Chapter VI

ISRAEL AS A FACTOR IN EGYPT'S AFRICA POLICY
Israel with its much publicised "constructive co-operation" and "technical aid diplomacy" has been trying to establish close diplomatic and economic contacts with many African countries. Its entry into Africa had posed a serious challenge to Egypt, which, along with other Arab countries, had successfully imposed a blockade against it in Arab areas and prevented its gaining access to many Asian countries. Egypt pursued this policy of containment of Israel in Africa and tried to persuade African countries not to have any relations with that country. It wanted them to condemn Israel as an instrument of imperialism and neocolonialism not only in West Asia but also in Africa. But African countries, which had welcomed Egypt into their fold, refused to be involved too much in its conflict with Israel. Israel's successful entry into Africa, Egypt's counter-moves, and African responses to these form the subject of this chapter.

EGYPT'S PERCEPTION OF THE ISRAELI THREAT AND MOVES TO CHECK IT

Palestine and Syria, which lie beyond one of the most vulnerable of Egypt's four borders, have been a prime concern of it. To maintain a bridgehead in southern Palestine and to extend its authority over Syria, if possible, had been the main preoccupation of Egyptian rulers for centuries. As early as 991 Wazir Ibn Killis while on his death-bed advised the Fatimid Caliph al-Aziz thus: "Keep the peace with Byzantines as
long as they keep it with you; be content with mention in the
coinage and public prayer by the Hamdanid amirs of North Syria;
(but) do not spare the South Palestine Bedouin Chief Mufarrij
ibn al-Jarrah, if you get the chance." Translated into more
general and modern terms, this would mean, as Bernard Lewis
observes, "Keep on good terms with Europe, as far as you can,
be satisfied with a pliant but independent Syria, don't let go
the Gaza strip."

This lasting concern about Palestine was one of the
3 factors responsible for Egypt's involvement in it. Even though
it was concerned with the Palestine problem since the late 1930s,
it kept itself relatively free until the proclamation of the
Jewish State of Israel on 14 May 1948 on its eastern border. The
creation of Israel was against the interests of both the Arab
population in Palestine and Egypt. This partly explains the
Egyptian Government's decision to commit its army to the
Palestine war of 1948. Though Israel emerged victorious and
the Arab forces suffered heavy losses, Egypt captured and
retained the strategic Gaza strip. After the war, despite the
armistice of 1949, Egypt along with the other Arab governments
refused to recognize, and reconcile itself to, the existence of
the Jewish state. Taking advantage of its strategic position in

1. As quoted in Bernard Lewis, The Middle East and the West

2. Ibid.

3. For Egypt's involvement in the Palestine question see
J.W.D. Gray, "Arab Nationalism: Abain Against the Wafd",
Middle East Forum (Beirut), vol. 38, no. 2, February 1962,
pp. 17, 20 and 48.
the Suez Canal and in the Gulf of Aqaba, Egypt prevented Israel-bound vessels from crossing either waterway. This immobilized the new Israeli port of Elath situated at the head of the Gulf. Egypt also played a leading role in the League of Arab States in co-ordinating Arab policy towards Israel which aimed at maintaining in the Arab area a tight boycott and blockade of Israel.

Egypt's growing participation in the Arab policy of containment of Israel was one of the factors which made the latter attack the Gaza garrison headquarters of the Egyptian army on 28 February 1956. In the attack an Israeli force estimated at half a battalion destroyed the garrison headquarters killing thirty-eight and wounding thirty-one. The Gaza raid once again convinced Nasser that the existence of Israel was not only a grave injustice to the Arab population of Palestine but a threat to the security of his own country.

An immediate result of Egypt's perception of this threat was the arms agreement it concluded with Czechoslovakia. Egypt, along with its Arab League partners, had already enforced a blockade of Israel. Its next objective was to bring all pressure to bear on other Afro-Asian states not to have diplomatic or trade relations with Israel which cut off from its own hinterland by the Arab boycott and blockade, was trying to establish


contacts with its neighbours in Asia and had succeeded in
setting up some missions. The policy of containment of Israel
scored a major victory at Bandung in April 1955 when Egypt and
other Arab countries thwarted Israel's entry into the Afro­
Asian Conference by threatening not to participate in it if
Israel was admitted.

Having succeeded in keeping Israel out of the Conference,
Nasser's Egypt together with other Arab delegations proceeded
to enlist the support of Afro-Asian countries for the Arab cause
in Palestine. The Palestine question was raised in the Political
Committee, composed of all the heads of the twenty-nine delega­
tions to the conference, which agreed to consider it as part of
its deliberations on Human Rights. Two resolutions on Palestine
were tabled: one by Afghanistan and the other, a stronger one,
by Pakistan, both supporting the Arabs. Nasser preferred the
milder Afghan resolution arguing that there was hardly any
difference between the two. The sub-committee appointed to
examine this question recommended a resolution which was adopted

6. Israel's activities in Asia are well-covered in Michael
Brecher, "Israel and Afro-Asia", International Journal

7. League of Arab States, The First Asian-African Conference
held at Bandung, Indonesia, April 18-24, 1955 (Report
submitted by Mohamed Abdel Khalek Hassouna, Secretary-
General of the League of Arab States, to the League Council,
Cairo, 1955), p. 22.

P. 199.

9. The Sub-committee consisted of Afghanistan, Burma, China,
Pakistan, the Philippines and Syria.
by the Political Committee, and incorporated in the joint
communique issued on the last day of the Afro-Asian Conference.

It said:

In view of the existing tension in the Middle
East caused by the situation in Palestine, and
of the danger of that tension to world peace,
the Asian-African Conference declared its
support of the rights to the Arab people of
Palestine and called for the implementation
of the United Nations' resolutions on Palestine
and the achievement of a peaceful settlement of
the Palestine question. 10

Although, Israel was not mentioned by name in the
resolution the Arab delegations to the Conference were
apparently satisfied with their achievement. They deeply
appreciated the support the Afro-Asian Conference had given
to their cause, and felt they had sufficiently exposed
Israel's "aggressive and imperialistic intentions" before
the world. Encouraged by this victory, Egypt carried forward
its struggle against Israel in the Afro-Asian world.

ISRAEL'S THRUST IN AFRICA

The economic boycott and political hostility of Arabs had
isolated Israel from the rest of the region. It had made some
progress in Asia, but on the whole the Asian response was cool.
This was made clear by the Bandung Declaration which was "soul-

10. Republic of Indonesia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Asia-Africa Speaks from Bandung (Djakarta, July 1955),
p. 166.

11. League of Arab States, n. 7, p. 144.
shattering" for Israeli diplomacy. It came as a surprise to Israel that so many Asian-African states had been carried away by the Arab "propaganda" and had given support to the Arab cause. It showed Israel how isolated it was from the rest of the Afro-Asian community and how necessary it was for it to draw closer to the Third World.

Israel's relations with the Arabs, particularly with Egypt, continued to deteriorate. It was more hostile towards Egypt than towards any other Arab country because it was Egypt which had persisted in its refusal to open the Suez Canal to Israeli navigation and in denying it access to the Gulf of Aqaba from the Red Sea. On the pretext of eliminating heavy concentrations of Fedayeen in Sinai, Israel invaded Egypt towards the end of October 1956. It occupied the Gaza strip and the Sinai Peninsula along with the Sharm el-Sheikh overlooking the Strait of Tiran. The Sinai campaign opened the Strait of Tiran for Israeli navigation between Port Elat and east Africa, creating a new opening for Israel. Thus if the Bandung resolution on Palestine

12. A high-ranking official in the Israeli Foreign Ministry is reported to have said:

"Bandung was our greatest diplomatic setback. It was the greatest trauma we ever suffered. That two and half billion people could be united in such a way against 1.8 million people in Israel was in itself soul-shattering to all of us in the Foreign Ministry."


