

DILEMMAS OF POSTCOLONIAL DIPLOMACY: ZAMBIA, KENNETH KAUNDA, AND THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, 1964–73*

Lynn Schler

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel

Abstract

This article examines Zambia's engagement with the Middle East conflict from 1964–73 as a window into the political strategies and ideological ambitions of Kaunda's government in the first decade of independence. At the start of independence, Kaunda's domestic agenda led him to establish ties with Israel and to advance a program for cooperative development based on Israeli technical assistance. However, broader international concerns, filtered through the struggle against white minority regimes in southern Africa, ultimately led Kaunda to embrace a leadership role in international protests against Israel's policies towards its neighboring states. Zambia's foray into Middle East diplomacy in the first decade of independence enables a focused examination of Kaunda's presence in the international arena, while also revealing the compromises he made in the face of conflicting interests. Zambia's role in the Middle East conflict highlights this era as a time of confidence and claim-making by African leaders, but also one of concessions.

Key Words

Zambia, southern Africa, diplomacy, ideology, postcolonial, politics, international relations.

From the moment of independence, Zambia established cordial relations with Israel. Prime Minister Golda Meir was prominent as one of the foreign dignitaries to attend the 1964 celebrations in Lusaka around the new country's birth. Shortly after, Israeli planners and advisors were dispatched to Zambia to assist in establishing and managing a series of agricultural cooperatives in the Copperbelt region. President Kenneth Kaunda promoted a political philosophy for national development that merged socialist, Christian, and traditional values, known as 'Humanism',¹ and cooperatives played a central role in Kaunda's vision. The new Zambian government hoped that Israeli expertise in agricultural cooperatives could help to realize Kaunda's Humanist agenda. After arriving in the Copperbelt,

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1 K. D. Kaunda and M. M. Colin, *A Humanist in Africa: Letters to Colin M. Morris from Kenneth D. Kaunda, President of Zambia* (London, 1966).

Israeli technical experts took control of several failing settlements that had been previously established with government assistance. Working with locals, the Israeli teams also laid the groundwork for new settlements in the region, teaching innovative farming techniques and industrializing the production of poultry, dairy, and pork. The Israelis educated the Zambian farmers in the ideological foundations and practical workings of cooperative agriculture. Within three years, farmers in the schemes were producing large surpluses and enjoyed monthly earnings that were five times higher than the average Zambian.² The Israeli-run cooperatives became the pride of the Zambian government, and President Kaunda proposed to duplicate the program across the country.

However, at the same time that Kaunda drew upon Israeli assistance to advance one of his primary domestic objectives, his government became a vocal critic of Israel's role in the Middle East conflict. In establishing relations with Israel, Zambia firmly rejected Arab protests and later withstood ongoing criticisms of these ties as the aid program deepened them. But as tensions continually rose in the Middle East and conflicts escalated into wars in both 1967 and 1973, Zambia took an increasingly critical stance towards Israel in various international forums. Kaunda embraced a leadership role in organizing condemnations and protests against Israeli policies towards its neighboring states. Escalating tensions came to a head in 1973, when Zambia fell in line with an Organisation of African Unity (OAU) directive ordering all member states to sever their ties with Israel. In the wake of the October War, Kaunda expelled the Israelis from Zambia, and the successful cooperative initiative, along with other Israeli aid projects, came to an abrupt end.

The rise and fall of the Israeli aid schemes in the first decade of Zambian independence can be situated in a broader history of aspirations, conflicts, and dilemmas that plagued the postcolonial leadership of Zambia. Kenneth Kaunda, like many independence leaders, came to power with a passionate ideological drive and agenda. At independence, Kaunda offered the Zambian nation his Humanist philosophy, a set of overarching principles that would guide the building of a postcolonial society. Like Julius Nyerere's *Ujamaa* or Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism, Kaunda's Humanism helped bolster his image as a moral statesman and visionary and gave him credence in his ideological struggles both at home and internationally. Humanism offered Zambians the promise of a progressive and moral postcolonial society.³ But Kaunda and the Zambian political elite struggled in translating these lofty principles into coherent policies, and often abandoned some core principles in the face of alternate priorities. As domestic and international challenges mounted in the postcolonial era, the Zambian leadership was faced with conflicting priorities that required political and ideological compromises. Humanism was continually invoked as a guiding principle, but few Zambians would recognize its moralistic ideals in the sociopolitical reality that ultimately took shape under Kaunda's rule.

Historians are just starting to make sense of these complexities.⁴ Scholarship of the post-independence years was largely sympathetic to Kaunda's vision and strategies, but recent

2 M. Schwartz and A. P. Hare, *Foreign Experts and Unsustainable Development: Transferring Israeli technology to Zambia, Nigeria and Nepal* (London, 2000), 91.

