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OBSERVATIONS ON AFRICAN VOTING IN THE  
UNITED NATIONS, CONCERNING THE  
ISRAELI-ARAB CONFLICT.

By

David Hirschmann.

(These "Observations" have been made available by Mr. Hirschmann, who is a post-graduate student at the University of the Witwatersrand, for circulation to members of the Institute for their information.)

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The voting by the independent states of Africa in the United Nations General Assembly Session (June/July 1967), concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict, shows interesting differences and gives rise to some significant observations. This discussion, though admittedly a superficial one, is an attempt to throw some light on the way Africa voted.

(It may be noted here that the South African delegation abstained in the votes on all the resolutions referred to below.)

I. THE RESOLUTIONS.

(a) The Soviet Resolution, strongly anti-Israel, calling not only for withdrawal but also for condemnation of Israel, received 13 African votes in favour, 13 against and 12 abstentions.

(b) The so-called 'non-aligned' Yugoslavian Resolution, asking that Israel should withdraw immediately to her previous frontiers, considered also to be pro-Arab, received 20 votes in favour, 8 against and 10 abstentions.

(c) On the Latin-American Resolution, which spoke of freedom of navigation, the refugees and peace and considered by the Arabs to be anti-Arab, the voting was 17 in favour, 16 against and 5 abstentions.

(d) No African country voted against the motion calling on Israel not to alter the status of Jerusalem; 8 of them abstained and these are referred to in the journal "West Africa" as being the "hardcore Israelophiles".

(e) Only Algeria, the U.A.R., Sudan and Mauritania voted in favour of the Albanian Resolution which also condemned the United States and the United Kingdom for direct aggression, 15 voted against and 19 abstained.

II. THE VOTING.

For purposes of discussion the following system has been used: On the Soviet, Yugoslavia and Jerusalem resolutions, all being anti-Israel in some degree, 2 points have been given for a vote in favour, 1 for abstention and none for a vote against. In the case of the Latin-American Resolution, being pro-Israel, the points are reversed.

Admitting that such a system has serious limitations the scoring is as follows:

Pro-Arab: 8 points - (i.e. full points): the six members of Arab League - the U.A.R., Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and the Sudan; Mali, Mauritania and Somalia; Guinea, Burundi, Tanzania and Zambia.

7 points (slightly less extreme having abstained on the Russian Resolution): Senegal, Uganda and Congo (Brazzaville).

6 points (borderline) Nigeria; she abstained on both the Russian and the Latin-American resolutions; but her vote in favour of the Yugoslavian resolution puts her on the pro-Arab side.

Pro-Israel:

5 points (also borderline) Gabon and Niger. A relevant point is that when a 2/3 majority is required an abstention is as good as a vote against. Niger abstained on all of the motions except that concerning Jerusalem, which she supported. Gabon favoured the Yugoslavian Resolution, but on the other hand, abstained on the Jerusalem motion.

4 points: Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya and Congo (Kinshasa).

3 points: Central African Republic, Upper Volta, Ruanda, Sierra Leone, Cameroon.

2 points: (strongly pro-Israel): Gambia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Dahomey, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar.

1 point: ("Israelophiles") Malawi and Liberia.

Totals: Pro-Arab - 17; Pro-Israel - 21.

III. CLASSIFICATIONS.

Classifying the states in various ways, some of them arbitrary, certain points can be seen to arise.

(a) Geographical Division: Most Arab support lies in the North and East. In the North, excluding the Arab League members, 50% of the countries were anti-Israel, while in the East 60% were anti-Israel. Israel finds most of its support in West Africa, where 75% of the countries supported her, in Central Africa 75%, and in Southern Africa (excluding the Republic) 80%.

(b) Comparison: former British and French Colonies. This again excludes members of the Arab League. There was little or no difference in the support for Israel, which in both cases was about 65%. This is very surprising, taking into account the usual practice of the French African States of following De Gaulle in foreign policy. Possibly his previous long friendship with Israel had rubbed off on them, and they just could not keep up with his sudden change of policy.

(c) Degrees of pro-Western feeling. Using the Albanian Resolution to indicate degrees of pro-Western feeling and taking those who voted against it to be pro-West it can be seen that of the 15 countries which did vote against it, 14 favoured Israel (Uganda was the only exception), showing fairly clearly where Israel has come to lie in "cold war" terms. Of those that abstained, however, 7 out of the 19 supported Israel - Niger and Gabon (the "borderline cases") Chad, Kenya, C.A.R., Upper Volta and the Cameroon.

