



Middle East Spotlight

Israel's Expanding Diplomatic Relations

Despite efforts to delegitimize Israel on the international stage, the Jewish state is making important progress forging new ties with nations outside of its traditional relationships—namely, with Africa, Asia and Latin America. These new diplomatic and trade relationships offer Israel many opportunities in the coming decades.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's July 2016 trip to Africa, during which he visited Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Ethiopia, marked one such example—a turning point in Israel-Africa relations. The trip was the first official visit by a sitting Israeli prime minister to Africa in 29 years. Key heads of state met with Prime Minister Netanyahu to discuss the issues which bind Africa and Israel, including security cooperation, energy, food and water security, as well as development assistance.

An Israeli business delegation concurrently traveled to Africa seeking to boost Israeli trade with Africa, which comprises approximately 3 percent of Israel's total exports.

Israel's prowess in the areas of high-tech and cybersecurity provides ideal platforms for the Jewish state to enhance diplomatic and trade ties with various Asian nations, such as Japan, Singapore, China and South Korea. This strategy has already begun to bear fruit: The inaugural China-Israel Technology, Innovation and Investment Summit took place in Beijing in January 2016, and in July 2016, Israel opened a new trade office in Osaka, Japan.

Israel has even made important progress at the U.N., with Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. Danny Danon's June 2016 election to chair the U.N. General Assembly's Sixth Committee—a body that deals with matters of international law. This represents the first time an Israeli has chaired such a significant body within the United Nations.

This is not to say that all is perfect in the international arena. The U.N. Human Rights Council maintains a permanent agenda item—known as Agenda Item 7—dedicated to criticizing Israel at each of its assemblies. Similarly, in May 2016, the World Health Organization singled out only one country—Israel—for alleged human rights abuses. And, the ongoing Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement seeks to isolate Israel both economically and academically.

While Israel faces a long road to overcome deep-seated institutional biases at international organizations, its diplomatic outreach is bright. Today, the Jewish state is harnessing its strengths in security, high-tech, agriculture and energy to expand relations with a diverse group of nations across the globe.

To learn more about Israel and the U.S.-Israel relationship, visit www.aipac.org.