14. Incidentally, it was also the Sinai campaign that greatly estranged Egypt's relations with the colonial Powers. See Chapter III.
made Israel aware of its shaky position in the Afro-Asian world and of the need to win friends in Africa, the Sinai campaign of 1956 established the necessary geo-political conditions for its political and economic penetration of Africa.

Israel's Objectives in Africa

The post-Sinai campaign period coincided with the rise of several independent states on the continent of Africa. Africa's growing importance in the international community and economy was acknowledged by all. Israel also was not unaware of these developments. Policy-planners in Tel Aviv believed that closer ties with black Africa would break the blockade and boycott of Israel by the Arab countries and bring it closer to the Third World. Thus Israel's first and foremost motive in establishing links with Africa was to break the barrier of Arab hostility surrounding it and to encircle its Arab neighbours with countries friendly to it. If that was not possible, the least Israel wanted was to prevent newly independent states from adopting the doctrine preached by the Arabs. This was viewed as an essential part of its "battle for survival". When questioned about Israel's motives behind co-operation with


16. An Israeli official later described Israel's contact with Africa as a "window in the Arab wall that surrounded the Jewish State". See New York Times, 6 June 1966.

17. Netanel Lorch, "Israel and Africa", World Today (London), vol. 19, no. 8, August 1963, p. 359. Netanel Lorch was ex-Director of the African Division of Israel's Foreign Ministry and its Ambassador to Peru.
African countries, Mrs Golda Meir, one of the principal architects of Israel's entry into Africa, said: "Israel wants something clear and definite for herself. It is bound to demand something in return for the co-operation and goodwill it brings to the African peoples and governments. This great thing is friendship." An Israeli Foreign Ministry official, Dev Schmorak, echoed the same feeling when he explained Israel's position in these terms:

It is not a one-way exchange and was never meant to be.... We can give technical education and economic assistance. We can help them build economic institutions which will develop their tremendous potential resources. We can also provide them with some of the know-how involved in establishing a free democratic administration. This is perhaps what they need most. What we need most are understanding friends.

These "understanding friends" would be highly useful to Israel in the United Nations and other international and regional organizations on questions related to the Arab-Israeli dispute.

Besides the need to win friends, Israel realized the strategic role Africa, particularly east African countries south of Egypt, could play in the Arab-Israeli dispute. Its ability to secure free navigation to the Red Sea depended largely on its securing the friendship of nations along the coast of the Red Sea down to the Indian Ocean. In this respect Ethiopia, which was not so friendly to Egypt, was of vital importance to Israel.

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19. Ibid.
Although the economic boycott by the Arab League could not isolate Israel completely, it had added to the latter's economic hardship. Israel wanted to alleviate the effects of the boycott or at least to prevent it from spreading to the outer ring of African and Asian states. For this purpose economic links with non-Arab Afro-Asian countries were essential. From a long-term point of view, African and other developing countries were not only potential markets for Israel's manufactured goods but were also a rich source of raw materials for its industries.

Another factor that influenced Israel in its drive into Africa was the desire to improve its stature in the eyes of its supporters in the west. As Remez, head of the Department of Foreign Ministry of Israel, observed: "Our position in Europe and the United States is determined by the state of our relations with the countries of Africa and Asia." To win more friends in Afro-Asia and enhance its credibility in the Western capitals, Israel initiated a technical aid programme for Africa which earned it a considerable prestige and a more sympathetic audience in international forums.

20. The Arab blockade and boycott affected Israel in many ways and contributed to its economic difficulties. For instance,

(1) The Suez Canal blockade against Israeli ships compelled it to pay the prohibitive cost of the detour round the Cape.
(2) The Arab boycott led a large number of international firms to reduce or even suspend their commercial relations with Israel for fear of reprisals against them in the Arab world.


Another objective of Israel was to strengthen the African states to enable them to withstand the pressure of Egypt. Israel also hoped to reach the Arab mind through friendship with Afro-Asia. It believed that if the Arabs realized that they could not persuade others to their way of thinking about Israel, they might change their own views. And if that happened, it would pave the way for Arab-Israeli reconciliation.

Israeli and pro-Israeli writers have contended that Israel was also guided in Africa by humanitarian considerations. Referring to the writings of Theodor Herzl, they point out that the Jews have a strong sense of identification with oppressed people in general, and Negroes in particular. This concern for the downtrodden was derived from their own persecution, on ethnic and religious grounds, by the Christian world. The Negro tragedy, they said, could be compared only to the tragedy of the Jewish


24. Prime Minister Ben Gurion told Israeli Parliament on 24 October 1960: "Only through ... the acquisition of the friendship and sympathy of nations near and far ... shall we in time breach the wall of hatred and boycott that surrounds us." Israeli Digest (Jerusalem), vol. 3, no. 22, 26 October 1960, pp. 1, 4, cited in Brecher, n. 6, p. 131.

people. Naturally, Israel, itself semi-developed, wanted to help the under-developed African countries in their economic reconstruction. It is difficult to measure the credibility of such statements. But, certainly, humanitarian considerations were not and could not be Israel's main objective in Africa. It is perhaps safer to conclude that its real objectives were strategic, political and economic. Fortunately for Israel, these did not clash with its humanitarian outlook.

Means and Methods

The means adopted by Israel to achieve its objectives were in keeping with the aspirations of African countries for modernization and economic development. A few months before Ghana achieved independence in March 1957, Israel sent an unofficial emissary, Hanon Yavor, a member of Kibbutz, who met Kwame Nkrumah and his colleagues and offered them help in their country's development.

26. In his novel Altneuland (published in 1902) Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, made the novel's hero say:

"There is one more problem of racial suffering which has remained without solution. Only a Jew can fully understand that problem in all its horror; I refer to the Negro problem. . . . I am not ashamed to say even at the risk of being ridiculed that now that I have witnessed the renaissance of the Jews, I should like to pave the way for the renaissance of the Negroes."

Quoted in ibid.

27. "One cannot weigh with quantitative precision the effect of this prism image in Israel's Africa policy." Brecher, n. 23, p. 244.

Israel was represented by its Minister for Commerce and Industry -- a high-ranking member of the cabinet. He took the opportunity to discuss the prospects for economic co-operation between the two countries and renewed Israel's promise to help Ghana. As a result Nkrumah sent several of his top cabinet ministers to see how Israel had tackled its problems. The Ghana-Israel co-operation -- described by one Israeli official as the 'honeymoon period' -- became so close that in July 1967 three Ghanian delegations were touring Israel at the same time. These "first representatives of the world's newest nation to visit ... Israel" reported to their people after their return from Israel:

It was after the declaration of independence of the State of Israel in mid-1948 that Israel, an agricultural country like Ghana, started developing from a barren land into a land now flowing with milk and honey. Ghana can do that too. It is unbelievable that ten years hard work has brought to Israel progress in all fields of activities now existing in that country.

Another member of the Ghanian delegation wrote:

The name Israel some few years ago was less known in this country than it deserved to be. Today every plane arriving at the Accra International Airport brings an expert from Israel to be able to advise us on our development....

