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Introduction

“In order to dominate militarily and strategically, you must first dominate economically,” this is to sum up the Israeli plan to spread in Africa. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the African continent has been - and still is - an essential and important part of the Israeli plans. In the beginning, it was even part of the Zionist Settlement Project, where some African countries such as Kenya and Uganda were chosen as a proposed homeland for the “Jewish people”, or an alternative location to settle the Jews if the original settlement center “Palestine” was not possible. Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizmann were particularly interested in these two countries, and Herzl welcomed the idea because he saw in East and Central Africa a suitable place, especially since there were African Jews. However, all these suggestions were rejected and completely excluded after Herzl's death, and Palestine was adopted as the only site for the Zionist settlement project, in the 6th Zionist Congress in 1903.

Israel has been seeking to strengthen and develop its relations with African countries in all fields, security, economic, commercial, political and diplomatic. These relations have witnessed ups and downs during the various eras according to the nature of the geopolitical conditions that the region undergone. Especially, the Middle East and North Africa, which includes the largest African countries in terms of area, Algeria and Sudan, as well as in terms of population, Egypt. Accordingly, Israel divides the map of its interests in Africa into three axes: Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Africa, in particular the Horn of Africa, and North Africa, which it considers part of the Middle East and Arab countries and does not fall within the African circle of the Israeli Foreign Policy. This report shall focus on Israel's relationship with Sub-Saharan African countries.



Israel's relationship with African Muslim-majority countries

Following the visit by the Chadian President Idriss Deby to Israel in November 2017, which came after Chad severed relations with Israel in 1973, the Israeli media indicated that relations with Chad open the door to new horizons of Israel's policy towards Muslim-majority countries in Africa. Following the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Chad in January 2019, he expressly declared that this visit was aimed at paving the way for the restoration of relations with Mali and the Muslim-majority Niger.

Israel wants to benefit from the rapprochement with Chad, especially for its relatively important strategic location for Israel, as it is located in the vicinity of Sudan and southern Libya, which are two countries that used to take tough positions on Israel, therefore, entering into relations with Chad means opening the door for Israel to be near these countries. In the meantime, Israel intensified its contacts with the Muslim-majority African countries located in sub-Saharan Africa.

The signing of the “ Abraham Accord” in Abu Dhabi in August 2020, the normalization of relations between the United Arab Emirates and Israel, and Netanyahu’s visit to Uganda in February 2020 are of great importance in the context of the search for new allies, as the visit culminated in a meeting between Netanyahu and the Head of the Sudanese Sovereign Council, Lieutenant-General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, which marks the beginning of the normalization of relations between Sudan and Israel, as well as the agreement to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries, and the start of a direct flight between Kampala and Tel Aviv.

Israel's New Relations with Sub-Saharan Africa

“The old world is dying, it is time for Israel to invade Africa,” this is what made the headlines in the “Maariv” newspaper during its publication of a report prepared by its correspondents covering the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to four African countries in 2016. The newspaper continues by saying that Israel must change its vision of Western countries as the sole and central player in the international arena, and that the Israel's relations with sub-Saharan African countries must be strengthened, as the world is living in the era of the end of axioms and postulates.

Israel considers Africa to be a huge market and an untapped economic opportunity that should be seized, and it seeks to triple the volume of exports to it. This continent constitutes a growing market power within rapidly growing economies that have seven of the world's top ten emerging economies. Additionally, there is much that Israeli companies may offer in the fields of programming, telecommunications, retail, water, energy and others.

4 Israel presents itself in Africa as having the capabilities that Sub-Saharan Africa needs for its development and the growth of its economies and societies. In this regard, Israel promotes the dream of food security, green energy, and the provision of food and electric energy to these countries. The Parliamentary Lobby in the Knesset for relations with Sub-Saharan Africa confirms that: “The fertility of the African land and the development of Israeli agricultural technology are the key to the development of the Sub-Saharan African continent.”

The most important major partners of Israel in the Sub-Saharan Africa at the present time are: Togo, Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, Uganda, Ghana, Guinea, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, South Sudan, Kenya, which are countries that account for most of African trade. Israel concludes commercial agreements



with various African countries, and is keen to open commercial attaché offices in Israeli embassies located in Sub-Saharan Africa. It also purposely grants African countries attractive financial facilities, as well as providing loans and credits to import goods from Israel. In addition to organizing fixed and mobile trade fairs to promote and market Israeli goods to gain new customers and enter new markets.

The Israeli-Kenya relations

There is a large economic presence of Israel in Africa nowadays, which has taken various forms and destinations in the continent. In Kenya, Israeli companies are investing in the hotel infrastructure. The Women's Economic Empowerment Project is also a joint venture between the Center for International Cooperation and the UN Women, which includes the establishment of an Africa center for comprehensive leadership for the advancement of women in rural areas. This project pays special attention to women in rural areas, and includes capacity development and training in agricultural technology and agribusiness.

