

**WHILE BIBI LEADS ISRAEL'S "RETURN" TO AFRICA, HERZOG
SECRETLY NEGOTIATES WITH THE PA**

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ISRAEL'S STRATEGY SHIFT BEARS FRUIT

Evelyn Gordon

[Commentary](#), July 22, 2016

Wednesday's announcement that Guinea is resuming ties with Israel almost half a century after severing them is a nontrivial piece of good news. Granted, Guinea is a poor and relatively unimportant African country. But it's 85 percent Muslim, and few Muslim-majority countries have yet been willing to forge open relations with Israel; consequently, its decision could encourage others to follow suit. Guinea was also the first country in Africa to sever relations with Israel following the 1967 Six-Day War. For both those reasons, its renewal of ties underscores the degree to which a new Israeli strategy aimed at improving relations with the non-Western world has begun bearing fruit.

The Guinea announcement comes on the heels of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's successful trip to Africa earlier this month. Highlights of that trip included announcements by both Kenya and Ethiopia-two of Israel's closest African allies-that they would push for Israel to receive observer status at the African Union, as well as Tanzania's announcement that it planned to open an embassy in Israel, 21 years after renewing relations.

Israeli media outlets have also reported that officials from three other Muslim-majority African countries that don't have relations with Israel-Mali, Chad, and Somalia-recently paid secret visits, indicating that the prospect of other Muslim countries following Guinea's lead is far from inconceivable. Indeed, just last week, Foreign Ministry Director General Dore Gold visited Chad for a meeting with its president. This prospect is made more plausible by the warming of Israel's relations with key Arab states. As several African leaders noted during Netanyahu's trip, there's little point in African countries continuing to give Israel the cold shoulder when some of the very Arab countries that originally pushed them to do so now have either overt or covert relations with it.

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There are two reasons why Israel ascribes such importance to its warming ties with Africa, and both have more to do with the long term than the short term. The first is the need to diversify its trading partners. Currently, about a third of Israel's exports go to Europe. But the combination of Europe's slowing economy and its growing hostility to Israel make this heavy reliance on Europe a potential threat to Israel's economic future. Africa is the world's poorest continent, but it's experiencing rapid economic growth, and many of Israel's fields of expertise fit well with Africa's needs, including agricultural technology, water conservation, and counterterrorism. Thus by expanding and improving its diplomatic relations with African countries, Israel hopes to eventually expand its trade relations as well.

The second, as Netanyahu said during his Africa trip, is the hope of ending the automatic majority against Israel in international forums. As he readily acknowledged, this could well take decades; long-entrenched voting patterns don't change overnight. Nevertheless, change is far from impossible: See, for instance, the 2014 Security Council vote on setting a deadline for Palestinian statehood, which was defeated because the Palestinians failed to muster the requisite nine votes. Two of the five crucial abstentions came from Africa (Rwanda and Nigeria).

Even if African countries can't yet be flipped into the minuscule camp of pro-Israel voters, just moving them from the anti-Israel bloc to the abstention column could ease Israel's dependence on America's Security Council veto. Since Security Council resolutions need a minimum of nine "yes" votes to pass, an abstention has the same effect as a "no" for countries without veto power. It should also be noted that reliably abstaining would suffice to make African countries better voting allies than about half the European Union and of equal value to most of the rest: EU countries almost never vote with Israel, and some regularly vote against it.

Israel's burgeoning relations with Africa obviously stem partly from something

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beyond its control: the rise of Islamist terror. As several African leaders openly acknowledged during Netanyahu's trip, counterterrorism assistance is currently the thing they most want from Israel. And if reports of the visits by officials from Mali, Chad, and Somalia are true, it's a safe bet they were also seeking counterterrorism help; all three have serious problems with Islamist terror.

The improvement also stems partly from Israel's longstanding policy of proffering aid even to countries it has no relations with, which sometimes bears belated fruit. For instance, Israeli officials said one factor in Guinea's decision to renew relations was the medical aid Israel gave it during the Ebola crisis two years ago. A salient example from Asia, another continent with which Israel's ties have recently blossomed, is Singapore. Singapore asked Israel to train its army in the mid-1960s, before the two countries even established relations, and then concealed that fact for decades. But last month, as Elliott Abrams noted, Singapore joined forces with India and Rwanda-the third country in the club of Israel's closest African allies-to help Israel gain the Non-Aligned votes it needed to win the chairmanship of a key UN committee.