Ghana's favourable response encouraged Israel to develop contacts with other African countries, which also turned to it


31. Ibid. Johnk Tettegah, General Secretary, in his foreword to Syme, n. 30.
for similar aid as soon as they gained independence. Israel became popular in African countries by helping them in the process of their economic and social reconstruction. It did this mainly through the Technical Assistance Programme which has been described as the basis of its relationship with the developing nations of the world. Israel's aid to Africa took the form of: (1) scholarships for study and practical work in Israel, (ii) sending specialists and technicians, (iii) joint companies, (iv) loans, and (v) military aid.

(1) **Scholarships for Study and Practical Work in Israel**

Israeli Government and educational institutions granted scholarships to African students and civil servants for training at Israeli universities and institutions. A special Afro-Asian Institute was established in Tel Aviv in October 1960 to train Afro-Asian students to assume positions of leadership in the labour movements of their countries and in other development activities. The Mount Carmel International Training Centre for Community Services (Haifa) was established in 1962. The centre specializes in training women from Africa and Asia (about 150-200 a year) in community services as well as in various skills and professions such as Nursing, Nutrition, Consumer Education and Home Economics. There are many other institutions for training students from developing countries.  

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32. See the speech by Shimeon Amir, Assistant Director General, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, to the Vienna Institute for Development. Shimeon Amir, *Israel Assistance to Developing Nations* (Vienna, n.d.).

33. For a detailed list of such institutions, see Hershlag, n. 25, pp. 89-92.
Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol in his report to the Knesset (Parliament) on his African tour (1966) said that 6,300 Africans had already undergone training and that over 300 were at that time receiving training in Israel. Between 1968 and 1969, some 13,025 students from developing countries were trained. Of these 6,272 were from Africa. This training enabled Africans to acquire skills in such diverse fields as agricultural co-operation, labour studies, community development, youth leadership, academic studies and vocations.

Israel also organized many international seminars and conferences to discuss subjects of particular interest to the developing countries. A conference on the application of scientific knowledge to the development of new states held in Tel Aviv in August 1960 at the Weizmann Institute brought together "scientists from the West and politicians from the East". Among the luminaries who attended the conference were the President of Congo Republic, the Prime Minister of Nepal and the Vice-Premier of Chad.

(ii) Sending of Specialists and Technicians

Israeli specialists and technicians sent abroad included experts on agriculture, city planning, education, management, tourism, irrigation, water supply, police services, etc. Of

34. Jerusalem Post, 29 July 1966.
35. Horshlag, n. 26, p. 99. Also see Laufer, n. 29, p. 76.
these Africa got the lion's share. Thus between 1958 and 1966 of the 3,476 Israeli experts sent abroad 2,485 went to Africa. These experts took particular care to see that the fruits of their labour were immediately visible. This, in the words of an Assistant Director of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, was mainly due to the fact that "in selecting our programs of technical assistance from the many demands, we make sure that Israel's own experiences can be usefully applied to the conditions and needs of the respective countries. Our rule is: adapt -- not adopt". Israeli experts while mixing with the local population kept out of internal politics. Eshkol told Parliament that "in our activities we are careful to maintain the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the countries concerned."

The experts were sent there "to serve, to train (and) to come back". And in this way they earned tremendous goodwill for their country.

(iii) Joint Companies

A number of economic enterprises jointly owned by Israelis and Africans at governmental or private level were set up with a view to train Africans. African Governments or companies always held the majority holding in such enterprises. Whenever it was agreed that the time had come to nationalise a company, the Israeli partner sold his shares to the national

37. Laufer, n. 29, p. 77.
38. Amir, n. 32, p. 4.
company. Thereafter, the two partners would sign a management contract which at a later stage, would be transformed into an advisory contract. An interesting example of this was Ghana's Black Star Shipping Line -- a joint company incorporated in Ghana with an authorised capital of $1,400,000. The Government owned 60 per cent of the capital and Zim, an Israeli navigation company, the remaining 40 per cent.

(iv) Loans

Israel's efforts to penetrate Africa were somewhat hampered by its inability to offer long-term loans, which formed a very small part of its aid to Africa. In 1966, the Israeli Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol, told the Israeli-African Friendship Association in Israel that "Israel can contribute from its know-how and experience to the development of Africa; (but) it cannot respond to requests for loans and money grants." However, Israel did grant loans and credits to a few African countries. Among them were: Ghana $10.5 million; Nigeria $8.4 million; Liberia $3.0 million; Ivory Coast $1.6 million; Tanzania $1.4 million; Sierra Leone $1.1 million; and Malagasy Republic $200,000. Loans were usually granted for a term of five years and were designed to finance the cost of Israeli equipment, construction materials and services.

40. Amir, n. 32, p. 11.

41. Jerusalem Post, 1 August 1966.

42. Laufer, n. 29, p. 139. See also "Sacrifices for Friends", The Economist, vol. 218, no. 6365, 8 January 1966, p. 124.
(v) Military Aid

Israel in its attempts to gain political influence in Africa extended military aid to many African countries in the form of (i) training their army, navy and air force officers, and in some cases police officers also, and (ii) establishing Nahal type military organizations and Gondna type paramilitary youth organization. This was done in various ways. For example, Sierra Leone's first military academy was set up with the help of Israel. Uganda's Air Force received planes from Israel. Many African military and police officers including Idi Amin of Uganda and Joseph Mobutu of Congo received training in Israel. As many as 100 Israeli personnel were sent to Ethiopia to train the Ethiopian army. Among the other African countries which benefited from Israel were Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Dahomey, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Tanzania and Togo. Considering the fact that the army plays an important role in the politics of Africa, military aid helped Israel to gain political influence in the continent. Israeli military played a vital role in this sphere. Besides training the armed forces of African states and providing other forms of technical assistance, it also staffed some of Israel's

43. Nahal comprises combat units and detachments set up in a country's border areas. Their personnel combine military service with farming.

Gondna is a youth organization in Israel with army units. For more information about Israel's military help to Africa see Abel Jacob, "Israel's Military Help to Africa 1960-66", Journal of Modern African Studies (London), vol. 9, no. 2, 1971, pp. 165-87.
diplomatic missions in Africa.

All this, however, should not lead one to believe that Israel was the main supplier of technical assistance to Africa. It only shows that it played an important part in its penetration of Africa. The aid programme became an integral part of its foreign policy in Africa. It got much publicity, prominence and acknowledgement mainly because, "it was highly selective and limited to clearly defined projects". In the words of G. Raphael, Director-General of Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it emphasized "impact projects", namely, "... projects with a demonstration effect, that activate local groups and encourage them to multiply their own efforts".

Another characteristic of Israeli help to Africa was the realization that it was not enough to transmit technical and professional knowledge alone. It was more important to create an understanding for development, namely, to bring about a change in attitudes. The Israelis realized that underdevelopment could be largely attributed to with a low level of technical and cultural development rather than to lack of physical and financial resources. Hence they concentrated on assistance aimed at social and human development.


"Some of the most successful Israeli diplomats in Africa and several representatives of the private companies operating there have been former military officers. Thus, just as within Israel the influence of the army extends beyond the military sphere, so it does in the aid to Africa." Jacob, n. 43, p. 166.


46. Hershlag, n. 25, p. 80.

47. Amir, n. 32, pp. 3, 4, 7 and 12.
Achlevements

Israel's achievements in Africa must be measured in the light of its objectives, which, as stated earlier, were to gain diplomatic recognition and, if possible, political support, and to eliminate the effects of the Arab boycott by establishing economic relations with Africa. Israel made a beginning in 1955 by exchanging consular representatives with Ethiopia and Liberia. When the Sudan became independent on 1 January 1956, it sent a message of congratulations though, as expected, it did not get any response.

