favor of the resolution were Rwanda and South Sudan.⁵¹ In a 2018 vote on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, Cameroon and South Sudan abstained;⁵² in a similar vote in 2019, Cameroon and Rwanda abstained and South Sudan was absent (as were Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Equatorial Guinea).⁵³ On the issue of assistance to Palestinian refugees, South Sudan and Cameroon abstained in a 2018 decision⁵⁴ and Cameroon abstained in a 2019 decision.⁵⁵ In 2018 votes on Jerusalem, South Sudan, Rwanda, and Cameroon abstained, and Ghana was absent.⁵⁶ It is not inconceivable that Rwanda's consistent positive voting pattern (mostly through abstention and absence) may in part be linked to Avigdor Lieberman's visit in March 2018. Lieberman was the first Israeli defense minister to visit Rwanda, alongside Tanzania and Zambia, and meet with President Paul Kagame.

In this context, then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visits to the continent also illustrate the importance attached by Jerusalem to strengthening its ties with Africa. In July 2016, Netanyahu visited Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda; in that same year, Rwanda was absent from all 19 condemnations of Israel, and Ethiopia abstained from two of them.

This positive voting pattern is also consistent in regional issues not necessarily related to the Palestinian question. For example, in the December 7, 2020 vote on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East (Item 106-A/75/402), which won the support of most African countries, South Sudan was among the absentees and Cameroon among the abstentions.⁵⁷

The positive voting pattern of Rwanda, South Sudan, Cameroon, and Ivory Coast with regard to Israeli affairs is also recorded in US State Department reports, which reflect

51 Yosef Israel Abramowitz, "The Soul of Israel's Schizophrenic Africa Strategy," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 25, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/magazine/an-enlightened-africa-strategy-605550>

52 UN Watch, "2018 U.N. General Assembly Resolutions Singling Out Israel."

53 UN Watch, "2019–2020 U.N. General Assembly Resolutions Singling Out Israel."

54 UN Watch, "2018 U.N. General Assembly Resolutions Singling Out Israel."

55 "Screenshot of Item 50 A/74/409," *UN Watch*, December 18, 2019, <https://unwatch.org/screen-shot-2019-12-18-at-15-55-04/>

56 UN Watch, "2018 U.N. General Assembly Resolutions Singling Out Israel."

57 UN Watch, "2020–2021 UNGA Resolutions on Countries."

the countries whose votes coincided with Washington on Israel-related issues. This data suggests that in 2018, Rwanda, South Sudan, Cameroon, and Ivory Coast (along with Togo and Liberia) were the African countries whose voting pattern correlated most frequently with the American support vote. In 2019, the voting patterns of Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Rwanda, and South Sudan (along with the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, and Togo) were the African countries most aligned with the American voting pattern. This positive voting pattern (which included voting together with the United States, abstention, or absence) also repeated itself in 2020, when Cameroon, Ghana, Rwanda, and South Sudan (along with the Republic of Central Africa, Liberia, Madagascar, and Togo) voted in line with the United States on Israel-related issues.⁵⁸

On the other hand, Ethiopia and Kenya tend to support condemnations of Israel (as do some other African countries not included in this analysis), although they have maintained extensive diplomatic, security, and civilian relations with Israel for decades. Nonetheless, they usually support Israel on key issues. For example, as shown above, Ethiopia and Kenya were among the eight abstentions from the 2009 proposal to establish an independent investigation of Israel's military operations in Gaza.⁵⁹ Another example noted earlier is RES/69/93, the 2014 vote on the human rights impact of Operation Protective Edge, where Kenya was among the 15 absentees. Moreover, in 2014, out of 19 condemnations of Israel, Kenya was absent from 15 votes and Ethiopia abstained from two votes. In June 2014, Avigdor Lieberman had visited each of these countries in order to strengthen bilateral ties. Finally, in the United States's proposed condemnation of Hamas in 2018, Israel won support from Ethiopia and Kenya, both of which abstained from the vote.⁶⁰

58 "Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2018," *US Department of State*, September 12, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/voting-practices-in-the-united-nations-2018/>; "Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2019," *US Department of State*, May 21, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/voting-practices-in-the-united-nations-2019/>; "Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2020," *US Department of State*, October 26, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/voting-practices-in-the-united-nations-2020/>

59 Augé, "Israel-Africa Relations"; Gidron, *Israel in Africa*.

60 Yaron Salman, "Diplomacy, UN Voting Patterns and Political Support: The Case of Israel and African Countries," *Politics*, Vol. 31 (2022), pp. 20–46 [Hebrew].