3 D. M. Gordon, *Invisible Agents: Spirits in a Central African History* (Athens, OH, 2012), 158.

4 M. Larmer, M. Hinfelaar, B. J. Phiri, L. Schumaker, and M. Szeftel, 'Introduction: narratives of nationhood', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40:5 (2014), 895–905; Gordon, *Invisible Agents*; J. B. Gewald, M.

years have seen a wave of new research that approaches the postcolonial leadership of Zambia with a much more critical eye. This new research rejects the ‘inbuilt nationalist bias’ that underscored studies of Kenneth Kaunda and his party, the United National Independence Party (UNIP), following independence.⁵ Acknowledging that an early pre-occupation with elite politics cultivated a hegemonic view of Zambian history, recent studies of dissident voices and marginalized experiences are playing a vital role in constructing a more critical historiography.⁶ Once the edifice of nationalist history was cracked open, we have been exposed to a more complex, nuanced, and contested understanding of the ruling elite. This has been a vital correction, as the crises and failures of the postcolonial era have driven the search for clarifications. Zambia, which entered the independence era as one of the richest and most promising countries in sub-Saharan Africa, swiftly declined to become one of the poorest countries on the continent by the 1980s.⁷ As Miles Larmer has argued, Zambians and historians of Zambia are emerging from decades of economic and political disempowerment and want to make sense of ‘one of the most dramatic economic and social declines anywhere in the world’. Students of Zambian history are agitating for a more accurate understanding of ‘what went wrong’.⁸

Adding to the complexity is the question of *when* things went wrong. There is a clear consensus that the drop in the price of copper of the mid-1970s served a calamitous blow to the economy and political leadership of Zambia. These were catastrophic circumstances not of their making, but Kaunda and the UNIP have been commonly faulted with ‘mismanagement, patronage, corruption and growing political authoritarianism’ in responding to them.⁹ The political and economic achievements of Kaunda and the UNIP in the first decade of independence are more difficult to assess. Recent scholarship reveals a considerable lack of clarity regarding the successes and failures of Kaunda during Zambia’s First Republic (1964–73). On the one hand, even among the staunchest critics of the later years, many acknowledge that idealism, optimism, and goodwill guided the intentions of the political elite in their efforts to bring about political and economic transformation in the first decade. As Larmer et al. wrote, this era is ‘widely remembered as a period of significant progress’.¹⁰ Ndangwa claimed that this was a period of good

Hinfelaar, and G. Macola (eds.), *One Zambia, Many Histories: Towards a History of Post-Colonial Zambia* (Brill, 2008); M. Larmer, ‘A little bit like a volcano: the United Progressive Party and resistance to one-party rule in Zambia, 1964–1980’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 39:1 (2006), 49–83; G. Macola, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa: A Biography of Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula* (Springer, 2010); M. Larmer, ‘What went wrong? Zambian political biography and post-colonial discourses of decline’, *Historia*, 51:1 (2006), 235–56 (238); A. Fraser and M. Larmer (eds.), *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism: Boom and Bust on the Globalized Copperbelt* (New York, 2010); N. Ndangwa, ‘Good governance and national social development: a Zambian experience’, *Social Development Issues*, 21 (1999), 70–6 (72).

5 Gewalt, Hinfelaar, and Macola (eds.), *One Zambia*, 4.

6 Two examples are: G. Macola, ‘It means as if we are excluded from the good freedom: thwarted expectations of independence in the Luapula Province of Zambia, 1964–6’, *The Journal of African History*, 47:1 (2006), 43–56; and Larmer, ‘A little bit like a volcano’, 49–83.

7 M. Larmer, ‘Historical perspectives on Zambia’s mining booms and busts’, in Fraser and Larmer (eds.), *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism*, 31–58 (31).

8 Larmer, ‘What went wrong?’, 235–56 (238).

9 Gewalt, Hinfelaar, and Macola (eds.), *One Zambia*, 2.

10 Larmer, Hinfelaar, Phiri, Schumaker, and Szeftel, ‘Introduction: narratives of nationhood’, 895–905 (901).

governance led by a young idealistic leadership that was ‘committed and genuinely concerned about the plight of the Zambian people’.¹¹ According to Fraser and Larmer, Zambia began independence as a model for other African countries seeking economic independence and an end to poverty. Revenue from copper production was invested in a vision for ‘a prosperous, non-racial society’, and the Zambian state made strides towards realizing five-year National Development plans with investments in ‘infrastructure, education and health systems’.¹² These successes, Fraser has argued, were partially an outgrowth of ‘ideological clarity’ that characterized the policies of the ruling elite in this era.¹³ With anticolonial and humanist zeal, Kaunda led the global fight against white-minority regimes in southern Africa and boosted the country’s international standing.¹⁴ He also won respect for his bold maneuvers in the realm of international economics, such as his leadership role in the campaign for the New International Economic Order (NIEO), and his efforts at establishing a cartel of copper-producing countries to combat underpricing.¹⁵

