

DOES RELIGIOUS INCLINATION ADVANCE AFRICA - ISRAEL COOPERATION? PERSPECTIVES FROM AFRICAN NATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Over the years the state of Israel has positioned itself as a strategic partner offering as an ally of solutions to African nation's challenges including development assistance, disaster response, water technology, security and investments in agriculture and technology. However, the emergence of Arab states' influence of African nations, regional solidarities and global power dynamics posed a new challenge to the symbiotic relationship that Israel enjoyed with African nations. Arab states have consistently portrayed Israel as an imperialist and an outsider to the African continent. The wealthy Arab states successfully brokered the Arab-Muslim solidarity which made Islamic African states view attack on Palestine as a religious attack, effectively weakening the partnership between the state of Israel and African nations. As a result, influencing African voting pattern at African Union and United Nations General Assembly. While African countries continue to benefit significantly from collaborations with Israel in terms of knowledge and technology transfer, agriculture, trade partnerships and water technology. African nations do not reciprocate these benefits as evidenced by African voting behaviour in and African Union resolutions. The study therefore sought to determine the influence of religious inclination on the cooperation between the State of Israel and African Nations. The study was anchored on a pragmatic research philosophy, adopting a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Descriptive and exploratory research designs were applied. The study population comprised experts and officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, trade and industry, education, agriculture, science and technology and security in countries with diplomatic relations and consulates of 40 African countries with diplomatic ties to Israel, and the interviews with Israeli diplomats were presented, from which 92 respondents were purposively selected. Primary data were collected through semi-structured questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from bilateral agreements, trade reports, scientific partnerships, and diplomatic communiqués. Qualitative data were analysed thematically through conceptual analysis using NVivo, whereas quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics. All ethical considerations were observed. The findings revealed that Africa-Israel cooperation manifested strongly in agriculture, water technology, cybersecurity, scientific innovation, and health partnerships, with respondents indicating substantial benefits in productivity, technological transfer, and capacity building. However, the results also showed that Arab-Muslim solidarity exerted significant pressure on African states, shaping United Nations General Assembly voting patterns and limiting diplomatic reciprocity toward Israel.

Keywords: Africa-Israel Cooperation, Arab-Muslim Solidarity, Religious Inclination.

INTRODUCTION

Relationship between African nations and the State of Israel is historically characterized by mutual interests and geopolitics. While Israel had her presence and strategic involvement in Africa long before African nations gained their independence, it's the onset of this independence that saw the State of Israel enhance her presence in Africa (Gidron, 2024). Strategically, Israel engaged in multifaceted activities in Africa which significantly improved the relationship between Israel and African nations (Singh & Kumaraswamy, 2022). The main point of interactions between African nations and the State of Israel was through trade partnerships, diplomatic initiatives, developments projects, disaster assistance, water technology and investment in agriculture and technology which positioned Israel as a developmental partner through MASHAV, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation (Odeb, 2018). Thus, Africa and Israel maintained mutual and guided cooperation before Africa mingled with Arab and Middle East geopolitics.

However, the emergence of the Arab influence on African nations presented a new challenge to Israel in relation to its symbiotic relationship with African countries. The Casablanca conference of 1961 saw a resolution passed declaring Israel as an imperialist and a colonial movement in Africa. In this conference, the Palestinian problem was successfully turned into an African problem further compounding the challenge. The United Arabs Republic (UAR) continued its dominance on African states persuading them to cut off diplomatic relations with Israel with the emphasis that her presence in Africa was seen as form of imperialism whose presence was construed as neo- colonialism. Israel suffered another blow in in 1967 during fifth Organization of African Union (OAU) summit, in Kinshasa when majority of African states refused to discuss the Six-Day War, following the defeat of Egypt by Israel and occupation of Sinai by Israel. Consequently, OAU issued a statement declaring Israel as a foreign presence in sovereign African territory, and African countries should do everything to help Egypt get back the lands conquered by Israel. This declaration expressed solidarity with Egypt which had been in support of Arab nations against Israel (OAU, 1967). After the Kinshasa summit, OAU became a key player in the process of the erosion of relations between Israel and African states, championed by Arab countries of North Africa headed by Egypt.

Nonetheless, Israel maintained a close diplomatic relations contact with new African nations with the number of embassies Israel had in Africa countries increasing from 23 embassies in 1961 to 32 embassies in Africa, with 12 African embassies in Israel. As a result, Israel expanded its economic presence across Africa through major contractual projects and commercial ventures. Israeli companies secured contracts worth approximately \$300 million, with the largest share undertaken by Solel Boneh (about \$170 million), followed by Vered (\$110 million) and other firms (\$20 million). Additional income of around \$7 million came from planning and consultancy services. By the end of 1972, net foreign exchange earnings from these contracts and planning activities were estimated at about \$40 million, alongside roughly \$90 million generated from exports. Overall, Israel strengthened trade and investment ties in infrastructure, technology, and agriculture, supporting economic development across several African countries (Oded, 2018).

Despite the continued economic presence across Africa and continued investment, African countries have not reciprocated Israel generosity as observed in their voting patterns. This study aimed to critically unpack the role of Arab influence on the relation between African nations and the state of Israel.