In anticipation of the independence of Ghana, Israel established a consulate in Accra in November 1956, and raised its status to that of an embassy in July 1967 immediately after Ghana attained freedom. From then onwards, no sooner did an African state become independent than Israel would seize the very first opportunity to recognize it and exchange with it diplomatic relations at the highest possible level. These diplomatic exchanges kept pace with the "wind of change" in Africa. By 1965 Israel had established diplomatic relations with all but two (Mauritania and Somalia) of sub-Saharan independent African states. Indeed, that year its diplomatic network was next only to that of France, United Kingdom and United States. This was its greatest political achievement.


49. Mauritania and Somalia refused to have diplomatic relations with Israel.

in Africa which enabled it to come out of the diplomatic isolation imposed on it by its Arab neighbours. In the words of Ellashivvel Ben-Horin, the Co-Director of the Asian and African Division at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this broke down the psychological barrier of hostility surrounding it in its immediate neighbourhood. All this gave Israel a "feeling of relief". To underline Africa's growing importance, the single Division dealing with Asia and Africa in the Israeli Foreign Ministry was divided into two separate units.

Starting from scratch Israel soon made a significant advance in its trade with Africa even though it contributed to a very small fraction of its total foreign trade. The same is true of the African states' trade with Israel as may be seen from the following figures for the year 1967:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exports (f.o.b. $ million)</th>
<th>Imports (c.i.f. $ million)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Israel's Total Trade</td>
<td>569.90</td>
<td>770.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade with Africa</td>
<td>20.44</td>
<td>22.04</td>
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For the same year the figures for Africa are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exports (f.o.b. $ million)</th>
<th>Imports (c.i.f. $ million)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa's Total Trade</td>
<td>5370.0</td>
<td>5460.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade with Israel</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

52. Brecher, n. 6, p. 134.
53. Hershlag, n. 25, p. 58.
54. Ibid., p. 59.
These figures show that Israel had a deficit in its balance of payments with Africa. The deficit continued till 1969. That year Israel had a surplus of £3.1 million for the first time. The surplus was maintained in subsequent years. In 1970 Israel exported £40 million worth of products to Africa and expected a further increase in its exports to tropical Africa. It may be noted that Israel's trade with Africa is not evenly spread over the continent. Almost three fourths of Israeli exports to tropical Africa went to east Africa. Geographical distance, transport and communications were some of the factors responsible for this unequal distribution.

Israel's trade with Africa was characteristic of the relationship that generally exists between developed and developing countries. Israel imported raw materials and primary goods and exported manufactured articles. African raw materials fed many factories in Israel. Israeli imports mainly comprised diamonds (from the Central African Republic) for its polishing industry and hard wood (from Gabon) for its plywood industry. Other imports consisted of cocoa beans, coffee beans, sesame seeds and hides. Its exports comprised industrial products, building materials, vehicles, spare parts, tyres, furniture, textiles, fertilizers and chemicals.

There were several reasons for Israel's achievements in Africa. The Africans were not as prejudiced against Israel as

55. *Daily Star* (Beirut), 1 May 1972.

56. Herslag, n. 25; p. 60.

57. Lorch, n. 17, p. 359.
many Asian nations because of their proximity and/or close contacts with the Arabs. Some Negro movements are even said to have derived inspiration from the Zionist movement. Some Africans evinced a sense of identification with the Jews as both had been victims of racial discrimination.

Secondly, many of the newly independent African states were anxious to reduce their dependence on their erstwhile colonial masters and to diversify their foreign, economic and trade relations in keeping with their development needs. The dynamics of Israeli development efforts and their visible achievements in difficult circumstances led the Africans to believe that Israel could offer them some useful lessons. They found in Israel a state with an advanced technology capable of extending practical assistance. Again, in Israel, the Africans could study the evolution of developmental techniques. As an African trainee put it, "there (in western countries) I have had an opportunity to study the history of development, in Israel I


59. At a dinner in honour of visiting Israeli Premier Eshkol, Premier Mulamba of Congo (K) said: "The African people like Israel because we are all victims of racial discrimination and we have had to fight for our liberty." The Israel Digest, vol. 9, no. 12, 17 June 1966, p. 2.
am studying development itself." Besides, Africans did not see any danger of domination as they did from their former masters. Israeli aid was largely without political strings. The only condition attached to it was that the recipient government should extend diplomatic recognition to Israel.

Thirdly, Israel's experiment in democratic socialism was seen by some Africans as a compromise between the extremes of communism and capitalism, and hence of interest to them. As Newsweek put it: "Frightened by the ruthless planning of Soviet society, bewildered by the periodical improvisation of many Western countries, a growing number of Afro-Asians are quietly exploring a middle way to planned democratic life -- the way of Israel." The vitality and flexibility of Israeli institutions in the field of economic and social development attracted many African countries. Some African countries also welcomed Israel's presence in the continent as a counter-weight to Egypt's influence. This was particularly true of Ghana and Ethiopia.

60. Lorch, n. 17, p. 360. Also note "In the United States I can study the history of development. In Israel I can see economic development in action." Brecher, n. 6, p. 128.

61. "Most (but not all) educated Africans tend to identify the European view of life with colonial appetites and summarily reject it. The economic imperialism of the Americans is widely viewed with some acid suspicion ... the Russian way, and to a lesser extent, the Chinese way, are both viewed with caution.

But not the Israelis. They do not have the power to entertain colonialist fancies. They are by no means in the pocket of the West, and are distinctly socialist in their approach.... African wants more of the Israeli method." Daily Nation (Nairobi), 21 February 1963.

62. Newsweek (New York), as quoted by Remba, n. 18, p.11.
This is not to say that Israel faced no obstacles. In addition to such factors as distance and paucity of resources it also had to reckon with Egypt's position and prestige in Africa. Indeed, it could not make any headway in countries with which Egypt had close traditional or cultural ties, such as Mauritania and Somalia. These predominantly Muslim African countries simply refused to have any ties with Israel. Countries with an ideological affinity with Egypt, e.g., Guinea and Mali, maintained diplomatic relations with Israel, but supported Egypt on the Arab-Israeli question. Then there were countries such as Ethiopia and Uganda where Israeli influence co-existed with that of Egypt.

Another difficulty faced by Israel in Africa was its intimate relationship with the Western colonial Powers and its soft attitude on the issues of colonialism and racialism. Israel explained its ties with the colonial Powers in terms of its vital security needs, and those with South Africa in terms of the existence of a sizable Jewish community in that country. Occasionally, Israel did try to adjust its policy in order to

63. For example, Egypt completely stopped its official support to the Eritrean freedom movement which operated from Ethiopia. In June 1962, Ethiopian and Egyptian churches reached an agreement by which Egypt conceded Ethiopian demands about the selection and status of the Ethiopian representative on the Coptic Church of Egypt. By these acts Egypt improved its relations with Ethiopia. So much so that when diplomatic relations between Egypt and Congo were suspended in October 1964, Egypt's interests in Congo were looked after by the Ethiopian embassy.

win African goodwill. Thus in 1962 it voted not only against South Africa's apartheid policy in the UN General Assembly but also for sanctions against South Africa. It also suspended its trade with Rhodesia following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Ian Smith's Government.

