

## *Israel in Africa: A Study of the Emotional Intelligence Strategy*

<sup>1</sup>khadija Bouamer\*; <sup>2</sup>Asma Hemaïdia

<sup>1</sup> Boumerdes University -Algeria; <sup>2</sup> Boumerdes University -Algeria

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### **Abstract:**

*This study examines the role of emotional intelligence in international diplomacy, with a particular focus on Israel's engagement with the African continent. As Africa assumes increasing geopolitical and economic significance, understanding how emotional intelligence shapes diplomatic interactions becomes crucial. The research explores how Israeli diplomats employ emotional intelligence to build trust, strengthen partnerships, and navigate the continent's complex political dynamics. A qualitative methodology was applied, relying on content analysis of diplomatic speeches, policy documents, and historical interactions between Israel and African states.*

*Findings reveal that emotional intelligence plays a central role in advancing economic cooperation, thereby reinforcing Israel's influence in Africa. The study also highlights the varied responses of African actors to this emotionally driven approach. While some states embraced it as a tool for development and collaboration, others reacted with caution or resistance—particularly where it intersected with colonial memory and ethical positions on global issues.*

*These results resonate with existing literature emphasizing the importance of emotional intelligence in international relations, while also underscoring the need to account for local cultural and political contexts that shape its effectiveness. The study recommends incorporating emotional intelligence training into diplomatic education programs and calls for further research in other regional contexts to assess its broader applicability in global diplomacy.*

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence; Africa; Diplomacy; Israel; Foreign Policy.*

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\* Corresponding author (k.bouamer@univ-boumerdes.dz); (Laboratory of Political and International Studies).

## **Introduction:**

International relations is a complex field where political, economic, and cultural factors intertwine. Emotional intelligence has emerged as one of the modern strategic tools influencing the management of these relations, particularly in the context of current global challenges. In recent years, emotional intelligence has become a key factor in enhancing diplomatic performance by empowering diplomats to understand and manage the emotions of various parties, thereby building trust and mitigating conflicts. This underscores the importance of studying the role of emotional intelligence in international diplomacy, with a special focus on Israel's interactions with African nations—regions that are increasingly significant both geopolitically and economically.

This study examines Israel's deployment of emotional intelligence (EI) in its diplomacy with African states. While EI is traditionally conceptualized as a psychological trait—entailing empathy, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills—this study treats EI as a strategic diplomatic practice, encompassing the mobilization of shared narratives, emotional appeals, and identity-based affinities.

In this context, we differentiate between emotional intelligence as an individual capacity (e.g., empathy in diplomatic exchanges), and emotional diplomacy as a state-level instrument (e.g., invoking Holocaust to build alliances).

## **Problem Statement and Hypotheses**

The central issue addressed in this study is determining the extent to which emotional intelligence impacts the success of international diplomacy, particularly within the framework of Israel's foreign policy toward African nations. The key question is: How is the emotional intelligence strategy used in Israeli African policy?

This study departs from the hypothesis that emotional intelligence, in the Israeli context, is not merely a cultural characteristic or a structural component embedded in national identity, but rather a strategic tool employed within a targeted diplomatic discourse toward the African continent. Accordingly, emotional intelligence is not understood here as part of Israel's "national self," but as an instrument of what is commonly referred to as public diplomacy—mobilized to construct a positive

affective image of Israel within African consciousness in service of geopolitical and economic objectives.

Based on this premise, the study adopts a dual analytical framework:

First, it examines emotional intelligence as an individual diplomatic competency, practiced by state representatives such as ambassadors and envoys, through an analysis of their speeches and formal interactions;

Second, it deconstructs emotional diplomacy as an institutionalized practice, manifested in media campaigns, official statements, and symbolic narratives aimed at influencing African public opinion.