Statement of the Problem

Partnership between Israel and African countries pose to provide mutual benefits between the two partners. Israel has expertise in solar, water, agriculture, and technological innovations, areas where Africa lacks. Thus, collaboration with Israel gives African states an opportunity to grow in industrialization to becoming a continent which can meet its needs. In addition, Gidron (2024) suggests, strengthening economic ties through investments and trade agreements would lead to economic growth. Israel investing in African markets provides opportunities for African states to diversify their market partners and reduce dependency on traditional western markets. This would lead to building capacity towards international engagements.

Despite these opportunities for Africa, Israel has endured the influence of Arab states, regional solidarities and global power dynamics which have affected her relationship with African countries (Miller, 2020). This has further affected their engagement in multilateral arena such as African Union (AU) and United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) (Bishku, 2017). It is thus, viewed that Israel's commitment has not been reciprocated by African countries which has strained their relations with Israel. Even with the establishment of Abraham Accords, which saw United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco shift from the traditional Arab League, and establishing economic, diplomatic and scientific ties with Israel, the expected benefit on realignment of regional alliances facilitated by the Accords has not yielded the expected results since the Accord has not influenced Africa's voting in support for Israel in the international arena (Rohulia, 2023). The Abraham Accords is a new framework for regional peace, with the aim to foster cooperation in tourism, Agriculture, security, trade and technology with many states, and Africa states on board (Miller, 2020).

Although it is appreciated that the emergence of Arabic influence on African states has influenced the relationship between Israel and the African states, the extent to which it influenced individual African states has not been well documented. This study sought to determine the role of religious inclination by Africans nations in supporting or opposing Israel at international platforms such as UNGA.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Through the lenses of constructivism, Israel's suffering from Arab discrimination has made it remain ready to contribute to social and economic development in Africa. Embedded in the vision of the State of Israel by the founder, Theodore Herzl, in 1902 in the book *Altneuland*, one of the objectives was to help the oppressed peoples of Africa. He observed that the radical discrimination, justified because of black colour, affecting Africa needed a solution. The Jews could well understand the depth of atrocities and suffering, because of the horrors of the slave trade they experienced. Because of what Herzl observed, he charged that Israel would work

toward becoming a nation that would assist in the process of redemption and revival of the black people, African nations (Eylon, 2025).

The Africa–Israel relationship, dating back to the 1950s, has evolved through shifting political alignments, scientific cooperation, economic engagement, and broader global diplomatic currents. Existing literature shows that nearly forty African states currently maintain diplomatic ties with Israel, reflecting a pragmatic approach in which African governments leverage scientific collaboration, technology transfer, and economic partnerships to advance strategic development goals (Adebajo, 2016). Israel has used technical cooperation and development diplomacy to strengthen its international legitimacy and political alliances within the African nations which scholars argue that such interactions carry important implications for African sovereignty, foreign policy autonomy and development trajectories, thereby providing a theoretical and policy foundation for understanding Africa–Israel engagement within African nations (Alden & Schoeman, 2015; Bishku, 2019).

Long before African countries started gaining independence, Israel had already initiated contacts across the continent, anticipating the political transformation underway. The period between 1957 and 1967 is often described as a hopeful and collaborative phase in Africa–Israel relations, characterized by strong diplomatic goodwill and practical development partnerships (Bishku, 2019). As newly independent African states sought to build viable economies and institutions after colonial rule, Israel positioned itself as a technical partner by establishing the Centre for International Cooperation (MASHAV) within its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, facilitating agricultural training and capacity-building programs for thousands of Africans (MASHAV, 2020). Israeli experts were deployed across Sub-Saharan Africa to support agricultural modernization, rural development, and institutional strengthening, fostering a sense of solidarity rooted in shared post-independence nation-building experiences. Scholars note that this early engagement combined diplomacy with development assistance, shaping the foundation of Africa–Israel relations for decades (Adebajo, 2016).

Between the 1960s and 1973, Africa–Israel relations shifted from cooperation to gradual diplomatic disengagement, largely due to the intensification of the Arab–Israeli conflict. A major turning point was the Six-Day War of June 1967, in which Israel defeated several Arab states, including Egypt. Following the war, Arab governments successfully internationalized the conflict within African diplomatic forums, particularly at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit in Kinshasa in 1967. By the 1970 OAU Summit in Addis Ababa, the Middle East crisis had been formally incorporated into the agenda under the theme of aggression against Egypt (OAU, 1970). The OAU reaffirmed earlier resolutions calling for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied since 5 June 1967 in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, expressing solidarity with Egypt and urging member states to support United Nations efforts toward unconditional withdrawal (Oded, 2018).

The diplomatic strain deepened in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), where African states were divided over competing Afro-Asian and Arab-backed resolutions on the Middle East conflict. A majority of African countries supported the pro-Arab proposal

demanding Israel's complete and unconditional withdrawal, while only a few either opposed or abstained (Oded, 2018). This voting pattern signalled a clear diplomatic realignment and reflected the growing influence of Arab states within African multilateral politics. The integration of the Middle East conflict into continental diplomacy, combined with limited regional negotiation mechanisms within Africa at the time, contributed significantly to the deterioration of Africa-Israel relations and set the stage for the widespread severance of diplomatic ties that followed in the early 1970s (ISA, 1970a, 1970b).