EGYPT'S COUNTER-THRUST

Israel's presence in Africa was a matter of serious concern to Egypt which feared that if a large number of African nations cultivated good relations with Israel it would reduce the impact of the Arab diplomatic boycott and economic blockade of the Jewish state. On the other hand, if the Africans could be persuaded not to have any ties with Israel -- just as many Asians had been persuaded to do -- then it would be isolated from the Afro-Asian community. This would strengthen Egypt's position vis-a-vis Israel.

Egypt viewed Israel as a tool of colonialism and imperialism and its presence in Africa as a threat to its security. Israel's collaboration with the colonial Powers in attacking Egypt in 1956 was one such pointer. Egypt also


apprehended that Israel might be able to influence the riparian states of the Nile to put pressure on it. Besides, Israel being technologically more advanced than Egypt, Africa would prefer to get aid from the former than from the latter. Though neither Israel nor Egypt had any big share in Africa's markets, the former had potentialities which the latter could not afford to ignore. It was in this context that Muhammad Hassanein Heikal urged Egypt to watch "Israeli activities in Africa, to study its aims and methods in order that scientific and practical steps be formulated to tackle this problem in the political, economic and cultural spheres." Egypt's immediate goal in Africa vis-a-vis Israel was to avert the possibility of Africa becoming "an Israeli lung". Its long-term goal was to curtail and reduce Israel's growing influence in Africa and, if possible, completely isolate the former from the latter.

In pursuance of these goals, Egypt launched a counter-offensive against Israel in Africa. Its various facets are discussed below under the following heads: Publicity Offensive; Economic and Technical Assistance; and Political Moves.

67. Comparatively advanced in technology and education, with not enough jobs at home, Egypt looked for openings in other African countries. Nigerian scholar F.A. Fabunmi says: "I met in Cairo this year a few university lecturers who expressed a definite desire to place their experience at the disposal of West Africa." See F.A. Fabunmi, "Egypt and Africa" in West Africa, no. 2124, 28 December 1957, p. 1231.


Publicity Offensive

Egypt used its powerful information media to mount a campaign against Israel. Israel figures prominently in Cairo Radio's broadcasts for Africa. In late 1960 a series of radio talks on "Israeli danger to Africa" was introduced. The Information Department of the Egyptian Government issued many booklets on the subject for distribution throughout Africa and a special officer was appointed to direct its anti-Israeli offensive in Africa.

The main theme of the publicity offensive was that Israel was a creation of colonialism and an outpost and agent of imperialism. This theme was sustained by underscoring Israel's peculiar relations with the Western Powers which made it appear as a cat's paw and bridge-head of imperialism. Egypt told the African countries that Israel's presence on the continent would impair Afro-Asian solidarity because it had destroyed an Asian people -- the people of Palestine. It equated Israeli policy with colonialism and imperialism.

To drive the point home to Africa, Israel was compared with Rhodesia and South Africa. Egypt told the African countries

70. Remba, n. 18, p. 17.

71. A joint communique issued at the end of President Sekou Touré's visit to Cairo on 17 May 1961 said: "The two Presidents condemn Israel as being a bridge-head of imperialism in its old and new forms in the Middle East, in Africa and in Asia." See Nasser's Speeches 1961, p. 110. See also Heikal, n. 68, p. 24; and The Scribe (Cairo), vol. 2, no. 2, May-June 1961, pp. 42-44.

that the Rhodesian and South African questions reminded the Arabs of their own suffering at the hands of the Zionists whose conduct was identical with that of the white settlers in Rhodesia and South Africa. Both sought to uproot or subjugate the indigenous majority.

The Egyptian National Assembly, while approving the government's decision to break relations with Britain on the Rhodesian issue, recalled Britain's attitude towards the racial minority in Palestine in 1948. In a resolution it declared that the imperialist conspiracy against the people of Rhodesia was aimed at usurping a part of the African continent and turning it into a base to fight against the independence of African countries and infiltrate into the entire continent. The resolution was communicated to the parliaments of African countries.

Israel's relations with South Africa were cited to show that there was a similarity between Israel against whom Egypt and the Arabs were fighting and South Africa against whom the Africans were fighting. To prove this point, as mentioned earlier, Israel was compared to South Africa where the settlers had ousted the legitimate owners of the country and rendered


them homeless. Like South Africa Israel practised racial and colour discrimination against the Arab minority in Palestine.

Israel's "black" record at the United Nations and its "shameful attitude" on the questions of Algeria, Cameroon, and Congo, and on racial discrimination in South Africa were underscored to link Zionism with imperialism and racialism. Israel's stand on the Congo issue was singled out for criticism. This had happened at a time when it was establishing relations with African countries. The Egyptians pointed out that Israel was "caught" on the side of "the enemies of African nationalism". For if Israel really wanted to support the Africans, then it should have announced its support for Patrice Lumumba to whom went the credit for the victory of Congo over its imperialist enemies. Instead, Israel supported Moïse Tshombe, Prime Minister of the Seccessionist Katanga regime.


As for Israeli aid to African countries, Egypt wanted African countries to know that the Jewish state's own economy depended on American contributions and reparation payments from West Germany. Now, then, an economy which depended for its very survival on "loans and charity" could possibly offer assistance to other countries? How could one who went about begging lavish presents on others? "He who has not, gives not." From this Egypt drew two conclusions for African countries. First, though imperialism granted independence to certain African countries, its hold on their economies was unshaken. Imperialism thus continued to plunder the resources of the African continent in the guise of independence and was using Israel as an accomplice. Second, Egypt wanted the African countries to know that in giving aid Israel wanted to control their economies for its own good.

The geographical fact of Egypt being an African country was also played up to underline the moral obligation of the

80. Hanser's Speeches March-June 1960, p. 76. See also Arab Observer, no. 121, 15 October 1962, p. 34.
82. The Middle East News Agency announced on 11 September 1969: "A report received in Cairo states that Israel is using in its own country only one-fourth or one-fifth of the 500 million dollars it received annually to direct aid, grants and loans and that the rest goes to Asian and African markets with the object of doubling these sums in three to five years and of establishing strong economic bases and a new imperialist empire in Africa and Asia ... making Afro-Asian investments to produce a fixed income sufficient to support its states." See S/8, pt. 4, no. 129, 4 September 1969, p. A/6.
African countries to support it against Israel. Nasser told them at Casablanca in January 1961 that his country was the gateway of defence of the interests of north-east Africa. It was his responsibility to prevent the area from becoming a sort of highway to imperialist infiltration into the continent. He reminded Africans living to the south or in the centre of Africa that they in turn were responsible for ensuring that the security of north African countries was not threatened by the infiltration from south. In short, aggression on Egypt was aggression on Africa whose north-eastern gate Egypt defends.

Political instability and discord in some of the African countries were attributed to Israeli infiltration into their armies. Egypt warned these countries against Israeli machinations to thwart African unity. Israel, it said, was a dagger in the heart of Africa. As an imperialist Power it wanted to dominate the African nations. Hence it was their duty to combat Israeli penetration into Africa.

83. Addressing the opening session of the OAU Council of Ministers, the Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mohammed Fayed, said that his country was not alone "in facing the challenges of our battle. It was also the concern of other OAU member states. We are bound by a common struggle and common destiny embracing the entire peoples of Africa." Daily Star, 25 August 1970.