Overall, a comprehensive look at the voting pattern of African countries in 2020 indicates a consistent trend in which 14 countries showed their support for Israel through abstention and absence, including four countries included in this article – Ghana, South Sudan, Cameroon, and Rwanda.⁶¹

In conclusion, these findings indicate supportive trends in the voting patterns of Cameroon, Rwanda, South Sudan, Ivory Coast, and Ghana (five of the seven countries included in this analysis) in Israeli affairs at the UN. As we have remarked, voting patterns may be influenced by a wide range of motives. For example, it is not inconceivable that South Sudan's support for Israel might stem from the warm historical relationship between the two countries, forged against the background of Israel's assistance to South Sudanese Africans in their struggle for independence from Arab Sudan in the late 1960s.⁶² In addition, Israel receives political support from Rwanda in the UN arena, at least partly based on a sense of identification and comparison between the Holocaust of the Jewish people and the Tutsi genocide in the 1994 Rwandan civil war.⁶³ It may also be that African countries take into consideration the special relations between Israel and the United States when strengthening ties with Israel, hoping that this will "open doors in Washington."⁶⁴ At the same time, the current research indicates a positive correlation between the voting patterns of African countries and Israeli foreign aid, channeled toward two primary aims – civilian development needs and security.

Assistance for Civilian Development

Israel was among the first countries to aid South Sudan through the development of infrastructure and water technologies, agriculture, natural resources, science and

61 The other African countries to vote in this manner were Seychelles, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo, Liberia (which voted four times directly for Israel), Madagascar, Malawi, Swaziland (Eswatini), and the Republic of Central Africa.

62 Yotam Gidron, "'One People, One Struggle': Anya-Nya Propaganda and the Israeli Mossad in Southern Sudan, 1969–1971," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2018), pp. 428–453; Yaron Salman, "The Security Element in Israel-Africa Relations," *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2021), pp. 38–53.

63 Salman, "The Security Element in Israel-Africa Relations."

64 Gidron, *Israel in Africa*; Michael and Salman, "Discussion of Israel's Foreign Policy."

technology, education, and defense. Haim Koren's statement that "South Sudan's attitude toward Israel borders on love"⁶⁵ indicates the positive consequences of that relationship. In Ghana, Israel currently promotes a project for early childhood education, as well as establishing intensive care units for newborns and training for doctors and nurses; in Kenya, a sustainability education project; in Ethiopia, projects in agriculture and regional development; in Cameroon, extensive humanitarian activity, including emergency aid after the outbreak of avian influenza virus, the establishment of an agricultural training center, high-tech projects, humanitarian operations in the north and east of the country, and assistance in ophthalmology.⁶⁶ Israel has also held sports activities for children in a refugee camp as part of a humanitarian project initiated by the Israeli Embassy in Cameroon.⁶⁷ During this period (2012–2020), Cameroon's political support for Israel was reflected in a positive voting pattern at the UNGA, as may be seen in the empirical analysis and in Appendix 1.

Another prominent form of Israeli aid in Africa is professional training in Israel and in the target countries on water, agriculture, medicine and public health, education, community development, science and technology, regional planning, and environmental issues. For example, out of 40 courses led by Israel in various countries in 2015, 11 were held in Africa; in 2016, 20 out of 59 courses were held in Africa; in 2017, the number of courses that Israel held in Africa was reduced to six out of 41, but in 2018 29 out of 80 courses were held in Africa and in 2019 about 32 out of 85.⁶⁸ In the civilian trainings held in Israel in 2015, 28 trainees were from Cameroon, 14 from the Ivory Coast, 30 from Ethiopia, 70 from Ghana, 130 from Kenya, 20 from Rwanda, and six from South Sudan,

65 Michael and Salman, "Discussion of Israel's Foreign Policy."

66 "Israeli Aid to Cameroon," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, July 18, 2016, https://mfa.gov.il/MFAHEB/AboutUs/DiplomaticUpdates/Pages/Israeli_aid_to_Cameroon_180716.aspx [Hebrew]; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "MASHAV Marks 60 Years."