Despite the persistent diplomatic tensions between African states and Israel, cooperation has persisted through flexible, low-profile engagement in development assistance, security collaboration, trade, and technology transfer. Through MASHAV and related initiatives, Israel adopted a pragmatic model that allowed African governments to calibrate their engagement while balancing ties with Arab states, domestic political perceptions, and Western donor expectations (Bishku, 2017). In the Sahel, early perceptions of Islam as moderate and locally grounded facilitated shared development partnerships, though later ideological shifts toward more politicized and militant interpretations complicated regional dynamics (Lubotzky, 2021; Mazuz, 2022; Adrahtas & Milani, 2021). Scholars argue that understanding Africa-Israel relations require attention not only to interstate diplomacy but also to domestic politics, local power structures, and non-state actors shaping foreign policy choices (Ylonen, 2025).

Post-1973 developments reveal deeper geopolitical complexities. After the Yom Kippur War, Arab diplomatic influence in Africa intensified, discouraging the renewal of ties with Israel and promoting resolutions within the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) condemning Israel and aligning the Palestinian struggle with African liberation movements (Africa Contemporary Record, 1974; Organization of African Unity, 1988). The Palestinian issue was framed as analogous to anti-colonial struggles in Southern Africa, reinforced by decisions within the United Nations General Assembly granting observer status to the PLO (United Nations General Assembly, 1974). These developments institutionalized the Middle East conflict within African multilateral diplomacy, often shaping voting patterns and political alignments in global forums. At the same time, historical analyses emphasize that Africa-Israel relations have never been static. Strategic interests in security cooperation, counterterrorism and economic exchange with specific countries such as Kenya have sustained bilateral engagement despite broader continental pressures (Khlebnikova, 2017; Olusola, 2013). Israeli soft power strategies, centred on agriculture, health, and technological innovation, have sought to build goodwill and political support, although questions remain regarding the effectiveness of aid in influencing African voting behaviour in multilateral institutions (Semenova, 2023; Salman, 2024; Mamuaya, 2023). Geopolitical shifts and adaptive diplomacy continue to shape the balancing act African states perform between Israel and Arab partners (Oded, 2018).

Arab institutional influence, particularly through the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), has further embedded Middle East politics within African continental affairs (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, 2008). Diplomatic campaigns following the 1967 war and subsequent OAU resolutions portrayed Israel as aligned with colonial and apartheid systems, strengthening anti-Israel narratives across parts of the continent (Oded, 2018). Yet

resistance to external pressure has also emerged, with some African leaders defending non-alignment and objecting to the dominance of Middle East issues within African agendas (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1964, 1973; Organization of African Unity, 1981). Overall, Africa–Israel relations remain shaped by competing geopolitical narratives, strategic development interests, and the ongoing quest for legitimacy and influence within multilateral institutions (Geronik, 2020; Hermann, 2013).

Strengthening ties between African states and Israel presents reciprocal diplomatic and developmental gains. Closer cooperation can translate into stronger political backing for Israel in multilateral arenas such as the United Nations and the African Union, while African countries benefit from access to scientific innovation, security collaboration, investment flows, and technical expertise. Scholars note that Israel’s comparative advantage lies in targeted technical assistance rather than large-scale financial aid, particularly in agriculture, water management, health, and security sectors (Semenova, 2023; Mamuaya, 2023). Enhanced cooperation in these areas can contribute to improved political stability, safer trade routes, and a more conducive climate for foreign investment and sustainable development.

Adopting a pragmatic foreign policy that prioritizes mutual economic benefit could further strengthen Africa’s global competitiveness. Through infrastructure investment, technology transfer, and productivity-enhancing innovations, African economies may diversify production and expand participation in higher-value global markets (Bishku, 2017; Salman, 2024). Diversifying diplomatic partnerships beyond traditional Western or Arab alignments also broadens Africa’s strategic options and reduces dependency on any single bloc. In this context, Africa–Israel collaboration can serve both developmental and geopolitical purposes supporting Africa’s economic transformation while potentially reinforcing Israel’s diplomatic standing in international forums (Geronik, 2020; Hermann, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology drew its findings from a mixed-methods approach within a qualitative and quantitative framework in line with the study objective to explore both historical developments and contemporary dynamics. It sought to provide empirical evidence of the influence of religious inclination on the Africa - Israel cooperation based on how African nations vote at the AU and UNGA. The study was based on a pragmatic research philosophy which views knowledge as dynamic developing, and oriented toward its consequences in human nature. As a result, the approach emphasises that knowledge is obtained through application of subjective and objective methods (Mbanaso et al., 2023). The approach, was preferred because it allows the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in deriving knowledge (Allemang et al., 2022). Descriptive research design adopted in the study.

The study was conducted among 40 African nations that currently have diplomatic relations with Israel with existing embassies or consulates. The study targeted experts and officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, trade and industry, education, agriculture, science and technology, and other sectors relevant to the study in relation to Africa and Israel. Current and former Israeli's diplomats also participated in the study to bring the perspective of diplomatic

ties between Israel and Africa. Stratified sampling techniques was used to categorise African countries into five regions comprising seven (7) countries in East Africa, eight (8) in Central Africa, two (2) in North Africa, ten (10) in South Africa and twelve (12) in West Africa (African Union, 2025). From each region, random sampling techniques was used in selecting a total sample of 92 respondents.

Primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaire. Google form questionnaire was developed owing to the geographical dispersion of the respondents across the continent. The questionnaire contained both closed ended and open-ended questions. In addition, interviews were conducted on current and former Israeli's diplomats to bring the perspective of diplomatic ties between Israel and Africa. The qualitative data collected was analysed thematically using conceptual analysis. The tool for data analysis was NVivo to group similar themes, responses, religious sentiments, count frequencies of repeated words and clarify responses into negative, positive and neutral. Results were presented in prose form. In addition, quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Results were presented in tables and charts.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents results of the study findings derived from analysed data. The results are based on a response of 84 respondents from the targeted sample size of 92 respondents.

Relationship African Countries and Israel

This section contains the perceptions of the respondents about the nature of relationship between Israel and African nations. The discussion was based on the quantitative and qualitative feedback derived during the analysis to give a clear representation of the diplomatic, economic, and strategic relationship that governs the Africa–Israel relations. Respondents were asked to indicate the general form of relationship their countries maintain with Israel. The responses are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Cross-tabulation: Region vs Form of Relationship with Israel

Region	Formal	Frictional	Informal	Neutral	Total
Central Africa	2	0	0	1	3
East Africa	54	0	1	4	59
Southern Africa	9	2	1	1	13
West Africa	7	0	0	2	9
Total	72	2	2	8	84

Source: Field data, 2025

The cross-tabulation shows that formal diplomatic relations dominated across all African regions. East Africa accounted for the largest share, with 54 respondents reporting formal ties, reflecting historically strong bilateral engagement, particularly in agriculture, water technology, and security cooperation. Southern and West Africa also showed predominantly formal relations, though with a wider spread of experiences, including frictional relations in

Southern Africa and more neutral positions in West Africa and Central Africa. Informal relationships were rare, appearing only in East and Southern Africa. Overall, the data highlights that while formal engagement was the norm, regional variations exist, particularly in Southern Africa where frictional ties appeared. In Central and West Africa neutrality was more common.

Perceived Benefits Realized from Relations with Israel

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which their countries have benefitted from their relationships with Israel. Results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Cross-Tabulation: Institution Type × Perceived Benefits from Relations with Israel

Institution Type	Very Great Benefit	Great Benefit	Little Benefit	No Benefit	Total (n)
Government Ministries & State Agencies	12	24	6	0	42
County / Local Government	2	3	1	0	6
International Organisations	4	7	2	0	13
Universities & Research Institutions	3	4	3	0	10
Private Sector	1	2	2	0	5
NGOs / Civil Society	2	5	1	0	8
Religious Organisations	1	3	0	0	4
Independent Consultants / Individuals	0	2	0	2	4
Total	25	50	15	2	84

Source: Field data, 2025

The cross-tabulation reveals that perceived benefits from Africa–Israel relations vary by institutional affiliation, though the overall trend strongly favours positive evaluations. Government ministries and state agencies, representing over half of all respondents, reported the strongest benefits, with 85.7% indicating either great or very great benefit. This was expected, as these institutions directly oversee sectors where Israel’s involvement was well-established, such as agriculture, security cooperation, technology transfer, and health innovation. Ministries also tend to participate in bilateral agreements and capacity-building programmes, which heightens their exposure to tangible developmental outputs. International organisations and NGOs similarly reported overwhelmingly positive perceptions. Staff in these entities frequently worked on thematic areas, such as food security, climate adaptation, technology deployment, and humanitarian programming, where Israeli expertise and partnership frameworks have direct operational impact. Their responses confirm earlier findings showing Israel’s strong footprint in agriculture, water technology, health systems, and digital solutions.

Universities and research institutions presented a more distributed pattern, with notable representation in the “little benefit” category. This aligns with qualitative feedback indicating that academic collaborations remain less institutionalised, often occurring informally or at departmental level rather than through structured national frameworks. Private sector respondents also showed a mix of perceptions, reflecting the uneven penetration of Israeli investment across African commercial markets. Religious organisations reported unanimously positive benefits, consistent with earlier findings that Christian institutions often maintain favourable views of Israel, influenced by historical, theological, and humanitarian ties. Conversely, the category of independent consultants and individuals contained the only “no benefit” responses. This may reflect limited access to government-led partnership programmes, low personal exposure to direct cooperation, or critical views shaped by political dynamics surrounding the Middle East. Overall, the cross-table reinforced the conclusion that perceived benefits were highest among institutions most actively engaged in technical, developmental, or diplomatic cooperation with Israel, while less directly involved groups may be more ambivalent.

Respondents were also asked to tell whether they believe that their cooperation with Israel was symbiotic. Table 3 displays the results.

Table 3: Perception of Whether the Relationship is Symbiotic

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	67	79.8
No	16	19.0
Missing/Unclear	1	1.2
Total	84	100.0

Source: Field data, 2025

A substantial majority (79.8%) viewed the relationship as symbiotic, suggesting a mutually beneficial partnership. Respondents emphasised collaboration in agriculture, security intelligence, trade, technology transfer, and diplomatic support. Those who did not view the relationship as symbiotic often cited political pressures, especially from Arab–Muslim blocs, limited reciprocity, or unequal benefits. Nonetheless, the overall perception was that cooperation yields value on both sides.