The third reason for Israel's declining isolation, however, is a deliberate decision by successive Netanyahu governments that the country could not afford, either economically or diplomatically, to keep focusing almost exclusively on the West while largely ignoring the rest of the world. Avigdor Lieberman, now the defense minister, made a major push to improve Israel's ties with Africa and Asia during his term as foreign minister, and since his departure, the ministry has continued this drive under the de facto leadership of Gold (Netanyahu is the nominal foreign minister).

This constituted a major shift in Israel's strategy, and it stemmed from a simple realization: Relations with Europe are inevitably being frayed by the fact that what the EU seems to want most from Israel is something beyond Israel's power to provide. Namely, a peace deal with people who have consistently refused every Israeli offer and are currently refusing even to negotiate with it. Europe's attitude could change someday, but Israel can't count on that. Hence it must develop

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alternative sources of trade and diplomatic support as an insurance policy. The restoration of relations with Guinea is yet another sign that this strategy is starting to pay off. And that's very good news for Israel.

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WHERE ISRAELI AND AFRICAN INTERESTS INTERSECT

Herb Keinon

[Jerusalem Post](#), July 4, 2016

When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Ministry Director-General Dore Gold talk about a "confluence of interests," they generally refer to a commonality of interests with the Arab countries in the region that is behind the unprecedented, but discreet, cooperation with them. That term, however, is also used when explaining why precisely now - nearly 30 years after Yitzhak Shamir was the last sitting prime minister to visit Africa - Israel, as Netanyahu puts it, is returning to Africa, and Africa is returning to Israel.

Interestingly, Shamir's six-day, four country tour took him to western Africa - Togo, Cameroon, Liberia and the Ivory Coast - while Netanyahu's five-day, four-country hop takes him to the east: Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Ethiopia. The main common interest revolves around security issues. Three of the four - Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia - are facing terrorism from Islamic extremists, and Rwanda is concerned about a spill-over effect. These countries are afraid that what has happened in Libya, Mali and the Ivory Coast could happen to them as well.

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For this reason they are interested in forging stronger ties with Israel. It is not all about getting water, energy and agricultural know-how, but it is also very much about getting Israeli knowledge and assistance in how to combat terrorism. These countries, and other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, are more concerned with questions of homeland security than they were some 20 years ago, and they see Israel as one country with a great deal of experience - and technology - in this field .

One of the reasons for this enhanced concern is the break-up of Libya, and the negative forces that it unleashed on its neighbors - Mali and Chad. The break-up of Libya has had another impact as well - it removed the single biggest factor inside Africa that was working against a normalization of ties with Israel.

It was former Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi who pressed to get Israel's observer status removed from the African Union, arguing in one debate that Israel was responsible for all the continent's ills. And it was Gaddafi who actively lobbied to keep countries from welcoming Israel. His fall had an impact on the willingness of a number of countries to strengthen their ties.

South Africa has also been an impediment to Israeli inroads into the continent, and indeed has been key in recent years to blocking an upgrade for Israel at the African Union, an upgrade that Netanyahu will raise in his meetings. There are many reasons for the South African animosity, including Israel's relations with the apartheid regime, and the ANC's close ties to the PLO. But, according to diplomatic officials, while Libya actively tried to convince African states not to strengthen their ties with Israel, South Africa is not doing the same with countries such as Rwanda, Ethiopia and Kenya. Partly, officials in those countries will say, because Pretoria realizes that they will not be able to do so.

Another common interest is keeping Iran and Hezbollah from gaining ground on the continent. Iran is active in east Africa, keen on getting access to the Red Sea, and Hezbollah in the west. A high-profile Israeli presence can serve as a counterweight to their efforts. Israel's close security cooperation with Jordan and

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Egypt is also something that is well-known in Africa, as are Israel's discreet ties with Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf countries. This, diplomatic officials maintain, has led to some of the African countries asking themselves: "If they can do it, why can't we?"

During Shamir's visit to west Africa in 1987, The New York Times quoted from an editorial in the Nigerian Tribune: "We can do business with Israel and keep our Arab friends - Egypt is doing exactly that," the editorial read. "Our Arab friends should not be seen as choosing our enemies for us." Israel and Africa's "return" to one another is an indication that 30 years later, this sentiment is indeed taking hold.

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HERZOG'S INTOLERABLE DECEIT

Isi Leibler

[Candidly Speaking](#), June 29, 2016

Zionist Union Chairman MK Isaac Herzog is the scion of one of Israel's most distinguished families. His late father Chaim served with distinction as president, and his grandfather, whose name he carries, was one of Israel's most respected and beloved chief rabbis. I have been lauding Herzog over the past year, relating to him as a Labor Zionist of the old school who had the ability to revive the party and rid it of the delusional leftists who alienated many of its former supporters and weakened it - almost to the point of destruction.