(d) Some Groupings. Outside of the O.A.U., the largest grouping in Africa is the O.C.A.M., formerly the Union Africaine et Malagache, consisting of 14 states, all former French colonies except for Ruanda: of these 11 supported Israel, the 3 against being Senegal, Mauritania and Congo (Brazzaville).

The five members of the Council of the Entente - all French West African states - all voted in favour of Israel.

Under a treaty of Association between Senegal and the Gambia, there is supposed to be some co-ordination on foreign policy. They took opposite sides.

In East Africa, Uganda and Tanzania supported the Arabs, whereas Kenya did not.

The non-aligned states aligned themselves and the split not only goes right down the middle in Africa but the Latin-American anti-Arab resolution was considered a "painful break in the anti-imperialist struggle ....." (Ousman Bai, Mali Foreign Minister in "West Africa" - July 15th.)

#### IV. SOME EXAMPLES.

(a) Kenya: It might be a mistaken interpretation to state that Kenya supported Israel; in fact she abstained as a matter of policy on all five resolutions, and her reason might well have been to keep the conflict out of Africa. As stated earlier, however, an abstention counts as a vote against and whereas Israel would be pleased with Kenya's voting, Nasser would not be.

(b) Nigeria: It is surprising to find Nigeria opposing Israel, in view of previous good relations. Possible reasons for this are that (i) the Northern Region is again in control and here the influence of Islam is far greater, and the Christian and Pagan Ibo tribe is no longer there to counter it; (ii) she felt by taking a stronger stand she might receive more aid in her troubles (note that she abstained on the Albanian resolution); (iii) she might not have enjoyed the sight of a smaller country getting the better of a larger.

(c) Senegal: One of President Senghor's main items of foreign policy is the establishment of an Arabo-Berber-Negro regional grouping comprising Senegal, Mali, Mauritania and Guinea, and this must have been one of his main reasons for support of the Arabs. This is out of step with the O.C.A.M. and differs from Gambia (Gambia and Israel ratified a treaty of friendship in May). 90% of Senegal's population is Islam.

(d) Congo - Kinshasa: This country voted with the Arabs on the Yugoslav Resolution, but against them on the Latin-American resolution, and abstained on the status of Jerusalem resolution. Relations between Mobutu and Israel and Mobutu and the West are good; so his one vote against Israel might be better understood in the light of the Tshombe affair as an attempt not to upset the Algerian Government.

(e) Ivory Coast: In about 1957, so a story goes, Houphouet and Nkrumah had a bet as to which country would be better off

in 10 years time. It appears as if Houphouet has won, and with his success his influence has risen. It appears that he and his country, and possibly their practices, are today exerting a strong influence - this appears from all the groupings of which the Ivory Coast is a member and the way they voted.

(f) Ghana: She falls in the group of extremely pro-Israel countries and this is merely one of the manifestations of the remarkable alteration of policies since the National Liberation Council took over from Nkrumah.

## V. SOME CONCLUSIONS.

The 'non-aligned' bloc did not hold together. The Afro-Asian bloc did not hold together. The O.A.U. showed no unified foreign policy.

The Arab-Israeli conflict made an impact on Africa, and with the exception of Kenya, all countries voluntarily took a stand.

Respect for De Gaulle and Bourguiba, in spite of the attempts by both to rally them, did not bring about French African support for the Arabs.

The Arabs again showed a strong unity. But their differences from Black Africa showed up - must have an effect on the difficulties of uniting the two groups on the African continent.

Islam remains, quite naturally, a very strong pro-Arab force, and the further one gets from it the less the support for the Arabs.

It appears that the more pro-West a country is, the more pro-Israel it is.

Excluding the North African Arab countries, the "radical" group in Africa seems to have diminished to eight - Guinea, Burundi, Zambia, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Congo (Brazzaville).

The new states of Lesotho and Botswana seem to be pro-West and pro-Israel and South Africa's influence on them in these regards should not be discounted. The unpopular Malawi is so pro-Israel that Israel might find her support embarrassing.

The 'old' African countries, Liberia and Ethiopia, both supported Israel. Of the countries which supported Israel, Chad, Niger and Ethiopia are those most closely in contact with the Arabs, and Israel might consider trying to use them in an attempt to influence the Arab states in support of her policies.

Nasser not only made a military error, he also made a diplomatic one. When it is considered that he is a leading and respected member of both the O.A.U. and the non-aligned

bloc, and that he was able to obtain only 11 out of 32 votes (again excluding the Arab League), his failure becomes more apparent.

Israel's work in Africa, often thought to exceed her means, has not been in vain. She has won a diplomatic battle - temporary though the success may turn out to be. Abba Eban, Israel's Foreign Minister, was more effective than Egypt's Deputy Prime Minister, Mahmoud Fawzi.