## **Research Methodology**

The research employs a qualitative methodology that incorporates several tools for data collection and analysis:

- 1- Content Analysis:** Diplomatic speeches, policy documents, and historical records of interactions between Israel and African nations were analyzed to extract indicators of the use of emotional intelligence in these engagements.
- 2- Case Studies:** Several key Israeli diplomatic initiatives in Africa were reviewed to analyze how emotional intelligence is applied in real-world situations and its impact on diplomatic outcomes.

This combined methodology was selected to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the role of emotional intelligence in diplomacy, enabling the collection of rich qualitative data that supports testing the proposed hypotheses and offers actionable recommendations for future diplomatic practices.

## **1. Conceptual Introduction: Emotional Intelligence in International Relations**

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dynamics power and interests emphasize<sup>1</sup> epistemological, recent. However, personl or secondary a as not emotion of role the highlighted have shifts epistemological an as but, factor personal or dethgisecondary shaping force active. Emotional, context this. In interaction diplomatic and behavior political allows that concept analytical valuable a as emerged has (EI) Intelligence–decision political influence emotions how of understanding deeper a for diplomacy nd making.

### 1.1 Defining Emotional Intelligence and Its Dimensions

Emotional intelligence, as defined by Mayer and Salovey, is “the ability to perceive emotions, access and generate emotions to assist thought, understand emotions, and regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth”.<sup>2</sup> The concept encompasses several key components: self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and communication skills<sup>3</sup>. In the field of diplomacy, emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in enhancing negotiation capacity, building trust, and preventing miscommunication.

A as understood is discourse emotional, realm, diplomatic the in political their construct to states by employed consciously tool strategic historical and cultural emontions, of invocation the through anrratives suffering, shared as such (methaphors charged emotionally or symbols, instruments affective These) solidarity symbolic or symbolism, genocide obscure and opinion, public shape alliances, forge to used are relations power asymmetrical<sup>4</sup>.

This means understanding the emotional motivations of nations and societies and formulating diplomatic messages that align with these motivations. This includes employing empathy, engaging in trust-based

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<sup>1</sup> - Dunne, Tim, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds. *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 11–20.

<sup>2</sup> -Mayer, John D, Peter Salovey. "What Is Emotional Intelligence?" In *Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence: Educational Implications*( New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997), pp. 6-12.

<sup>3</sup> -Goleman, Daniel, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee. *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), pp. 27–29.

<sup>4</sup> - Gaby Clément and Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, “Emotions, Power and International Relations,” *Journal of International Political Theory* 11, no. 2 (2015) pp, 92–108.

negotiations, and leveraging cultural and religious symbols to strengthen relationships. Consequently, emotional intelligence is regarded as a vital strategic tool that assists policymakers and diplomats in achieving their objectives<sup>1</sup>.

## **2.1 Relations International with in Intelligence Emotional Positioning Theories**

Despite the growing significance of emotional intelligence (EI) in explaining state behavior and understanding diplomatic interactions, traditional theories of international relations—especially realism and liberalism—tend to overlook the emotional dimensions of global affairs. Realism views the international system through a competitive lens, where state behavior is determined by national interest, power balances, and survival in an anarchic world order. Within this framework, emotions are seen as irrational or secondary elements, not part of core strategic calculations of the state.<sup>2</sup>

Liberalism, while relatively more open to concepts like cooperation, trust, and institutional dynamics, remains largely rooted in rational choice assumptions. This orientation limits its ability to account for non-material factors such as collective emotions, identities, and symbols.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, emotional intelligence offers a critical perspective that challenges these rationalist paradigms by highlighting the emotional dimension as a central component in the understanding of international politics. It does not assume that states and actors are driven solely by material interests, but rather acknowledges the role of empathy, emotional signaling, and psychological interaction in shaping foreign policy decisions, forming alliances, and building legitimacy. Emotions, in this light, are not merely ephemeral reactions but strategic tools that shape political narratives and redefine the map of allies and adversaries.

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<sup>1</sup> - Mayer, John D, Peter Salovey, and David R. Caruso. "Emotional Intelligence: New Ability or Eclectic Traits?" *American Psychologist*, no. 6 (2008), pp. 503–517.