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I bemoaned the fact that a unity government was not formed, insisting that Herzog, like the head of all Zionist parties, would basically be implementing the same policies as the current government. In this context, I believed that he would make an excellent foreign minister and enable Israel to display unity in the face of the concerted diplomatic pressures being exerted against us. In January after the elections, while as leader of the opposition, Herzog continued castigating Netanyahu, he nevertheless publicly endorsed the consensus policy toward the Palestinians adopted by Professor Shlomo Avineri, Labor Zionism's foremost intellectual.

Although he emphasized that he remained committed to a separation from the Palestinians, Avineri maintained that the Oslo Accords were no longer relevant as the Palestinian leadership refused to accept Israel's right to exist and considered Israel's destruction a higher priority than achieving their own statehood. Avineri concluded that under such circumstances, efforts to implement a two-state solution were delusory. Despite bitter protests and condemnations from the radical ranks of Labor, Herzog publicly identified with this approach, explicitly stating that there is "no chance of peace in this era." Furthermore, he declared that the Israel Defense Forces must remain in the West Bank and in the Jordan Valley. He told French President François Hollande that "hatred and incitement among the Palestinians" are currently too intense to contemplate implementing a two-state solution.

Thus, it was a shocking revelation when it was disclosed last week that, prior to last year's election, at the height of Palestinian incitement and frenzied calls to "save Al-Aqsa," Herzog was secretly negotiating terms for a final settlement with the corrupt and degenerate Palestinian Authority. Through former Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh, Herzog outlined the following surrealistic principles which were summarized in a secret letter of understanding with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and scheduled to be implemented following the elections:

Israel would withdraw to the 1949 armistice lines, i.e., from all of Judea and

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Samaria, with the exception of 4% territory swaps enabling Israel to retain portions of the settlement blocs. Those resident outside these areas would either be repatriated to Israel or obliged to accept Palestinian rule. Israel would retain a "symbolic" presence in the Jordan Valley in conjunction with Palestinian forces. East Jerusalem would become the capital of a Palestinian state with a single municipality acting under the jurisdiction of both Israel and the Palestinian State. The Temple Mount would be administered by an international force with an Israeli presence at the Western Wall. The Palestinian refugee issue would be resolved on the basis of U.N. Resolution 194 with a "joint decision" to accept those wishing to return or accept financial compensation. The Arabs claim that currently over 5 million people - the original refugees and their descendants - are awaiting repatriation.

This is simply an extension of the Olmert formula - which was not approved by the cabinet or the Knesset and rejected by Abbas. It was surely utterly naïve and politically counterproductive to extend such unilateral concessions before obtaining a single indication of reciprocity from the Palestinians. But the worst travesty was the unprecedented initiative of an opposition leader to furtively engage in foreign affairs initiatives that conflict with the policies determined by a democratically elected government. When this is applied toward hostile forces that promote and endorse terrorism, it could even be considered seditious.

What makes Herzog's behavior even more reprehensible is that all opinion polls clearly demonstrated that a broad consensus of the nation was adamantly opposed to further unilateral territorial concessions. Most Israelis aspire for separation but recognize that unless the Palestinians demonstrate a willingness to accept the reality of a Jewish state and cease terror activities, there is no possibility of creating a Palestinian state.

To cap it, Herzog fought an election and failed to disclose to the electorate that these negotiations had taken place. Today, he admits that had he won, he had every intention of implementing these policies. Needless to say, had he disclosed his policy, he would have been decimated at the polls.

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A year later, after this sleazy episode has been exposed, Herzog tries to justify his deceit by suggesting that the entire operation was designed to persuade Abbas to cease inciting against Jews. The late Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin would turn in his grave if he could visualize how a youngster whom he personally nurtured politically and had become leader of his party, crossed every one of the red lines he had drawn in relation to territorial concessions to the Palestinians...

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ISRAEL'S SOCIALIST DREAMS VS. CAPITALIST REALITIES

Steven Plaut

[Middle East Quarterly](#), Summer, 2016

A colorful legend holds that when God offered the Torah to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, they were reluctant to accept it. God then lifted the mountain over their heads in a threatening manner, making them an offer they could not refuse. They reconsidered. The saga of economic liberalism, some-times dubbed "neoliberalism," and Israeli economic growth bears some similarities to that legend. Modern Israel has developed into something of an economic miracle, largely as a result of economic liberalization, driven by entrepreneurship, innovation, investment, and the accumulation of human capital. Yet Israelis have never been entirely comfortable with economic liberalism and indeed are by and large hostile to it. Like their wandering ancestors, they have benefitted in spite of their disinclinations.