How Israel Has Benefitted from African Countries

Respondents provided a wide range of qualitative views on how Israel had benefitted from its engagement with African countries. Their responses reveal that the perceived benefits are multidimensional, spanning diplomacy, security, economic exchanges, human capital, cultural ties, and historical connections. A substantial number of respondents emphasised Israel’s gains in diplomatic legitimacy and international positioning. Several noted that African countries provide Israel with valuable political alliances and support in international forums. One respondent (Interviewee 4, 2025) captured this clearly, stating that Israel benefits “through

diplomatic support and limited economic trade,” while another remarked that “Kenya is strategic in the African economic bloc. It has a strong voice in diplomatic affairs.” These views suggest that Africa is seen as an important partner in strengthening Israel’s diplomatic reach and influence.

Security cooperation also emerged strongly across the responses. Some respondents highlighted mutual engagement in counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, and crisis response. A respondent from East Africa (Interviewee 5, 2025) observed that Israel gains through “security and counterterrorism cooperation,” while another noted that Israel receives “security intelligence and protection” in return for its partnership with African states. These reflections align with literature positioning Israel as an active security partner in Africa, particularly in regions affected by terrorism and instability.

Economic and trade-related benefits were also widely mentioned. Respondents frequently referred to exports, agriculture, and the role of African markets. One participant (Interviewee 2, 2025) explained that “Kenya has provided crucial support to Israel through security cooperation... and significant Israeli investment in Kenya, particularly in agriculture and infrastructure,” while another (Interviewee 4, 2025) noted that Israel “has benefited from the trade of mineral resources. South Africa's economy is monopolised by Jewish companies participating in mining, retail, manufacturing, and professional services.” These accounts illustrate that the exchange is not unidirectional; Africa also provides resources, market access, and commercial opportunities that contribute to Israel’s economic interests.

Some respondents emphasised cultural and historical ties as sources of benefit. One interviewee (Interviewee 1, 2025) remarked that “many Israelites lived in Ethiopia for centuries and returned once Israel was established as a state,” highlighting long-standing demographic and cultural linkages. Another respondent (Interviewee 6, 2025) referred to the significance of religious engagement, stating that their country supports Israel through “prayer support for Israel’s protection... Intercessors pray daily and regularly.” Although such contributions may not be conventionally categorised within economic or diplomatic frameworks, they reflect how religious identity and cultural solidarity shape public and institutional attitudes in certain African nations.

A number of responses pointed to human resource contributions and skills development. One respondent stated that “Israel has imported ideas and important knowledge from my country, to serve in innovation of new advanced technologies,” (Interviewee 7, 2025) while another pointed to labour exchange, explaining the benefit as “through labour export,” (Interviewee 2, 2025) especially in agricultural and caregiving sectors. Others described benefits arising from collaboration in education, technical training, and infrastructure development, including a respondent (Interviewee 2, 2025) who noted that “through technology and infrastructure, (The University of Zambia) UNZA was built by them and they also created a file system for land,” highlighting the deeper institutional footprints that remain in some African states.

Not all responses indicated clear benefits. A small minority argued that Israel gains little or nothing from their countries. One respondent (Interviewee 8, 2025) wrote, “I am not sure,” and another (Interviewee 3, 2025) stated, “It has not, as we have taken Israel to the International Criminal Court.” These outlier views reflect political or historical tensions that have shaped bilateral interactions in specific contexts.

Overall, the qualitative responses represent a rather complicated yet mostly favourable picture. Israel is seen as gaining from Africa in terms of diplomatic backing, security collaboration, trade and investment potentials, cultural and historical ties, workforce exchange, as well as human resources. Although there are those respondents who doubted the scale of these benefits, the overall story points out that African states have a role to play in interests of Israel both geopolitical, economic and security and the point to the notion that the relationship between Africa and Israel is not one-sided, although there are circumstances where it is felt unequally.

Influence of Arab–Muslim Dynamics on Africa’s Voting Patterns on Israel

This section examined how Arab–Muslim geopolitical influence shapes Africa’s diplomatic stance and voting behaviour toward Israel, particularly within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The analysis covered the evolution of Israel’s diplomatic engagements in African states since 2000, the African institutions most involved in these engagements, the perceived weight of UNGA resolutions in shaping voting behaviour, Africa’s voting patterns over two distinct periods, and the broader diplomatic forces affecting voting decisions.

Israel’s Diplomatic Engagements in African States Since 2000

Respondents were asked to describe the trajectory of Israel’s diplomatic engagements in their countries since the year 2000. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Israel’s Diplomatic Engagements in African States Since 2000

Response	Frequency	Percent
Increased	56	66.7
Decreased	11	13.1
Stagnated	17	20.2
Total	84	100.0

Source: Field data, 2025

The findings show that most respondents perceived a significant expansion of Israel’s diplomatic presence in Africa over the past two decades. A strong 66.7% indicated that Israel’s diplomatic engagements have increased, reflecting renewed Israeli outreach efforts in areas such as agriculture, counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and trade diplomacy. Conversely, 20.2% reported stagnation, suggesting minimal changes in their national relations with Israel, while only 13.1% felt that diplomatic engagement had decreased, indicating that deteriorating relations were relatively rare. These results pointed to a continued Israeli interest in strengthening its political, strategic, and development ties across Africa, despite regional political pressures.

African Institutions Engaged by Israel Since 2000

Respondents identified which African institutions Israel has most actively engaged with. Table 5 summarizes the responses.