<sup>2</sup> -Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 3rd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), pp. 105–109.

<sup>3</sup> -Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 4th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2012), pp. 20–27.

Although emotional intelligence originated in the context of cognitive and behavioral psychology, its application in international relations necessitates clear theoretical grounding. EI can be situated within the constructivist approach, which argues that state behavior is shaped not only by interests but also by identities, symbols, beliefs, and collective emotions.<sup>1</sup> Within this perspective, emotions are understood as structural forces that co-constitute meaning and behavior—not just individual psychological reactions.

Moreover, emotional intelligence can be conceptualized as an independent analytical framework that offers alternative tools to those rooted in rationalism or structural determinism. As a capacity to perceive, regulate, and strategically employ emotions, EI serves as a complementary lens to the major theoretical paradigms of international relations. Accordingly, this study adopts a dual analytical approach to emotional intelligence:

—First, as an individual skill practiced by diplomats in interpersonal interactions, contributing to effective communication, trust-building, and negotiation;

—Second, as a strategic instrument employed in political and diplomatic discourse to shape perceptions, construct alliances, and reinforce legitimacy.<sup>2</sup>

This distinction helps illuminate how emotions are transformed from private feelings into public and political resources—especially in non-Western or postcolonial contexts, where symbolism, identity, and memory often outweigh material considerations in shaping international alignments.

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<sup>1</sup>-Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 373–377.

<sup>2</sup>-Andrew A.G. Ross, "Emotion in International Political Theory," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Political Theory*, ed. Chris Brown and Robyn Eckersley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 415–429.

## 2. The Importance of Africa for Israel

The African continent holds strategic importance for Israel for several reasons related to political support, historical solidarity, and influence in international forums. Africa has long played a significant role in the Arab–Israeli conflict. The Zionist imperial perspective on Africa is not new; its roots can be traced back to the Basel Conference of 1897, when Uganda was proposed as one of the Zionist movement's options for establishing a national homeland for the Jews. In fact, some early Zionist opinions even favored Sudan, considering it a vast agricultural country suitable for farming.

This perspective was periodically revived after the establishment of the Zionist entity. Today, Africa is regarded as a battleground for settling scores over the Palestinian issue, among other reasons.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1 The Numerical Influence of African States in the United Nations

The voting weight of the continent in international organizations, especially in the UN General Assembly, is significant, as the African group accounts for 32 percent of the total votes. In this context, David Ben-Gurion affirmed this in 1960. Ben-Gurion, one of the founders of the Israeli Labor Party and a pioneer of the Zionist movement—and a key proponent of establishing the state of Israel on Palestinian lands—served as Israel's Prime Minister for 30 years since its establishment, being the first Prime Minister of Israel. Although African states may not be powerful individually, their voices are heard worldwide, and their votes in international organizations carry the same weight as those of major powers. Consequently, African solidarity aims to neutralize Africa's stance in the Arab–Israeli conflict.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.2 Israel's Geostrategic Isolation

The geographical location of the Israeli entity has imposed a geostrategic isolation that favored the Palestinian cause. Israel became aware of this and sought to find another region through which it could manage the conflict. Africa emerged as a strategic area for conflict management.

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<sup>1</sup>- Clancy, Jonathan. "Israel and Africa: From Abandonment to Engagement." *African Affairs* 116, no. 461 (2017) ,pp. 245–265.

<sup>2</sup>-*Ibid.* p.259.

### 2.3 The Role of the Economic Facto

Israel is considered a vast market for Israeli products, as the country dominates numerous industries and economic facilities in several African nations. For example, Israeli companies have a significant presence in Ethiopia's food industry, and the diamond sector—both its production and export—is one of the most important sources of national income for Israel, given that most of its diamonds are extracted from African countries. This economic engagement has not only strengthened Israel's trade ties with Africa but also contributed to its broader diplomatic strategy in the region<sup>1</sup>.