84. Thiam, p. 63, p. 66. See also The Scribe, vol. 2, no. 4, May-June 1961, p. 54.


Economic and Technical Assistance

Israel had spread its influence in Africa by giving economic and technical assistance to several countries. It was partly to combat this influence that Egypt undertook an economic assistance programme in Africa. Answering criticism voiced by some Assembly members that it was rather odd that Egypt should be so short of funds and yet give loans to Guinea and Congo, President Nasser argued that such loans did not involve any expenditure of foreign exchange and that they were essential to Egypt's foreign policy especially as a means of checking Israel's influence in Africa.

At the outset, Egypt concentrated on those African countries which had refused to accept technical assistance from Israel. An important step taken in this direction was the conclusion of an agreement with Somalia in December 1960. Then came the Casablanca Conference in January 1961. Encouraged by its success at this conference, Egypt concluded a series of agreements on trade and payments, technical co-operation, and industrial credit with Mali in March. The political significance of the agreements lay in the fact that Mali had recently established trade and cultural relations with Israel. An intensive campaign to expand trade relations with other African

88. A high-ranking Egyptian Foreign Ministry official told this author that when Egypt sent technical assistance, particularly doctors, to Africa, it did not mean it had a surplus, "We want to help them to ward off neo-colonialism".

countries followed. A large delegation headed by Mahmud Hamsa of the Ministry of Economy left Cairo in March 1961 for an extended tour of several African countries. Subsequently Egypt signed trade and payments agreements with several African countries. In October 1966, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of El-Nasr Export & Import Co., El Sayed Mohamed Ghanem, said: "The consolidation of co-operation and UAR trade with African countries in the past few years has helped to check Israel's influence in Africa."

As many of the African countries were also getting economic and technical assistance from Israel, some of the agreements Egypt concluded with them stipulated that Egyptian aid should not be used in any way beneficial to Israel, for instance, the credit and co-operation agreement with Mali. Egypt also instructed its commercial attaché throughout Africa to keep a close watch on purchases of Israeli goods by Africans and, if possible, to prevent them by offering Egyptian products at lower prices.

Political Moves

In 1958 Egypt initiated a sustained effort to secure African support against Israel. At the Accra Conference of

91. See Chapter VII.
Independent African States in April 1968, it tried to obtain an anti-Israeli resolution which would isolate Israel from the emerging states of Africa. But unlike at Bandung where Nasser could get a resolution upholding the rights of Palestinians passed, at Accra Egypt found it difficult to have its way. This was mainly due to the close ties between Ghana and Israel. Significantly, one of Ghana's delegates withdrew from the Conference to attend an official ceremony in Jerusalem. Israel had also done some spade work in advance. The Israeli Foreign Minister had visited Ghana before the Conference and persuaded Nkrumah that the Palestine question should not be raised there.

Thus despite all-out efforts made by its Foreign Minister, Mohammed Fauzy, Egypt did not succeed in securing a resolution condemning Israel. The conference even refused to single out the Palestine question as a special case. The question was included in the general resolution on international peace. The conference expressed its "deep concern over the question of Palestine which is a disturbing factor of world peace and security" and urged "a just solution of the Palestine question". Egypt's attempt to interpret the phrase "just solution of the

95. For a detailed discussion of the Accra Conference see Chapter IV - "Egypt and Pan-Africanism".
98. Legum, n. 96, p. 262.
Palestine question as implying "recognition of the rights of Palestine Arabs" was immediately contradicted by the Ghanians who maintained that "the meaning of the resolution is what the resolution says". The part of the resolution dealing with Palestine was reproduced in the Nasser-Nkrumah communique issued at the end of Nkrumah's visit to Egypt in June 1958.

The next Conference of the Independent African States was held in 1959. This time Egypt did not raise the Palestine question, possibly because the membership of the conference was almost the same as that of the earlier one. The only additional member was Guinea. Egypt's attempt to win the support of the next Conference of Independent African States held in Addis Ababa in June 1960 also did not succeed. The conference refused to endorse an Egyptian proposal that African countries sever their ties with Israel. One of the delegates bluntly told Egypt: "We have no stomach for the Arab-Israeli dispute".

The year 1960 witnessed the independence of seventeen African states. Israel hastened to establish diplomatic relations with them before Egypt could do so, and offered them technical assistance which they readily accepted. This made them indifferent to the Palestine question. And before Egypt could raise the

100. Legum, n. 96, p. 91. See also SWE, pt. 4, Daily Series no. 533, 25 April 1958, p. 1.


103. "A flock of diplomatic appointments to Africa was made in the summer of 1960, lest the Arabs get there first". Brecher, n. 6, p. 134.
question again at the Pan-African level, Africa found itself divided into rival groups of "moderates" and "militants" as a result of differences on the questions of African unity, Algeria and Congo. Egypt along with Ghana was spearheading the militant group. At the first conference of this group held at Casablanca in January 1961, Nasser linked the problem of Palestine with the general theme of defence and security of the African continent. The defence of Africa against imperialism, according to him, was the need of the hour. The conference adopted a separate resolution on Palestine denouncing Israel as "an instrument in the service of imperialism and neo-colonialism not only in the Middle East but also in Africa and Asia" and demanded restoration to the Arabs of Palestine all their legitimate rights.

The denunciation of Israel by the Casablanca Conference was the first of its kind. Nasser's bargain with Nkrumah and other African leaders that his country would join the Casablanca group if they realized the danger of Israel was a major victory for Egypt. At Bandung Nasser succeeded in isolating Israel from the Asian community, at Casablanca he succeeded in isolating Israel at least from the radical African states. This was clear from the fact that again in June 1962 at their second Summit meeting in Cairo the Casablanca Powers warned African countries against Israeli infiltration into the continent "with the aim of


105. President Nasser told Nkrumah and all African leaders that Egypt would join the Casablanca group only if they realized the real danger of Israel. Anirudha Gupta, Reporting Africa (New Delhi, 1969), p. 59.
dominating its economy under the guise of economic and technical aid".

Encouraged by this success, Egypt raised the Palestine question at the Addis Ababa Summit Conference of Independent African States convened in May 1963. The conference was primarily concerned with bridging the gulf between the rival African groups and Egypt's attempt to introduce the Palestine question did not yield any positive response and hence Nasser changed his line and told the conference:

We have come here without selfishness; even the problem which we consider to be one of our most serious problems namely that of Israel, and on which the Casablanca Member States rightly share our view that it is one of the tools of imperialist infiltration into the continent and one of its bases of aggression -- We shall not submit this problem for discussion at the meeting in the conviction that the progress of free African endeavour will, through trial, reveal the truth day after day and lay it unmasked before African conscience. 107

Nasser made this tactical retreat in view of the desire of African states to play down controversial issues. Besides, Israel too had done a great deal of diplomatic spade work months before the conference cautioning African leaders about Egyptian moves against Israel and had persuaded them, by stressing the positive role it was playing in Africa, to resist them. It was reported that Israel got promises from some African countries.


107. United Arab Republic, Information Department, Towards the Second African Summit Assembly (Cairo, n.d.), p. 29.
that they would not endorse any anti-Israeli move. Events in
the Arab world on the eve of the African Summit Conference also
contributed to Nasser's retreat on the Arab-Israeli question.
Following the failure of attempts to set up an Arab Federation
some Arab countries blamed Nasser for harming and hindering Arab
unity. Had Nasser introduced at the Addis Ababa Conference
an issue on which there were strong differences among the
participants, he would have laid himself open to similar charges
of creating dissension in Africa. Lastly, the fact that the
Summit Conference took place in Ethiopia, a country with which
Israel had very close relations, influenced Egypt's decision.
For all these reasons Nasser decided that the time was not
propitious for seeking involvement of the African states in
the Arab cause.