67 "Sports Project in Gadu Refugee Camp, Cameroon," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 28 December 2014, https://mfa.gov.il/MFAHEB/AboutUs/DiplomaticUpdates/Pages/Sports_project_in_Gadu_refugee_camp_Cameroon_281214.aspx [Hebrew].

68 MASHAV Annual Reports, 2013–2019, https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/mashav/Publications/Annual_Reports/Pages/default.aspx

among other African countries.⁶⁹ In 2016, 19 trainees from Cameroon, 20 from the Ivory Coast, 99 from Ghana, 44 from Ethiopia, 190 from Kenya, 22 from Rwanda, and five from South Sudan participated in advanced training in Israel.⁷⁰ The civilian training courses held in Israel in 2017 included, among others, 65 trainees from Cameroon, 28 from the Ivory Coast, 49 from Ethiopia, 31 from Ghana, 127 from Kenya, 12 from Rwanda, and five from South Sudan.⁷¹ In this context, there is a notable increase in the number of trainees from Cameroon in courses held in Israel: 28 participants took part in the courses in 2015, 19 in 2016, 65 in 2017, 68 in 2018, and the number of trainees from Cameroon reached 80 in 2019.⁷² As mentioned, during these years, the positive trend was evident in Cameroon's voting patterns; Cameroon consistently abstained or was absent from votes condemning Israel, especially those directly related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The voting pattern of the Ivory Coast also improved significantly in parallel with the increasing number of students in MASHAV courses conducted in Israel on its behalf. For example, there were 14 participants in 2015, 20 in 2016, 28 in 2017, 19 in 2018, and 29 in 2019.⁷³

Israel has also made use of “disaster diplomacy” in Africa. Disaster diplomacy features prominently in the toolbox of Israel foreign policy designers; the World Health Organization (WHO) even awarded Israel a certificate of appreciation in 2016, ranking its rescue teams and field hospitals first in cases of natural disaster around the world. Examples in recent years include Israeli emergency aid to Cameroon in July 2016 as part of the avian flu epidemic and an Israeli delegation in April 2018 to South Sudan that provided humanitarian aid to village residents in a drought-stricken area, both sponsored by MASHAV.

The humanitarian aid provided by Israel to the countries in this study has taken numerous forms. For example, in 2018, ophthalmologists from Israel performed more than 1,000 different eye treatments in Kenya. In Rwanda, on the initiative of MASHAV, Israeli doctors provided care for children with heart problems, many of whom were then

69 Ibid., 2015.

70 Ibid., 2016.

71 Ibid., 2017.

72 Ibid., 2015–2019.

73 Ibid.

medically monitored in Israeli hospitals. In South Sudan, MASHAV granted food and equipment to residents of three different rural communities.⁷⁴ Israel has also contributed humanitarian aid in refugee cases, a widespread phenomenon in Africa due to the large number of intra-state conflicts across the continent. For example, in 2017, Israel donated a large amount of medical equipment as part of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s effort to improve the living conditions of refugees from the Central African Republic who had fled to Cameroon.⁷⁵ Humanitarian aid helps to present Israel "beyond the conflict"⁷⁶ and may help lead to political support for Israel in international institutions. South Sudan and Cameroon's consistent support for Israel in the UNGA voting process illustrates this well.

Rwanda's consistent political support for Israel in the UNGA voting process may also be seen, among other things, as a result of Israel's effort to strengthen relations between the two, also reflected in the provision of civilian assistance. Israel's civil activity in Rwanda consists of aid in several aspects of agriculture development – entrepreneurship, technology, and trade.⁷⁷ In November 2020, then-Israeli Communications Minister Yoaz Hendel met with Rwandan President Paul Kagame to sign an agreement that promoted entrepreneurship in the fields of communications and technology. That same month, Rwanda was absent for a UNGA Fourth Committee vote that referred to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem only by its Muslim name of al-Haram al-Sharif.⁷⁸ Rwanda consistently supports Israel in the voting process at UN institutions; beyond the UNGA voting pattern examined in this study, its support for Israel is also reflected in the UNSC. Thus, for example, during its tenure as a temporary member of the UNSC in 2013–2014, Jordan initiated a draft resolution in December 2014 which called in part for the establishment of

74 Ibid., 2018.

75 Ibid., 2017.

76 Salman, "The UN and Israel."

77 "Israel in Africa: Rwanda," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, July 4, 2016, https://mfa.gov.il/MFAHEB/AboutUs/DiplomaticUpdates/Pages/Israel-in-Africa-Rwanda_040716.aspx [Hebrew].