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Israelis may be the most entrepreneurial population on the planet; their capabilities in innovation being, for example, the essential message of *Start-Up Nation*, the *New York Times* business bestseller. There are supposed to be more startups in Israel than in Western Europe, not per capita, but in absolute numbers. With a population of eight million people, Israel has over 6,000 startups. In the 2015 Bloomberg Innovation Index, Israel was ranked ahead of the United States, France, and the United Kingdom. The number of Israeli patents is among the largest for any country in the world while shares of numerous Israeli companies trade on the American NASDAQ stock exchange as well as other exchanges. Acquisitions of Israeli high-tech companies by foreign investors inject many billions of dollars into the country every year. Among the reasons for the country's success are its well-educated labor force, a high household savings rate, high levels of imported capital, a strong immigration rate (which includes many highly-educated people), and especially—in recent years—an extremely creative high-tech sector, which so far operates largely outside the realm of government regulation.

This economic good news is all the more remarkable in light of the fact that Israel began its existence in the late 1940s as an impoverished third-world country, whose economy might have been discussed in the same breath as that of India or Egypt. Today, Israel has a gross domestic product per capita comparable to that of the middle-income countries of Western Europe, roughly the same as Italy's. Israel was one of the only countries in the world whose economy did not contract during the global financial crisis that began in 2007. Its rates of inflation and unemployment have been better than those of the United States and Western Europe in recent years. The economy has shown its resilience in the face of numerous challenges and shocks, including chronic terrorism, frequent military conflict, a huge defense burden, a dearth of physical natural resources, and the need to integrate people arriving from scores of different countries and cultures.

Ironically, this dramatic transition from low-development status to today's very high level took place largely despite economic policies that were, in many cases, designed to prevent growth and efficiency. Economic policy has been liberalized slowly over time, but this occurred by and large in the face of governmental reluctance. In some cases, especially regarding the reduction of import protectionism, this was forced upon the government as part of multinational trade

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agreements. Israeli economic policy has almost always stifled competition; protected inefficient sectors; allocated resources based on political negotiation, lobbying, and political power; and suppressed market forces in large swaths of the economy. This "reign of pork"— has included the maintenance of an enormous bloated public sector, a long series of bailouts for failed enterprises, high tax rates, and a gargantuan budget.

Israeli economic success is disconnected from the every-day economic philosophy of most of the Israeli public, Israelis from all parts of the political spectrum are devoted to maintaining a near-Scandinavian level of welfare state benefits. Income and wealth disparities are obsessions for a broad swath of the citizenry, and all parties promise to redress them, often by means of taxes that will "soak the rich." Most Israelis use the terms "capitalist," "privatization" and "deregulation" as pejoratives while "socialist," or at times even "communist," is something of a romantic compliment (though one that has also come to imply a certain naiveté.) Both middle- and upper-income Israelis are highly likely to vote for political parties of the Left, like the Israeli Labor Party or Meretz, which openly denounce economic liberalism and romanticize the egalitarianism of socialism. Working-class and low-income Israelis are much more likely to vote for the parties of the Right and religious parties although these parties are often really parties of the Left when it comes to economic liberalism...

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lead to diplomatic successes.

'Palestinians, Sudan Working to Restrain Israeli Breakthrough in Africa': Adam Rasgon, *Jerusalem Post*, July 21, 2016 —Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki announced on Wednesday that the Palestinian Authority and Sudan are coordinating to “restrain Israeli movements” in the African continent.

More Positive Signs for the Israel-China Relationship: Judith Bergman, *Algemeiner*, May 26, 2016 —Welcome to the beauty of Chinese-Israeli cultural relations. Seen against the backdrop of solid loathing of all things Israeli that so dominates the European cultural establishment, the relations between China and Israel almost seem like something out of a dreamlike alternate reality.

End US Aid to Israel: Daniel Pipes, *Israel Hayom*, July 26, 2015 —Exactly 20 years ago, a newly elected Israeli prime minister — Benjamin Netanyahu — dramatically announced the following to a joint session of Congress: "We are deeply grateful for all we have received from the United States, for all that we have received from this chamber, from this body. But I believe there can be no greater tribute to America's long-standing economic aid to Israel than for us to be able to say: 'We are going to achieve economic independence..."