Through the Tilapia Fish Farming Project, Israel and Germany have joined forces to establish a tripartite partnership with Kenya, with the aim of increasing the income of farmers' families to contribute to the eradication of poverty in the region and the improvement of the ecosystem of Lake Victoria. The project aims to promote sustainable ways of protecting the environment by providing alternative livelihoods for the local communities residing around the lake, and includes training and professional capacity development activities to enhance tilapia fish farming and businesses, with a focus on “pro-poor” agenda to generate income for families working in fish farms.

Sustainable development is considered one of the most prominent challenges facing humanity, and Israel participates in a joint project of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which is taking place in Kenya. This model, which has been successfully implemented in Israel, is essential for training children to meet the future challenges of society through learning the skills of vibrant and creative thinking. The ultimate goal of the joint project is to establish a national network for sustainable development in Kenya, including the establishment of institutional centers that will serve as training resources for schools.

The Israeli-Rwanda relations

For Rwanda, the most important exports to Israel are tea and some mining materials used in computer chips (tantallite). Some Israeli security services companies are implementing contracts for cooperation in the field of military training, under which they send former Israeli soldiers to provide training services to Rwandan army units. Moreover, An Israeli security consultancy company is also supervising the insurance systems of Kigali Airport and the Rwandan Cargo Village. Overall, a number of experts and specialized Israeli companies work in various economic and commercial sectors.

The Israeli -Ugandan relations

In Uganda, in response to potential new emergencies and mass casualty scenarios, Israel developed and revamped the emergency essentials at Kampala Mulago Hospital. The hospital was built in 1962 by “Solel Boneh”, the largest and most important Israeli construction company in the country.

The project included the reconstruction of a 250-square-meter site inside the hospital, adapting it to serve as an emergency and trauma center. The donation process included the installation of new and modern medical equipment. An Israeli medical team provided guidance and training according to a training program in order to coordinate the early stages of the project.

The Israeli-Cameroonian relations

Israel's relations with the Republic of Cameroon began a long time ago, since the independence of Cameroon in 1960. At present, these relations focus on the transfer of knowledge and technology aimed at improving the economic and social situation in Cameroon, and it is based on the organization of training courses where Israel is active in the field of Agribusiness Training. An unprecedented tripartite agreement was signed by the Center for International Cooperation, the UN Fund and the Ministry of Animal Resources, allowing the establishment of an “Agribusiness Incubator” based on the Israeli experience.

In the field of advanced technology, the only academic department of high-tech studies in West Africa has been established in Yaounde. Furthermore, a 3D printer project is expected to be launched soon (only one in Sub-Saharan Africa) based on Israeli professional, technical and educational experience.



The importance of African markets for the future of the Israeli economy

Pursuant to the strategy to strengthen the relations between Israel and the countries of Africa, and the plan to promote trade relations between the two sides, the Israeli Ministry of Economy and Industry is working through several channels to enhance trade with Africa. In this context, two additional commercial attachés offices of the Ministry of Economy and Industry were opened in Accra – Ghana and in Nairobi – Kenya, in addition to the old commercial attaché office in South Africa.

On the other hand, Israel is establishing Israeli-African joint corporations, working in the fields of transportation, public services, trade, poultry farming and agriculture. It is noticeable that Israeli trade flourishes mainly in six Sub-Saharan African countries: South Africa, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, as these markets absorb approximately 75% of total Israeli exports to Africa. Therefore, it is expected to increase this percentage and to develop trade relations between Israel and Sub-Saharan Africa. Especially in light of Britain's exit from the European Union and its repercussions on the European economy, which is already suffering from financial crisis, and also in light of the European Union's refusal to import Israeli products produced in settlements. All this indicates Israel's keenness to work seriously in the near future to increase the level of trade relations with Sub-Saharan African countries.

Summary

Israel seeks to support its global economic position by benefiting from its relations with Sub-Saharan African countries, presenting itself as a friend and a role model in its development and economic strength. It seeks to bring about positive changes towards the development of Sub-Saharan African countries in an attempt to entice those countries to cooperate with it and open the way to penetrate Africa through the economic gate.

Israel was able, through the consolidation of its relationship with sub-Saharan Africa, to provide its needs of raw materials sources at cheap prices to support its industries. In addition to exploiting the markets of those countries to export its products, which has achieved a huge return for its investments. Africa has provided Israel with one of the most essential raw materials in its industries; i.e. diamond. Israel owns thirteen companies in the Afri-Group Trade Alliance for Diamond Trade, and it controls 75% of the diamond mines in Africa.

8 In a future vision, Israel believes that seven out of ten emerging and most developed economies in the world exist in Africa, with which it builds close relations. Israel also strengthens its links with the middle class in Sub-Saharan African countries, which is characterized by its steadily increasing numbers and plays a large and influential role in the economy, politics and culture, and is also characterized by being supportive of cooperation with Israel.

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