78 Tova Lazaroff, "Rwanda Mulls Embassy Move to Jerusalem," *The Jerusalem Post*, November 29, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/rwanda-mulls-embassy-move-to-jerusalem-650548>

a Palestinian state. The draft resolution was not accepted because it did not win nine votes in favor, and Rwanda was among the abstentions.⁷⁹

Deepening Security Ties

In general, Israel's defense transactions in Africa are marginal in comparison to other regions of the world.⁸⁰ However, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in security exports to Africa, which doubled from 2% in 2018 to 4% in 2019 (one billion shekels) and 2020 (1.08 billion shekels).⁸¹ This may be explained, among other things, by African countries' fear of the intrusion of global jihadists into their territory, leading them to view security cooperation with Israel as a necessity. In addition, African countries are also interested in Israeli security assistance as a means of ensuring regime survival.⁸² Israel has extensive security ties with some of the countries examined in this article. In Cameroon, for example, Israel's contributions to security include training and even leadership of Cameroon's Special Forces (the Rapid Intervention Battalion), training and equipment for the Presidential Guard Unit, and the establishment and maintenance of security and intelligence equipment in the Presidential Dormitory since the mid-1980s.⁸³ In addition, since the early 1990s, Israel has been one of the most prominent arms suppliers to Ethiopia and Kenya, whose struggles with the challenges of terrorism in East Africa have contributed to the strengthening of their relations with Israel.⁸⁴ In the context of Ethiopia, the past two years have also revealed close security ties between Israel and Ethiopia following the country's civil war between the government and the Tigray rebels. Israel is

79 UN Security Council (UNSC), "Jordan: Draft Resolution, S/2014/916," December 30, 2014.

80 Salman, "The Security Element in Israel-Africa Relations."

81 "Defense Export Contracts in 2020: 8.3 Billion Dollars," *Israel Ministry of Defense*, June 1, 2021, <https://www.mod.gov.il/Defence-and-Security/articles/Pages/1.6.21.aspx> [Hebrew].

82 Gidron, *Israel in Africa*.

83 "Cameroon: The Dangers of a Fracturing Regime, Africa Report, No. 161," *International Crisis Group*, June 24, 2010, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/cameroon-dangers-fracturing-regime>

84 Michael B. Bishku, "Israel's Relations with the East African States of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania: From Independence to the Present," *Israel Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2017), pp. 76–100; Herman Butime, "Shifts in Israel-Africa Relations," *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2014), pp. 81–91.

one of Ethiopia's main arms suppliers; its exports include assault rifles, armored vehicles, drones, espionage systems, and optical tools. Although no evidence has been found, it is not inconceivable that Israeli military advisors and trainers train and guide the Ethiopian army in the operation of these systems. In addition, Israeli exporters and arms dealers are involved in the supply of bullets for Russian rifles, machine guns, and sniper rifles to the Ethiopian army, and Israelis even brokered arms deals for the Ethiopian army that included anti-tank missiles as well as thousands of artillery weapons, tanks, and mortar shells.⁸⁵

Israel's security expertise is also relevant to Nigeria, which faces threats from radical and growing Islamist groups in West Africa. One of Israel's indirect contributions to Nigeria's fight against terrorism is reflected in the Nigerian army's cooperation with the Cameroonian army, trained by Israeli military advisors and wielding basic equipment made in Israel.⁸⁶

The Islamist threat is also helping to increase Israel's security ties with Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Rwanda, with which it shares knowledge and intelligence capabilities. Moreover, while official diplomatic relations between Israel and South Sudan were only established in 2011, ties have existed since the late 1960s, expressed in Israel's assistance to the southern rebels as part of their struggle for independence from North Sudan. It is not inconceivable that consistent Israeli security assistance partially underpins South Sudan's support for Israel in the UN arena, alongside a sense of partnership due to alienation from the Arabs and, as a Christian country, a perception of Israel as the cradle of Christianity.⁸⁷ Israel-Rwanda relations also reached a peak with the opening of an Israeli embassy in Kigali in April 2019. In addition to Rwanda's tendency to identify with Israel on the basis of the comparison between the Holocaust and the Tutsi genocide, relations between the two have also improved in recent years due to Israel's defense exports to Rwanda, which officially began in the early 1990s.