In this context, "Golda Meir", Israel's fourth Prime Minister, famously remarked:

*"Some might say that we went to Africa because we needed supportive votes at the United Nations, and that is indeed an important factor, though it is not the only one."*<sup>2</sup>

This acknowledgment reveals that pragmatic considerations were strongly present, despite the adoption of an emotional discourse that outwardly links Israel to Africa through "humanitarian" or "religious" ties

However, numerous studies—especially those from postcolonial perspectives—indicate that these relationships are unequal, as investments are not accompanied by genuine technology transfer or adherence to the principle of economic sovereignty.<sup>3</sup> For example, Israeli companies have been implicated in arms sales in conflict zones such as South Sudan<sup>4</sup>, raising ethical questions about their role in fueling crises.

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<sup>1</sup> -Clancy, Israel and Africa: From Abandonment to Engagement, *African Affairs* 116, no. 461 (2017), pp. 254–257.

<sup>2</sup> -Golda Meir, *My Life* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> -Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> -Human Rights Watch, "Israel: Weapons Transfers to South Sudan," Human Rights Watch, July 3, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/03/israel-weapons-transfers>

Davidson Basil, a Nigerian researcher, argues that Israel's relations with postcolonial African states were not merely aimed at overcoming the Arab boycott. Rather, Israel also exploited the institutional fragility of these states in order to present itself as a "developmental and civilizational model." He considered this a deviation from the concept of Global South solidarity, since it was essentially an exchange of political and security support in return for recognition, framed within interventions that carried a "technological-missionary" character<sup>1</sup>.

### **3. Mechanisms for Implementing the Emotional Intelligence Strategy:**

Studies indicate that Israel views Africa as a strategically significant arena for enhancing its regional and international standing by forging economic and security alliances based on shared historical and cultural ties with certain African nations. Concepts such as "identity" and "national self" are utilized to justify and bolster Israeli engagement on the continent—whether through technical cooperation, economic investments, or the exchange of security expertise. Moreover, these studies reveal that this engagement is not merely driven by economic interests; it is also closely linked to the pursuit of reaffirming Israeli identity. Israel employs a variety of approaches that leverage emotional intelligence as a diplomatic tool to attract African states. Accordingly, it has invested in emotional intelligence strategies that address cultural and linguistic differences, as well as capitalize on the opportunities provided by adopting an emotionally driven approach to building strategic alliances and reshaping African positions toward the Palestinian issue.<sup>2</sup>

#### **3.1 Employment of Religious and Historical Symbols to Establish "Spiritual Ties"**

Israel utilizes an emotionally charged narrative filled with religious and historical symbols to strengthen its cultural and religious ties with African nations. This narrative highlights ancient civilizational bonds to justify Israel's presence as a bridge for development. Additionally, unverified myths are employed to reinforce relationships with African

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<sup>1</sup>- Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (New York: Times Books, 1992),p. 216.

<sup>2</sup>-Jonathan Clancy, *op.cit*, pp, 261–265.

states. Studies suggest that these narratives are not just historical but also serve as political tools to reshape contemporary relations.<sup>1</sup>

Israel focuses in its official discourse towards Africa on deepening ties with the continent by invoking religious and historical myths, such as the legend of the relationship between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, to reinforce its cultural and religious presence. It relies on the Ethiopian narrative, which claims that Queen Makeda bore Solomon a son named Menelik I, the founder of the Solomonic dynasty. This myth is used to give a civilizational and official character to the Israel-Ethiopia relationship and to promote Israel's image as a developmental bridge within the African space.<sup>2</sup>

In some predominantly Christian African countries, Israel leverages religious beliefs that depict its establishment as part of biblical prophecies, thereby facilitating both political and economic support. It aligns itself with nations that subscribe to evangelical roots in their support for Israel, such as certain Protestant denominations in Nigeria, Kenya, and South Sudan. For instance, in Nigeria, Israel relies on Protestant currents, as many Christians there perceive common evangelical roots. These narratives are employed to enhance cooperation across diplomatic, security, and economic sectors, ultimately contributing to the formation of strategic alliances with local religious groups.<sup>3</sup>

In Kenya, Israel targets the Christian audience through media and cultural campaigns that highlight biblical heritage and link biblical prophecies with developmental achievements. This approach facilitates the signing of economic and security agreements with both governmental and private sectors. Moreover, Israel capitalizes on the deeply rooted religious backgrounds in South Sudan, where a large segment of the population adheres to Christian beliefs. Here, narratives that associate Israel with biblical heritage are employed to persuade local decision-

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<sup>1</sup>-Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (Oxford: Saqi Books, revised edition 2020), pp. 112–115.