On the other hand, an alternative perspective on the early years argues that Kaunda’s authoritarianism, ideological flip-flopping, and ineffective governance were apparent from the very beginning of the UNIP’s assumption of power. The declaration of one-party rule in 1972 was a watershed in the retreat from democracy in Zambia, but some scholars have claimed that this much criticized move to authoritarianism was foreshadowed in the earliest years of Kaunda’s ascension to power. Gordon asserts that the destructive nature of Kaunda’s despotism was already revealed in the era of decolonization, when resistance to the UNIP led to the massacre and dispersal of followers of the Lumpa church.¹⁶ Likewise, Giacomo Macola’s work on opposition to the UNIP in the Luapula province from 1964–6 argues that local populations were disillusioned by the UNIP’s failure to deliver on post-independence promises well before the economic recession of the 1970s.¹⁷

Faced with this inconsistent portrayal of Kaunda’s rule in the first decade of independence, the history of the rise and fall of the Israeli aid schemes can offer new insights. The case study highlights the contours of the broader trajectories, but also provides a fresh perspective from which to evaluate the ideology and strategies of Kaunda and the UNIP during the First Republic. One outstanding feature of this history is the fact that it spans both the domestic and foreign policy concerns of the era. The collaboration with the Israelis in the area of domestic cooperatives was ultimately abandoned because of larger ideological and economic concerns in the realm of foreign policy. This makes this examination valuable, as most scholars acknowledge that Kaunda and the UNIP faced extraordinarily complex challenges in both domestic and foreign spheres and few

11 Ndangwa, ‘Good governance’, 70–6 (72).

12 Fraser and Larmer (eds.), *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism*, 6.

13 A. Fraser, *Zambia: back to the future*, Global Economic Governance Programme, Working Paper (2007), 1–47 (12).

14 Larmer et al., ‘Introduction’, 897.

15 Fraser and Larmer (eds.), *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism*, 7.

16 D. Gordon, ‘Rebellion or massacre: the UNIP-Lumpa conflict revisited’, in Gewalt, Hinfelaar, and Macola (eds.), *One Zambia*, 45–76.

17 Macola, ‘It means ...’, 44.

studies provide a sufficiently panoramic view. At the domestic level, there was an acute need to improve agricultural outputs and develop industrial and commercial interests, as well as to expand and ameliorate social services and infrastructure in an economy that was dominated by the copper industry. With regard to foreign affairs, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in Rhodesia in 1965 had serious consequences both for Kaunda's vision of a post-racial society and for the Zambian economy. While all of the white-minority regimes of southern Africa posed a challenge for the newly-independent Zambia, the UDI constituted a vital threat to the Zambian economy, which was heavily dependent upon Rhodesia both for exporting copper and for importing most consumer goods.¹⁸ Thus, during the first decade of independence, Kaunda and the UNIP juggled domestic and foreign imperatives, but the links between developments in these two spheres are not always apparent. The mining industry is one obvious exception, as copper revenues were fundamental to promoting the domestic agenda, and the declaration of the UDI jeopardized Zambia's export of copper through Rhodesia. But most scholarship investigating the postcolonial era emphasizes either domestic or international affairs, and there is a need for better understanding the correlation between them. As Larmer et al. wrote, 'few studies have fully considered the interaction between and mutual effects of Zambian domestic politics and the regional liberation struggles'.¹⁹ Along with the historical record, popular memory in Zambian society also attests to the need for a more comprehensive view. Kaunda's achievements in the realm of foreign policy have rehabilitated him in the popular memory of those who suffered his domestic mishaps. Gordon claimed that even those critical of Kaunda's domestic policies have remained sympathetic to the role Zambia played in supporting and hosting southern African liberation movements.²⁰ Thus, there is a need for new perspectives on the dialogue between Kaunda's domestic and foreign policy achievements to better evaluate the choices and outcomes of his leadership.

This article examines Zambia's engagement with the Middle East conflict from 1964–73 as a window into the political and ideological ambitions of Kaunda's post-independence government both at home and abroad, as well as the fate of these objectives in the face of geopolitical circumstances not of their choosing. The Middle East conflict posed both dilemmas and opportunities for Zambia as a newly-independent nation-state trying to establish its international standing. It will be seen that in establishing ties to Israel, Kaunda and the UNIP were advancing a developmentalist agenda at home, but also asserting Zambia's right to autonomy and non-alignment in the sphere of foreign relations. As tensions grew in the Middle East and Zambia became an increasingly vocal critic of Israel despite deepening ties domestically, Kaunda and the UNIP continually insisted that Zambia would be guided only by Humanist doctrines in exercising both domestic and

18 D. Anglin, 'Zambia and southern African liberation movements: 1964–1974', in T. Shaw and K. Heard (eds.), *The Politics of Africa: Dependence and Development* (Harlow, 1979), 182–213; S. C. Nolutshungu, *South Africa in Africa: A Study in Ideology and Foreign Policy* (Manchester, 1975); T. M. Shaw, 'The foreign policy of Zambia: ideology and interests', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14:1 (1976), 79–105; M. Burdette, *Zambia: Between Two Worlds* (Boulder, CO, 1988).