85 Shai Levi, "Foreign Publications: Israeli Weapons Alongside Iranian Weapons in the Ethiopian War," *mako*, December 10, 2021, <https://www.mako.co.il/pzm-military/Article-0135dcd6f9d71027.htm> [Hebrew].

86 Salman, "The Security Element in Israel-Africa Relations."

87 Gidron, "'One People, One Struggle'"; Levey, "Israel's Strategy in Africa, 1961–67"; Øystein H. Rolandsen, "The Making of the Anya-Nya Insurgency in the Southern Sudan, 1961–64," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2011), pp. 211–232.

Security ties are expressed in the export of aircraft, vessels, and small arms, as well as training of military forces and an overhaul and upgrade of weapon systems. For example, Israel has supplied aircraft and vessels to Cameroon and Rwanda (alongside other countries not included in this study: Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Nigeria, the Seychelles, South Africa, and Uganda). Israel is one of the six main suppliers of small arms to Africa, along with Russia, China, the United States, Germany, and Belgium. Israeli small arms can be seen in photographs of African countries' armies and National Guard units (in Cameroon, the National Guard is called the "Israeli unit"), in which the soldiers are clearly equipped with weapons and rifles made in Israel. The photographs also show the target countries for Israeli defense exports in Africa (including Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Rwanda, alongside the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, and Djibouti).⁸⁸ In this context, it should be noted that photographs are used here as a source of information because official information on Israeli small arms exports to African countries is almost nonexistent. This silence results from Israel's attempt to reduce domestic and international criticism of its small arms exports given human rights violations, violence, and instability in the African continent.⁸⁹

Israeli security assistance is also dedicated to training the armies and Presidential Guard of certain countries.⁹⁰ Cameroon is one of these countries, as noted above; as the empirical analysis has shown, Cameroon is one of the countries that consistently votes in support of Israel (mostly through abstention and absence). Furthermore, in 2019, the *Times of Israel* reported that, as part of Israel's attempt to boost its diplomatic ties in Africa, Israeli officers were training African soldiers in Krav Maga, urban combat, and hostage rescue. The African forces trained were in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, and Ghana, as well as Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, Angola,

88 Salman, "The Security Element in Israel-Africa Relations."

89 This contrasts with the existing information on the export of aircraft, vessels, and tanks, revealed mainly through reports submitted annually by Israel to the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA; <https://www.unroca.org/>).

90 Salman, "The Security Element in Israel-Africa Relations."

Nigeria, and Togo.⁹¹ Explicit evidence of the link between Israeli security assistance and political support in the UN may be found in a *Jerusalem Post* interview in which President Kagame stated that Israel was assisting Rwanda in its fight against the threat posed by al-Shabab and Boko Haram. In the interview, Kagame stressed that Israel benefited from its relations with Rwanda, inter alia, in the UN arena.⁹²

Conclusions

Until now, the correlation between foreign aid and voting patterns in the UN arena has mainly been explored in order to trace the motives of donor countries and the attempts of superpowers, particularly the United States, to use aid to influence voting patterns and gain political support in UN institutions. This study seeks to add to the literature, focusing on the foreign aid that Israel provides to seven African countries in order to influence their voting patterns in light of the unique challenges it faces in the UN arena. The article contributes two primary findings. First, an investigation of seven African countries' voting patterns in 171 UNGA decisions on Israeli affairs indicated mixed results – on the one hand, Israel enjoyed increased support from Rwanda, South Sudan, and Cameroon (mainly by abstention and absence), while on the other hand, Ethiopia, Kenya, and to some extent the Ivory Coast and Ghana tended to align with votes to condemn Israel. Second, and in a comprehensive examination, the study found a positive correlation between Israeli aid to some of the countries in question and their UN voting patterns. As shown above, this correlation holds true even in the case of Ethiopia and Kenya, which, despite their tendency to support condemnations of Israel, still tend to back Israel in votes on key issues.