<sup>2</sup>- Mm Adamu, "The Legend of Queen Sheba, the Solomonic Dynasty and Ethiopian History: An Analysis," *African Research Review* 3, no. 1 (2009), pp. 30–32.

<sup>3</sup>-Kaufman, Michael, and Jonathan Rynhold. "Divine Alliances: Religion and Diplomacy in Israeli Foreign Policy." *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 52, n. 3 (2016), pp. 345–360.

makers of the importance of cooperation in security matters and counter-terrorism.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.2 Narratives Supporting the Lost Israelite Tribes in Africa

The use of religious concepts as a tool of emotional appeal (such as Sheba and Beta Israel) is part of a strategy aimed at “softening” Africa’s colonial memory and presenting Israel as a state “sympathetic” to the peoples of the Global South—even though its political and economic structure reproduces relations of domination, albeit through soft power instruments.

Israel highlights its longstanding relationships with Africa, particularly through the biblical legend of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. According to Ethiopian traditions, it is believed that Queen Makida (the Queen of Sheba) visited King Solomon in Jerusalem and bore him a son named Menelik I, who is considered the founder of the Solomonic dynasty in Ethiopia. This narrative is used to reinforce the historical and cultural bonds between the two countries, with Israel asserting that the shared history between them dates back to the era of the Queen of Sheba. Furthermore, Israel has sought to validate this historical narrative by citing the statements of Emperor Haile Selassie I, especially after a group of Ethiopians sought refuge in Jerusalem in 1939 following Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia.<sup>2</sup>

Israel supports narratives regarding lost Israelite tribes in Africa—such as the Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews)—to bolster the idea that Jews have deep roots on the continent. These narratives illustrate how this myth has become an integral part of the cultural and religious identity in certain African communities, including accounts that link some African groups (for example, Beta Israel in Ethiopia) to these ancient tribes. Such narratives exert a profound psychological and cultural influence, as they are used to reshape the religious and cultural identity of some African peoples and have evolved into a political and cultural tool that reinforces

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<sup>1</sup>-Danziger, Yoav, and Mark Goldberg. "Biblical Heritage and Modern Diplomacy: Israel’s Outreach in East Africa." *Journal of African Diplomatic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2019), pp. 112–130.

<sup>2</sup>-Fletcher, Roland E. *The Queen of Sheba and Ethiopian Heritage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 51.

the concept of the "chosen people" and the bonds of hospitality and communication between Jews and African communities.<sup>1</sup>

Since the inaugural Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in the late 19th century, the Jewish communities in Africa have played a significant role in extending the influence of the Zionist movement and, later, the Israeli state across the continent. They became a crucial source of financial support for the Zionist movement and the Israeli state, and they served as a central hub for information about Africa—covering regions such as the Nile sources in the Lake Region, the Ethiopian Highlands, and the course of the Nile—which, in the Zionist vision, extend the historical continuum of the Israeli entity.

Furthermore, official institutions have long recognized the importance of these Jewish communities in forging relations with African nations and their influential capacity. On another front, these communities have established coalitions with certain evangelical Christian groups—known for their close alignment with the global Jewish lobby—that are active in countries like Kenya and Eritrea, serving Israeli interests with the backing of the international Jewish lobby.