Consequently, at subsequent African Summit meetings Nasser
did not press for condemnation of Israel against the wishes of
the participants. He also changed his tactics. Instead of
making a frontal attack on Israel, he resorted to indirect means.
Thus at the Second Summit Conference of the Organization of
African States (OAU), held in Cairo in July 1964, he told the
Heads of African states that both South Africa and Israel were
imperialist bases whose settlers had ousted the legitimate

108. The Correspondent, "The Egyptians Bow to African Unity",
New Outlook (Tel Aviv), vol. 6, no. 6, July-August 1963,
p. 26. See also SWB, pt. 4, Second Series no. 1249,

109. For example, the Syrians insisted that it was the
Egyptians and not they who had shown themselves the
enemies of unity by their domineering attitude. See
owners of the country and rendered them refugees. He, however, hastened to add that he was not asking for a resolution on Israel but raising the issue so that "you may reach the truth". Egypt had evidently given up the aggressive approach and taken to low-key diplomacy. At the same time, it kept the Israeli issue alive in its diplomacy in Africa. It was introduced or withheld according to the circumstances and mood of each conference so as to get as much support as the Africans were willing to give.

Egypt's Limitations

Egypt enjoyed certain advantages in Africa which Israel did not. Geographically Egypt belongs to Africa. This gave it a permanent seat in the Organisation of African Unity, and opportunities to meet Africans and sit with them at various conferences and meetings where it could explain its views. Furthermore, as an important African country Egypt hosted a large number of African diplomatic missions. It had in 1970, 24 African missions compared to Israel's eleven. It had opened 29 diplomatic missions in Africa compared to Israel's 32. This brings out the reciprocal nature of Egypt's relations with African countries. Moreover, there were at least some African countries


whose support Egypt could take for granted. These included Somalia and Mauritania who held the same views as Egypt on the Israeli issue.

Notwithstanding these advantages, Egypt's tireless endeavours to counterbalance Israel in Africa did not yield commensurate results. This needs some explanation. For one thing, the independent African countries were more interested in economic reconstruction -- in which Israel was eager to help them -- than in political polemics over remote issues. As long as the Africans were fighting for independence Cairo was a Mecca for them. But their enthusiasm diminished after the attainment of independence.

Secondly, Egypt was fighting Israel in Africa over an issue which was of greater concern to West Asian and Arab countries than to African countries. Not all nations involved in the Palestine dispute were members of the African community. Moreover, even though Palestine was an Arab issue, other Arab-African countries did not take much interest in fighting Israeli influence in Africa. In any event, there was no co-operation and co-ordination among the Arab states of Africa.

Thirdly, Egypt's anti-colonialism also came in the way of its establishing early contacts with African countries. Whereas the colonial Powers did not want Egyptian consular or trade offices being set up in their African territories, they did not object to Israel doing so. Thus Egypt's request to open

113. Though the Arab League discussed "Zionist aggressive activities", "danger of Israeli expansion", "infiltration of Israeli activities" in Africa it did not do much to combat them.
a consulate in Accra was rejected by the British Government whereas Israel's had been granted long before Ghana's independence. Another difficulty Egypt had to face in Africa arose from the fact that some of the companies financed by Western capital and used by Israel for its operations in Africa were registered in a neutral country. It was difficult for Egypt to attack such a company.

Fourthly, Egypt's limited resources and rapid growth of population created doubts in the minds of Africans about its motives. Its big-brotherly attitude gave rise to misunderstandings in some African countries which in turn cultivated Israel to counteract the growth of Egyptian influence. A case in point is the Ethiopia-Israel equation. Egypt's attempt to exploit the Islamic tie proved a liability in some other cases. For though it had sometimes succeeded in wooing a Muslim African country, it had also antagonized non-Muslims.

114. Jerusalem Post, 11 May 1966. The Belgian financial and industrial delegation which visited Israel was reported to have said that Israel could benefit by selling its goods in the Belgian Congo and recommended the investment of Belgian capital in Israel. See SME, pt. 4, Social Series no. 76, 13 July 1969, p. A/8.

115. See "... Egypt's Economic needs and Political desires which together constitute her potential interest in the Rest of Africa", Fabunmi, n. 67, p. 1231.

116. It is believed that the support which some Arabs (mostly Egyptians) had "showered" on the predominantly Muslim northern region of Nigeria antagonized the other regions where Israel had been gaining ground, especially since the overthrow of the north-dominated regime of the late Prime Minister Abu Baker Tafawa Balewa. See Youssef Azmeh, "Reasons Behind Israeli Success", Daily Star, 24 July 1966.
Finally, the fact that Egypt had supported African nationalist leaders in their fight against colonialism came in the way of its establishing cordial relations with some African countries. This happened mainly because after independence some nationalist leaders were in power and some in the opposition. If Egypt became friendly towards those in the opposition, then it was suspected and even accused of interfering in the country's internal affairs. The same was true of some old nationalist leaders who enjoyed respect and prestige in Egypt but were thrown out of power by young military officers. All these reasons combined to create resistance in Africa to Egypt's diplomatic moves against Israel. This continued till the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967.

**JUNE 1967 WAR AND AFRICA'S RESPONSE**

The June 1967 war in which Israel humiliated Egypt and captured a sizeable portion of its territory had varied reactions in Africa. It enhanced Israel's prestige in the eyes of some African countries. It dealt a severe blow to Arab prestige. Some African leaders came to believe that the Arabs could only fight a war of words. According to Banda of Malawi, Cairo could not "even fight a woman". He also declared that Israel had not

117. In February 1966, Malawi's Premier, Hastings Banda charged the Egyptian Ambassador to Malawi, Ahmed Faud Hillal with interfering in Malawi's internal affairs and asked him to close the embassy and leave the country within eight days. The charge was that Egypt's United Arab Airlines had ferried Malawi rebels to Tanzania. Ambassador Hillal explained that the Airlines normally do not investigate passengers who carried valid travel documents. *Daily Star*, 16 February 1966.

been aggressor in the war but was a "tough country". Some African states became sympathetic to Egypt, moved either by the sheer magnitude of its defeat or by friendship or due to their ideological and political affiliation with Egypt. Mauritania and Somalia which had been traditionally anti-Israel came out openly in support of Egypt. So did Tanzania. Even before the hostilities began, Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere, in a cable to President Nasser, offered aid "in defence of your rights against imperialism". The situation was much the same in progressive countries like Guinea and Mali. President Sekou Toure of Guinea, which had withdrawn its ambassador from Israel and expelled Israeli technicians, was reported to have said that any African state whose territory was at one time offered for the Zionist project could have been the victim of such aggression. This aggression, he added, was an invisible part of the imperialist aggression launched against the world liberation movement. Mali as a member of the UN Security Council openly and whole-heartedly supported Egypt. Mali's delegate said his government condemned the Israeli aggression and supported the Arab peoples in their


121. *West Africa*, 26 October 1967, p. 771. Mention of the African states whose territory was proposed for the Zionist project was a reference to the British offer of Uganda for Zionist settlement which the Zionists refused.
just struggle for sovereignty and lawful rights. He declared that his country would not vote for any resolution which placed the aggressor and the victim on the same footing.