Table 5: African Institutions Engaged by Israel

Institution	Frequency	Percent
Christian-based organizations	32	38.1
Bilateral engagements only	18	21.4
Regional and economic forums	18	21.4
African Union	16	19.0
Total	84	100.0

Source: Field data, 2025

Christian-based organizations emerged as the most engaged institutions, cited by 38.1% of respondents. This reflects the strong faith-based networks and Christian solidarity movements that historically support Israel, especially in East and Southern Africa. Bilateral channels and regional forums each accounted for 21.4%, suggesting that Israel balances grassroots religious engagement with formal governmental and regional diplomatic approaches. Engagement with the African Union was reported by 19.0%, a figure indicating that while Israel has sought AU observer status and broader continental engagement, political resistance, primarily from North African and Arab-aligned states; continues to constrain stronger ties at the continental level.

Impact of UNGA Resolutions on Africa's Voting Behaviour Toward Israel

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which United Nations General Assembly resolutions on Israel influence African voting patterns. The results appear in Table 6.

Table 6: Perceived Effect of UNGA Resolutions on Africa's Voting Behaviour

Impact Level	Frequency	Percent
Great extent	43	51.2
Very great extent	16	19.0
Little extent	23	27.4
No extent	2	2.4
Total	84	100.0

Source: Field data, 2025

More than half of the respondents (51.2%) believe UNGA resolutions significantly influence African voting behaviour, while another 19.0% view this influence as very great. This suggests that global political pressure, diplomatic expectations, and bloc voting patterns strongly shape Africa's positions on Israel-related resolutions. A smaller proportion, 27.4%, reported only a little influence, and 2.4% saw no impact, indicating that some states independently define their positions based on national interests rather than global political tides.

Africa's Voting Trends in Support of Israel (2000–2010 and 2011–2023)

Respondents evaluated Africa's voting behaviour toward Israel during two separate periods. The results for each period are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7: Africa's Voting Behaviour (2000–2010)

Voting Trend	Frequency	Percent
More supportive of Israel at UN	31	36.9
Abstain rather than oppose	30	35.7
Less supportive	19	22.6
Unchanged	4	4.8
Total	84	100.0

Source: Field data, 2025

The 2000–2010 period reflects a generally favourable shift toward Israel. A combined 72.6% either supported Israel more frequently (36.9%) or preferred to abstain rather than oppose (35.7%). This aligned with scholarship observing warmer Africa–Israel ties in the early 2000s, partly due to development partnerships and counterterrorism collaboration. Only 22.6% reported declining support.

Table 8: Africa's Voting Behaviour (2011–2023)

Voting Trend	Frequency	Percent
Less supportive	41	48.8
Abstain rather than oppose	22	26.2
More supportive	15	17.9
Unchanged	6	7.1
Total	84	100.0

Source: Field data, 2025

The second period (2011–2023) displays a clear decline in support. Nearly half the respondents (48.8%) stated Africa has become less supportive of Israel, a shift often attributed to rising Palestinian solidarity, pressure from Arab–Muslim states, and political realignment within the African Union. Although 17.9% reported increased support, this was markedly lower than in the earlier decade. Abstentions remained common, suggesting African states increasingly adopt cautious, non-confrontational positions.

To examine whether perceived material benefits from cooperation with Israel translate into supportive voting behaviour, a cross-tabulation was conducted between Perceived Benefit to African Countries and Voting Trend (2011–2023).

Table 9: Cross-Tabulation – Perceived Benefit to Africa × Voting Trend (2011–2023)

Perceived Benefit to African Countries	More Supportive of Israel F, %	Abstain Rather than Oppose F, %	Less Supportive F, %	Unchanged F, %	Row Total
Very great / Great benefit (n = 67)	13 19.4%	18 26.9%	30 44.8%	6 9.0%	67 (100%)
Little / No benefit (n = 17)	2 11.8%	4 23.5%	11 64.7%	0 0.0%	17 (100%)
Column totals	15 17.9%	22 26.2%	41 48.8%	6 7.1%	84 (100%)

Source: Field data, 2025

The cross-tabulation in Table 9 confirmed that declining support for Israel at the UN was widespread across both groups, but it also exposed a critical structural inconsistency. Among respondents who believed that their countries had benefitted very greatly or greatly from cooperation with Israel, 44.8 percent still reported that their states had become less supportive of Israel in UN voting between 2011 and 2023, and a further 26.9 percent indicated a tendency to abstain rather than oppose. Only 19.4 percent in this high-benefit group described their countries as more supportive.

Among those who perceived little or no benefit to Africa, the pattern was even more negative: 64.7 percent reported that their states had become less supportive of Israel, and only 11.8 percent indicated increased support. This group therefore combined low perceived developmental gain with a disproportionate tendency toward less supportive voting patterns.

The results showed that perceived material benefit from Africa–Israel cooperation does not automatically translate into diplomatic support for Israel at the UNGA. Even within the high-benefit group, negative or hesitant voting patterns (less supportive or abstaining) dominate. This reinforces a central finding of the study: African states frequently separate developmental cooperation with Israel from multilateral diplomatic alignment, with voting behaviour being shaped more by Arab–Muslim influence, regional bloc positions, and broader geopolitical calculations than by the extent of economic and scientific benefit derived from Israel.

Influence of Africa–Arab Relations on Voting Behaviour

Respondents were asked whether Africa–Arab relations influence voting patterns toward Israel. The results appear in Table 10.