While invoking shared historical myths (e.g., the Queen of Sheba or the Beta Israel lineage) may resonate emotionally, their tangible diplomatic impact remains questionable. Ethiopian policymakers, for instance, prioritize security cooperation and infrastructure development over symbolic kinship. Without empirical evidence of these narratives shaping policy, their utility may be more aesthetic than strategic.<sup>2</sup>

### **3.3 Exploiting the “Chosen People” Narrative and the Concept of Diaspora**

The “chosen people” narrative and the concept of diaspora are rhetorical tools used in political and cultural contexts to reinforce identity and legitimacy, both in internal discourse and in external communications. This narrative is exploited to emphasize that diaspora communities—whether Jewish or even other African groups—possess

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<sup>1</sup>-Parfitt Tudor and Emanuela Trevisan Semi. *The Beta Israel in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 200–210.

<sup>2</sup>-Grace A. Musila, “Myth, Memory, and Diplomacy: Reassessing Israel–Africa Relations,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 29, no. 2 (2017), pp. 145–158.

historical roots and a heritage that distinguish them from others. In this way, the concept has been employed to assert the survival of these peoples despite historical persecution and alienation. For instance, the idea of the lost tribes has become part of the narratives used to reconstruct national identity, particularly among groups such as the Beta Israel in Ethiopia.

Some scholars argue that the notion of diaspora is used to highlight the historical suffering of the Jewish people, thereby creating a bridge of empathy with the similar experiences of African peoples who endured colonialism and slavery. In reconfiguring diaspora narratives within the framework of liberation movements and religious identity, Israel seeks to promote its image as the “chosen people” through a diplomatic and cultural discourse that presents it as an ally for development and cooperation with African nations—especially those with a similar colonial past. This approach helps build strategic alliances without evoking historical sensitivities, as Israel portrays itself as a state that has survived persecution, likening the Jewish plight throughout history to the suffering of African peoples under colonialism and slavery. The narrative of the Jewish diaspora is used to generate empathy with the African diaspora, thereby facilitating the building of diplomatic relations with African countries that view themselves outside the framework of traditional imperial powers.<sup>1</sup>

### **3.4 Portraying Israel as a "Non-Colonial" Partner**

Israel asserts that it is not a colonial power but rather a "small state" focused solely on economic and developmental cooperation. This positioning enables Israel to build influence without triggering historical sensitivities associated with colonialism—sensitivities often evoked by references to Torah figures like Joseph in Egypt or the biblical Exodus from slavery. Such historical allusions are used to draw parallels between the Israeli struggle and the African fight against colonialism and oppression.

In its diplomatic outreach, Israel emphasizes its non-colonial character to differentiate itself from the exploitative legacy of Western colonial powers in Africa. By framing its engagements as mutually

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<sup>1</sup>-*Ibid*, p. 140.

beneficial partnerships, Israel seeks to cultivate a positive image among African nations. The country promotes technology transfer, capacity building, and investments in key sectors such as agriculture and infrastructure. Additionally, by invoking figures like Joseph—who is celebrated in biblical narratives for his role in Egypt's economic transformation—Israel aligns its narrative with themes of resilience, collaboration, and development that resonate with African experiences of overcoming colonial exploitation.

As a framing-self Israel's challenge scholars Postcolonial as such sectors in involvement Israel's that argues ally. Postcolonial extraction diamond technology surveillance and monopolies, agricultural colonial in seen historically domination economic of patterns mirrors. Furthermore contexts critiques "memory multidirectional" of concept, overshadow that why in narratives Holocaust of instrumentalization the colonization and slavery of experiences African<sup>1</sup>.

However, African perceptions of Israeli engagement are far from monolithic. According to a 2018 editorial in *The East African*, "Israel's return to Africa raises questions about motive, especially in contexts where economic asymmetries persist." Similarly, Senegalese diplomat Amadou Sy observed that Israel's developmental rhetoric often "obscures extractive logics rooted in commercial gain."<sup>2</sup>

The Kenyan researcher Grace Musila affirms that the Israeli discourse linking Israel to Africa through "shared suffering" (colonialism, genocide, slavery) is a "selective and instrumental" narrative, as it does not recognize African agency but rather reduces it to a reflection of the Jewish experience. She adds, "Africa does not need sympathy; it needs respect for the autonomy of its memory and its unique context".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>-L. Pritchard, "Symbolic Diplomacy and Strategic Realism in Africa-Israel Relations," in *Postcolonial Perspectives on Global South Diplomacies*, ed. L. Wekesa (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 97–113.