Even though Egypt's supporters in Africa were vocal in denouncing Israel, the majority of African countries extended silent support to it. In the Security Council, Ethiopia and Nigeria adopted an attitude totally different from that of Mali and concentrated on the side-effects of the war rather than on the main issue. They appealed for humane treatment of the population of the areas involved in the conflict and of the prisoners-of-war. The African countries' sympathy for Israel became clearer when the West Asian question came before the special emergency meeting of the UN General Assembly in June 1967. Two draft resolutions were presented, one sponsored by Yugoslavia and the other by Latin American countries. While the Yugoslav resolution, also supported by other non-aligned nations, called for unilateral Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories, the Latin American resolution linked Israeli withdrawal with termination of belligerency and starting of negotiations aimed at solving the West Asian problem. The first draft resolution was pro-Arab, the second pro-Israel.

The reaction of the sub-Saharan African countries was mixed and reflected the coolness of the majority of African countries towards Egypt in its fight against Israel. This was clear from

123. Ibid., p. 29.
124. Ibid., pp. 21 and 25.
the voting pattern. Whereas fourteen African countries voted in favour of the Yugoslav draft resolution, eight opposed it and ten abstained. At the same time, seventeen African countries voted in favour of the Latin American draft resolution, ten opposed it and five abstained.

The African tilt towards Israel deeply hurt Egypt and its friends in Africa. They were sorry that many African countries did not support Egypt even though it was a member of the OAU and had always supported African causes. Somalia and Guinea proposed a special session of the OAU to discuss the Arab-Israeli question before the regular Kinshasa session of the OAU scheduled for September 1967. To this the response of the pro-Israeli Africans was: Why transfer the Arab-Israeli question from the United Nations to the OAU?

At the regular session of the OAU in Kinshasa some three months after the Six Day War, the Arab-Israeli issue was not listed in the agenda. President Nasser, forewarned of the lack of militancy in the OAU concerning the West Asian crisis, did


127. President Houphouet-Boigny of Ivory Coast reported to have said: "The problem of the Middle East is of such a scale that it cannot be transferred from the UN to the OAU." West Africa, no. 2618, 5 August 1967, p. 1030.
not attend the meeting. Egypt was represented by Mohammed Fayek, Minister for National Guidance. Before leaving for Kinshasa, Fayek said that although the question of Israel’s aggression against Arab countries was not included in the agenda, he would explain Arab views on the matter to the conference.

Sensing the coolness of the African countries, Egypt and other Arab delegates did not press for strong action against Israel. Fayek tried to win over the sympathy of African countries by telling them that his country believed that it was not alone in facing the serious West Asian crisis and that the entire African continent was behind it, for the whole African continent was endangered by the Israeli aggression. Egypt on its part, Fayek declared, wanted to establish peace in West Asia so that it could devote its resources to constructive work. For this it wanted Israel to withdraw behind the line it had violated by its aggression of 5 June 1967. As long as this did not happen, any invitation to Egypt for a negotiated settlement was an unjust invitation. Fayek also reminded the African countries that any solution to the West Asian problem should guarantee the rights of Palestine refugees. Egypt did not demand the inclusion of Israeli aggression in the agenda of the conference but, he added, “in our willingness to secure the success of the conference we did wish to face the Conference with the details of our problem

since the UN General Assembly will discuss this matter shortly."

Under the circumstances, the Summit Conference could not avoid showing its token sympathy and solidarity with Egypt. It passed a resolution agreeing to work along with Egypt within the United Nations to help it recover its territory occupied by Israel. On his return to Cairo Fayek observed that the Arabs could expect wider support inside the United Nations when the West Asian crisis was debated.

On 9 November 1967, Indian, Mali, and Nigeria submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council calling for, among other things, the withdrawal of Israeli troops to the positions they occupied before the aggression, a political and humane solution of the problem of the Arab people of Palestine, freedom of navigation in the international waterways in accordance with world agreements and conventions, and the right of every state of the area to be secure within its borders. The resolution was not put to the vote and all the three sponsors eventually endorsed the now-famous resolution No. 242 of 22 November 1967.

At the next Summit meeting of the OAU, held in Algiers, Mahmoud Riad, Egyptian Foreign Minister, made a powerful plea for outright condemnation of the Israeli aggression. Dahomey,

Gabon, Lesotho, Malawi, Ruanda, Sierra Leone, Swaziland and others who received economic and technical aid from Israel did not favour it. However, a closed-door meeting of the Heads of State passed on 16 September 1968 by thirty-six votes to nil with two abstentions a resolution demanding "the withdrawal of foreign troops from all Arab territories occupied since June 5th 1967, in accordance with the resolution adopted by the UN Security Council on 22 November 1967". This shift could partly be attributed to Egypt's stand on the Nigerian civil war. Egypt had supported the Nigerian Federal Government against Israel's backing of breakaway Biafra.

The burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque in August 1969 in Jerusalem evoked strong protest against Israel in Africa, more particularly in Muslim Africa. The Islamic Conference convoked in September 1969 to discuss the Al-Aqsa issue was attended by seven non-Arab African countries: Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Somalia. The conference unanimously adopted a declaration supporting the Palestine people and calling upon the Great Powers to intensify their efforts to secure speedy withdrawal of the Israeli military forces from all territories occupied by them in the June 1967 war. The progressive shift of the African countries towards Egypt was further noted at the OAU Summit Conference of September 1969 and the Ministerial Council of


March 1970, both held in Addis Ababa. Encouraged by this, at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers held in August 1970, Mohammed Fsayek, the Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, declared that his people were shouldering the "burdens of an unjust war" waged against them by "a racist regime supported by imperialists". After expressing his conviction that his country was not alone "in facing the challenges of our battle", he called for "renewed support" of the OAU for Egypt's stand against Israel.

The shift in the position of the African countries was also reflected at the UN General Assembly meeting of November 1970 which adopted the twenty-two Power pro-Arab resolution calling upon Israel for resumption of peace talks through the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in West Asia, Gunnar Jarring. The resolution also reaffirmed the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territories by force and maintained that respect for the rights of the Palestinians was an indispensable element in the establishment of a just and lasting peace in West Asia.


137. In fact it was an African resolution for out of twenty-two sponsoring countries fifteen were from Africa. They were: Burundi, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, People's Republic of Congo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

138. Israel was avoiding this by referring to Egypt's alleged violation of Cease-fire Agreement of August 1970.

139. For the text of the Resolution see General Assembly Official Records (GAOR), session 25, supplement 28 (A/8028), p. 5.
In short, the June 1967 war marked a turning point in the attitude of several non-Arab African countries towards Israel. With Israel having occupied territory of a sovereign African nation the Arab-Israeli dispute was no longer a West Asian question. Israel's refusal to vacate Egyptian territory to implement the UN resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 put many African governments in an embarrassing position. It was very difficult for them to justify the Israeli aggression, more particularly when a fellow African country was its victim. The shift in the French approach to the West Asian problem after the June 1967 war induced a lukewarm attitude towards Israel on the part of the former French territories as well.

To sum up, the Arab diplomatic boycott and economic blockade completely isolated Israel from its West Asian neighbours. It was to overcome this isolation that Israel went about making friends with African countries by giving them technical assistance. Its presence in Africa was a source of concern to the Egyptian Government, which launched political, diplomatic and economic counter-offensive against Israel in Africa. Thus Israeli factor played a quite important part in Egypt's Africa policy. However, Egypt's counter-offensive did not produce immediate positive results mainly because the Palestine question was not of immediate concern to many Africans in the sub-Saharan region. But the Israeli occupation of Egyptian territory in June 1967 induced a shift in the African stand on Israel.