Table 10: Cross Table: Region vs Perceived Influence of Africa–Arab Relations on Voting Behaviour

Region	Yes	No	Total
Central Africa	2	1	3
East Africa	61	1	62
Southern Africa	7	6	13
West Africa	3	3	6
Total	73 (86.9%)	11 (13.1%)	84

Source: Field data, 2025

The results strongly indicated that Africa–Arab relations exerted substantial influence on the voting behaviour of African states at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). As Table 10 shows, 86.9% of respondents affirmed that Arab relations shape Africa’s voting patterns. However, the strength of this influence becomes clearer when examined across regions.

The cross-table analysis revealed striking regional differences. In East Africa, almost all respondents (61 out of 62) reported that Arab–African relations influence voting behaviour, reflecting the region’s deep involvement in Christian–Muslim geopolitics, the Horn of Africa’s proximity to the Middle East, and financial and political ties with Arab Gulf states. In contrast, Southern Africa displayed a more divided pattern, with only 7 out of 13 respondents affirming the influence, suggesting that liberation-struggle ideologies, South–South politics, and historically independent foreign policy traditions moderate Arab pressure in that region. West Africa was evenly split (3 “yes”, 3 “no”), reflecting the region’s religious diversity and divergent national alignments. Central Africa leaned toward acknowledging significant Arab influence, though with small sample numbers.

These patterns underscore that Arab–Muslim influence is not uniformly distributed across the continent; instead, it is strongest in East Africa and comparatively weaker in Southern and Western Africa. This regional variation is important because it demonstrates that Africa’s voting behaviour on Israel is shaped by a mix of religious identity, historical alliances, and geopolitical proximity.

Respondents who stated that Africa–Arab relations influence voting behaviour were further asked to indicate the degree of that influence. Table 11 presents a cross-tabulation between the extent of Arab–Muslim influence and Africa’s voting trend between 2011 and 2023, offering a deeper understanding of how ideological and geopolitical pressures shape diplomatic choices.

Table 11: Extent of Influence of Africa–Arab Relations

Extent of Arab–Muslim Influence	More Supportive of Israel Row %	Abstain Rather than Oppose Row %	Less Supportive Row %	Unchanged Row %	Total
Very great extent (n = 19)	0 0.0%	2 10.5%	16 84.2%	1 5.3%	19 (22.6%)
Great extent (n = 45)	7 15.6%	12 26.7%	23 51.1%	3 6.7%	45 (53.6%)
Little extent (n = 10)	4 40.0%	4 40.0%	2 20.0%	0 0.0%	10 (11.9%)
Very little extent (n = 10)	4 40.0%	3 30.0%	2 20.0%	1 10.0%	10 (11.9%)
Column Totals	15 17.9%	22 26.2%	41 48.8%	6 7.1%	84 (100%)

Source: Field data, 2025

Across the study sample, most respondents rated the influence as significant, with 53.6% selecting great extent and 22.6% selecting very great extent. However, the cross-table revealed a far sharper pattern: the stronger the perceived influence of Arab–Muslim relations, the more consistently African states shift toward less supportive voting behaviour at the UNGA.

In the group that described the influence as very great, a striking 84.2% reported that their countries became less supportive of Israel during 2011–2023. Only 10.5% indicated abstentions, and none reported increased support. This is the clearest numerical concentration in the entire table, demonstrating that when Arab–Muslim pressure is perceived as intense, African states overwhelmingly adopt positions that distance them from Israel. Similarly, among those who perceived the influence as great, over half (51.1%) reported a decline in support, and another 26.7% reported a preference toward abstention rather than open support for Israel. Together, these two groups, representing the majority of respondents, form the core of Africa’s drift away from Israel in the multilateral arena.

In contrast, respondents who rated Arab–Muslim influence as little or very little displayed the opposite trend. In both of these groups, 40% reported that their states had become more supportive of Israel, while another 30–40% indicated continued reliance on abstention. Only 20% reported declining support in each category. This pattern shows that when Arab–Muslim pressure is weak or negligible, African states are more inclined to adopt independent diplomatic stances that do not automatically align with Arab or Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) positions.

Therefore, the cross-tabulation demonstrates a clear and strong relationship: Perceived intensity of Arab–Muslim influence is the single most powerful predictor of Africa’s declining support for Israel in UN voting between 2011 and 2023. The data confirmed long-standing scholarly arguments that Arab financial leverage, ideological ties on the Palestinian question, and inherited political alignments from the Cold War era continue to constrain Africa’s diplomatic autonomy. Even in states where economic, agricultural, technological, and security cooperation with Israel was expanding, multilateral voting behaviour remained heavily shaped by Arab–Muslim solidarity networks. This finding reinforces a central conclusion of the study: Africa’s foreign policy behaviour at the UNGA is often decoupled from its bilateral developmental interests, reflecting the enduring weight of bloc politics and geopolitical pressure rather than the benefits accrued from cooperation with Israel.

Effect of Arab–Muslim Solidarity on Africa–Israel Relations

Respondents were asked to describe how Arab–Muslim solidarity affects Africa–Israel relations. Table 12 presents the results.