<sup>2</sup>-"Israel's Return to Africa Raises Questions about Motive." *The East African*, April 9, 2018.

<sup>3</sup>-Grace Musila, *A Death Retold in Truth and Rumour: Kenya, Britain and the Julie Ward Murder* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2015), p. 14.

### 3.5 Gaining Sympathy through the Myth of the Holocaust

This strategic portrayal is part of a broader effort to establish Israel as a developmental ally, thereby securing political support in international forums while sidestepping the negative historical associations of colonialism.

Understanding the cultural and social contexts of African nations and employing methods that reflect empathy for their needs and challenges is a fundamental strategy for garnering sympathy. In this regard, the Zionist movement sought to exploit what is known as the Holocaust myth, drawing on a Zionist doctrine that posits a natural affinity between Jews and African peoples. This idea is based on the belief in a similarity between the African slave trade and the Holocaust—a myth that was crafted to evoke international sympathy and has been used as a pretext in many situations, a notion refuted by Roger Garodi in his book *Foundational Myths of Israeli Politics* criticizes the ideological foundations used to justify Zionist policies.

## 4. Assessing Israel’s Emotional Intelligence Strategy in Africa: Deconstructing Symbolism and Resisting Discourse

Despite Israel’s attempts to deploy “emotional intelligence” in its foreign policy towards Africa—through invoking narratives of shared suffering and historical intersections between the African and Jewish Diasporas—this discourse increasingly faces rejection from African elites and institutions who view it as a soft instrument for reproducing hegemony, rather than a genuine expression of solidarity or mutual recognition.<sup>1</sup>

**First**, many African intellectuals perceive Israel’s emotional narratives—centered on colonialism, slavery, and the Holocaust—as selective and instrumental discourses. As Kenyan scholar Grace Musila points out, such rhetoric marginalizes the uniqueness of the African experience, reducing it to a mere reflection of the Jewish one. This empties solidarity of its ethical content and reframes it as a geopolitical tool.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>-Ibid, pp. 44–46.

<sup>2</sup>-Ibid, p.45.

**Second**, Israel invokes religious and historical symbols—such as the relationship between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, or the myth of the “lost tribes”—to justify its ties to the continent. However, these symbols resonate little with African states whose priorities revolve around development, infrastructure, and security. Thus, these narratives are often perceived as a form of soft cultural colonialism that seeks to reshape African collective memory from the outside.<sup>1</sup>

**Third**, there is a glaring contradiction between Israel’s anti-colonial rhetoric and its actual practices in Africa, where it dominates sectors like agriculture, mineral extraction, and security surveillance—patterns that strongly resemble colonial-era economic exploitation. Postcolonial scholars like Pritchard and Rothberg have noted how Holocaust discourse is at times used to obscure the suffering of African peoples and neutralize their critiques.

**Fourth**, although Israel promotes its bilateral relations with African countries as “mutually beneficial partnerships,” the significant disparities in economic and technological capacities render these relations deeply asymmetrical. This dynamic undermines African agency and reinforces dependency rather than sovereignty, weakening the autonomy of African decision-making.

**Fifth**, despite the symbolic appeal of certain religious and historical narratives, field evidence shows that policymakers in countries like Ethiopia and Nigeria prioritize concrete economic and security interests over symbolic or emotional connections. Consequently, Israel’s emotional strategy encounters real limitations when confronted with Africa’s pragmatic political realism.<sup>2</sup>

This divergence is clearly reflected in the growing gap between official and popular positions across the continent. In 2023, the African Union revoked Israel’s observer status following pressure from member states that viewed the move as unacceptable normalization with an occupying power in violation of the Union’s Charter—particularly the

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<sup>1</sup>-Adebayo Olukoshi, “Africa and the Myth of Shared Origins: Reassessing Religious Symbolism in Foreign Policy,” *Journal of African International Affairs* 12, no. 1 (2017), pp. 29–31.