91 “Israel’s Diplomatic Thrust into Africa Spearheaded by Military Training,” *The Times of Israel*, March 4, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israels-diplomatic-thrust-into-africa-spearheaded-by-military-training/>

92 Herb Keinon, “Kagame to ‘POST’: Israel Helping Rwanda Defeat Jihadist Threats,” *The Jerusalem Post*, July 11, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Kagame-to-Post-Israel-helping-Rwanda-defeat-jihadist-threats-499325>

The political support that Israel receives from Rwanda, South Sudan, and Cameroon through their voting patterns in the UNGA is significant. However, the voting patterns of Ethiopia and Kenya, as well as, to a lesser extent, the Ivory Coast and Ghana, show that they still tend to support votes to condemn Israel despite extensive Israeli assistance. This figure suggests that voting patterns are influenced by several factors beyond the quantity of aid received, including historical bilateral relations, regional context, and security challenges. It is not inconceivable, for example, that the security challenges facing Kenya, Ethiopia, and Cameroon have significant effects on their security ties with Israel; at least in the case of Cameroon, this is also reflected in positive voting patterns in Israel-related affairs at the UN. Thus, the article's findings suggest that in the case of the African countries analyzed in this study, national interests were translated into a foreign policy of strengthened relations with Israel, but not necessarily political support at the UN. The dual nature of these findings – Israeli cooperation with African countries contributes to stronger relations, but only partly influences voting patterns in the UN – raises questions about the value of bilateral relations of this kind and the use of foreign aid as a tool to promote foreign policy.

In light of the above, and given the difficulty in demonstrating a causal link between a specific factor and the UN voting pattern, this study presents a positive correlation between Israeli aid and improved voting patterns in some of the seven African countries. In this context, it should be noted that the purpose of this article was to point out the actual voting patterns. In other words, Israel partially succeeded in “buying votes” at the UN through foreign aid to some of the countries under examination. The study's findings indicate a positive correlation between civilian aid and security ties on the one hand and supportive voting patterns on the other.

In conclusion, closer relations between Israel and African countries serve Israel's economic, strategic, security, and political interests, and contribute to these countries' political support for Israel's actions. On the basis of these results, and from a more general perspective, it seems that Israel would be wise to continue to provide foreign aid; the political support of at least some of the countries under study, reflected in their UNGA voting patterns, indicates that foreign aid is not barren but fruitful.

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Appendix 1: Voting patterns of African countries regarding Israel in the years 2012–2020⁹³

Ivory Coast				Gana				Years
absent	abstention	in favor	against Israel	absent	abstention	in favor	against Israel	
0	1	0	20	10	0	0	11	2012
0	2	0	18	9	0	0	11	2013
6	10	0	3	6	3	0	10	2014
6	11	0	2	6	4	0	9	2015
6	10	0	3	6	1	0	12	2016
0	0	0	20	13	2	0	5	2017
0	16	0	4	2	4	0	14	2018
0	9	0	8	0	5	0	12	2019
0	6	0	11	14	1	0	2	2020

93 source: UN Watch, 2012–2020

Cameroon				Kenya				
absent	abstention	in favor	against Israel	absent	abstention	in favor	against Israel	Years
0	20	0	1	0	0	0	21	2012
0	19	0	1	6	0	0	14	2013
0	19	0	0	15	0	0	4	2014
0	19	0	0	0	0	0	19	2015
0	19	0	0	0	0	0	19	2016
0	20	0	0	1	1	0	18	2017
0	20	0	0	0	0	0	20	2018
0	17	0	0	0	1	0	16	2019
0	16	0	1	5	0	0	12	2020

Ethiopia				South Sudan				
absent	abstention	in favor	against Israel	absent	abstention	in favor	against Israel	Years
0	2	0	19	16	0	1	4	2012
0	2	0	18	5	15	0	0	2013
0	2	0	17	8	10	0	1	2014
0	2	0	17	10	8	0	1	2015
0	2	0	17	6	11	2	0	2016
0	2	0	18	4	16	0	0	2017
0	2	0	18	12	7	0	1	2018
0	2	0	15	4	11	0	2	2019
0	2	0	15	8	5	0	4	2020

Rwanda				
absent	abstention	in favor	against Israel	Years
6	5	0	10	2012
14	0	0	6	2013
7	5	0	7	2014
16	1	0	2	2015
19	0	0	0	2016
8	7	0	5	2017
3	14	0	3	2018
1	15		1	2019
2	11	0	4	2020