Table 12: Cross-Table: Effect of Arab–Muslim Solidarity × Voting Trend (2011–2023)

Effect of Arab–Muslim Solidarity	Abstain Rather than Oppose	Less Supportive	More Supportive of Israel	Unchanged	Total
Mostly obstructive	5	23	7	5	40(47.6%)
Slightly obstructive	12	11	6	0	29(34.5%)
Neutral	5	4	2	1	12(14.3%)
Not obstructive	0	3	0	0	3(3.6%)
Total	22(26.2%)	41(48.8%)	15(17.9%)	6(7.1%)	84

Source: Field data, 2025

The findings show that Arab–Muslim solidarity was widely perceived as an obstacle to deeper Africa–Israel relations. Nearly half of respondents (47.6%) described the effect as mostly obstructive, and another 34.5% as slightly obstructive. Yet the cross-table comparing solidarity effects with voting patterns (2011–2023) revealed a more nuanced and powerful dynamic.

Countries perceiving Arab–Muslim solidarity as mostly obstructive were heavily concentrated among those reporting less supportive voting behaviour toward Israel between 2011 and 2023. For example, the cross-table shows that among respondents who viewed solidarity as “mostly obstructive,” 23 reported their countries had become less supportive of Israel in this period, the highest cell counts in the entire table. This suggested that the more obstructive Arab–Muslim solidarity was perceived to be, the more likely a country was to shift toward anti-Israel or less supportive positions in UN voting.

Similarly, respondents who described Arab solidarity as slightly obstructive also clustered around “less supportive” (11 respondents) or “abstain rather than oppose” (12 respondents) voting patterns. This reflects a diplomatic hedging strategy, where states seek to avoid openly opposing Israel but also avoid appearing to break ranks with Arab-aligned blocs.

Conversely, respondents who viewed Arab–Muslim solidarity as neutral or not obstructive were more likely to report either stable voting behaviour or occasional instances of increased support for Israel. For example, “neutral” respondents were distributed across abstentions, small increases in support, and a few unchanged positions, while the small group perceiving no obstruction reported some of the only instances of stable or independent voting patterns.

The cross-table demonstrates a clear and consistent pattern: the stronger the perceived Arab–Muslim solidarity, the more African voting behaviour shifts away from supporting Israel and toward either opposition or cautious abstention. These findings aligned with existing literature showing that religious identity, ideological alignment, and geopolitical pressure combine to inhibit Africa–Israel diplomatic consolidation.

Other Diplomatic Drivers of African Voting Behaviour

The study further investigated additional factors influencing African nations’ voting patterns. The results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13: Additional Diplomatic Drivers Affecting Voting Patterns

Factor Combination	Frequency	Percent
Religious & cultural alignment	11	13.1
Superpower partners	8	9.5
Security & bloc geopolitics	6	7.1
Economic threats	3	3.6
Multiple combined factors (various mixes of religion, economics, geopolitics and superpower influence)	56	66.7
Total	84	100.0

Source: Field data, 2025

The majority (66.7%) selected combinations of factors, underscoring the multifaceted nature of Africa’s diplomatic decision-making. The most prominent single factor was religious and cultural alignment (13.1%), reflecting Africa’s Christian–Muslim divide and strong religious influence on public sentiment. Superpower alliances (9.5%), especially with the U.S. and China, also shape voting patterns, while security-related geopolitics (7.1%) highlight Africa’s strategic vulnerability in conflict and counterterrorism contexts.

Israel’s Perceived Influence on African Voting Patterns

Respondents provided their views on Israel’s direct influence on their countries’ voting behaviour. Table 14 summarizes the results.

Table 14: Perceived Influence of Israel on Voting Patterns

Influence Level	Frequency	Percent
Little	37	44.0
Great	29	34.5
Very great	9	10.7
None	9	10.7
Total	84	100.0

Source: Field data, 2025

Most respondents (44.0%) believe Israel exerted little influence on their voting behaviour, suggesting that African states tend to prioritise regional alliances, Arab–African relations, or broader geopolitical pressures over Israeli influence. However, a combined 45.2% indicated great or very great influence, reflecting Israel’s growing economic partnerships and security cooperation with certain African states. Only 10.7% reported no influence at all.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Africa–Israel cooperation is broad, formally structured, and strongly anchored in economic and scientific engagement. The cooperation manifests most prominently in agriculture, water technology, health innovation, cybersecurity, renewable energy, and academic collaboration, with agricultural and technological partnerships forming the central pillars.

The study further concludes that Arab–Muslim solidarity continues to exert substantial influence on Africa’s diplomatic behaviour toward Israel, especially within the UN General Assembly and AU. Despite the strong developmental benefits African states derive from Israel, geopolitical and religious pressures from Arab–Muslim blocs shape voting patterns in ways that frequently conflict with these interests. In summary, Arab–Muslim influence remains the most significant structural constraint to the full realisation of Africa–Israel cooperation.

Recommendations

The findings reveal that Africa’s voting patterns at the UNGA remain heavily shaped by Arab–Muslim geopolitical influence, often at the expense of Africa’s own developmental interests. To address this challenge, African states need to adopt a more autonomous and interest-based diplomatic posture. This requires governments to re-evaluate inherited voting patterns and prioritise national development considerations over external ideological alignments. Regional bodies such as ECOWAS, EAC, SADC, and IGAD should encourage member states to conduct independent foreign-policy assessments that balance historical alliances with contemporary socio-economic needs. Public diplomacy is also necessary, as many respondents indicated that religious narratives and misinformation continue to influence domestic perceptions. African states should therefore improve civic education and deepen policy dialogue to create a more informed understanding of the Africa–Israel relationship.

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