<sup>2</sup>-Grace Musila, “African Agency and Emotional Diplomacy: Rhetoric versus Policy,” *African Affairs* 114, no. 456 (2015), pp.637–659.

principle of the right of peoples to self-determination.<sup>1</sup> The symbolic expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from the AU summit hall in Addis Ababa in 2025 marked a turning point in this institutional resistance.<sup>2</sup>

At the popular level, opposition emerged even within traditional allies of Israel, such as Ethiopia, where local Christian communities and intellectuals voiced their rejection of political and military support for Israel in light of its escalating aggression in Gaza. This resistance was powerfully articulated in January 2024 in a collective statement signed by more than 220 African scholars in African Studies. The signatories condemned Israel's military operations, describing them as a continuation of a colonial structure based on exclusion and systematic occupation. The statement emphasized: "*The relationship with Israel cannot be reduced to development projects or technological cooperation; it must be read within a broader framework of ethical accountability and global justice*".<sup>3</sup>

These positions—ranging from institutions to academic elites and civil society—reveal a growing African consciousness that perceives Israel's emotional discourse as a rhetorical strategy that masks hegemonic ambitions, even when presented under the guise of aid or partnership. The experience thus far demonstrates that Israel has failed to translate its emotional narratives into lasting acceptance in Africa, due to the ongoing nature of its policies toward Palestinians and the moral incoherence between its African rhetoric and the liberationist principles embedded in Africa's political memory.

## Conclusion:

This study has demonstrated that Israel's use of emotional intelligence in its foreign policy towards Africa is not merely an attempt to build empathetic bridges based on "shared suffering," but rather a symbolic strategy aimed at reproducing influence in a postcolonial context. By instrumentalizing emotional discourse and wrapping it in

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<sup>1</sup>- "African Union Revokes Israel's Observer Status," *Al Jazeera*, February 18, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/18/african-union-revokes-israel-observer-status-after-dispute>.

<sup>2</sup>- "Israeli Delegation Expelled from AU Summit," *BBC Africa*, February 17, 2025.

<sup>3</sup>- "African Scholars Condemn Israel's War on Gaza," *Brittle Paper*, January 15, 2024, <https://brittlepaper.com/2024/01/african-scholars-condemn-israels-war-on-gaza/>.

selective religious and historical narratives, Israel seeks to reshape its image and assert soft power across the continent. However, this strategy increasingly collides with a rising African critical consciousness that deconstructs such narratives and exposes their hegemonic undertones.

In light of the analysis, the study reaches the following key findings:

–The study reveals that Israel employs emotional intelligence not as a means of mutual understanding, but as a strategic soft-power tool to reconstruct its international image, using narratives of suffering, diaspora, and biblical ties for diplomatic leverage.

–There is a striking contradiction between Israel’s emotional discourse and its actual practices in Africa—such as control over key sectors like agriculture, mining, and security—that reproduce colonial patterns and undermine the credibility of its solidarity rhetoric.

–The research shows a growing awareness among African elites, regional institutions, and civil societies of the instrumental nature of Israel’s emotional discourse. This has led to expanding forms of resistance, as reflected in the African Union’s positions and collective statements by African scholars.

–The findings highlight that the deployment of emotional intelligence, when not accompanied by a critical engagement with colonial legacies and political contradictions, yields limited success in postcolonial contexts saturated with historical memory and demands for justice and equality.

In light of the findings, the study recommends integrating emotional intelligence training into diplomatic education and foreign policy planning, particularly for actors operating in postcolonial contexts like Africa. Such training should not only develop interpersonal skills, but also foster cultural sensitivity and historical awareness to avoid reproducing narratives that undermine local agency. Moreover, future research should expand the analysis of emotional intelligence strategies in other geopolitical regions to evaluate their ethical and political implications in global diplomacy.