19 Larmer et al., 'Introduction', 897.

20 Gordon, *Invisible*, 2.

foreign policies. Zambia's engagement with the Middle East during the First Republic thus brings into sharp focus Kaunda's bold attempts at securing both his ideological footing and his leadership role for Zambia in the international sphere. Kaunda's ambitions were best evidenced in his Middle East Peace Initiative of 1969, to be examined below. The outcome of this initiative is well known – Zambia's efforts at maintaining neutrality in the Middle East conflict did not succeed, and far from brokering a peace deal, Zambia broke ties with Israel in 1973. While keeping this final outcome in mind, we have much to learn from a review of Zambia's evolving positions during the First Republic. Zambia's embrace of Israeli domestic aid alongside its increasingly critical stance towards Israel within the Middle East conflict can provide a new perspective on the optimistic efforts of Kaunda and the UNIP to bolster Zambia's autonomy and influence. As it will be seen, this was a time of confidence and claim-making by Zambian leaders, but also one of concessions.

THE DOMESTIC AGENDA: HUMANISM AND COOPERATIVES IN POSTCOLONIAL ZAMBIA

In December 1963, the Central African Federation was dissolved, paving the way for independence in both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. In January 1964, Kenneth Kaunda won the election for prime minister of Northern Rhodesia and subsequently became the first president of the Republic of Zambia on 24 October 1964. In assuming power, Kaunda, like other postcolonial leaders across the continent, embraced a set of responsibilities that included not just formulating policies, but also conveying a vision for postcolonial society. Crawford Young claimed that postcolonial leaders vigorously promoted their ideological platform as part of 'the legitimisation imperative' that weighed on upon them.²¹ Kaunda saw himself as one of these 'serious thinkers',²² and he presented Humanism as a vision for postcolonial Zambia.²³ Humanism afforded Kaunda a space among other postcolonial leaders in Africa who had risen to prominence with their own political philosophies. According to Taylor, Humanism boosted Kaunda's reputation as a charismatic philosopher king, 'high on moral fortitude',²⁴ while Hatch claimed that Humanism reflected Kaunda's desire to distinguish himself from other nationalist leaders, and in particular, Nyerere. Declared the national philosophy of Zambia in 1967, Humanism offered the new nation a way forward that claimed to draw upon the values and norms of precolonial societies, emphasizing communalism, egalitarianism, and mutual aid.²⁵ In his inaugural address to the UN General Assembly in December 1964 Kaunda explained the tenets of

21 C. Young, *The Postcolonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960–2010* (Madison, WI, 2012), 131.

22 A. A. Mazrui, 'On poet-presidents and philosopher-kings', *Research in African Literatures*, 21:2 (1990), 13–19 (13).

23 K. L. Stevinson, 'Humanism as political ideology: a study of its role in the evolution of the leadership of Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia' (unpublished MA thesis, Haverford College, 1985), 2; A. Sekwat, 'Beyond African humanism: economic reform in post-independent Zambia', *International Journal of Organisation Theory and Behaviour*, 3 (2000), 521–46 (523).

24 I. Taylor, 'Zambia's foreign policy: themes and approaches', *Politikon*, 24:2 (1997), 57–65 (57–8).

25 See H. S. Meebelo, *Main Currents of Zambian Humanist Thought* (Lusaka, 1973), 1; and J. Scarritt, 'Elite values, ideology, and power in post-independence Zambia', *African Studies Review*, 14:1 (1971), 31–54 (45).

Humanism as a uniquely African philosophy: ‘Our African personality contains elements of simplicity, of service, of community which all the world needs. . . . This is the African substitute for the capitalism, socialism and communism of the East and West.’²⁶

Some scholars have claimed that Humanism was Kaunda’s most important political achievement, as it initiated a process for redefining the dominant values of society in the postcolonial era. Humanism’s emphasis on individual welfare became both a collective goal and a blueprint for government policy. As Mkandawire wrote, ‘The Humanist’s assertion of the importance of every man leads on to a belief in non-racialism and non-violence, and a desire to avoid sectional and class conflict. This absence of conflict in turn enables stress to be placed on communal cooperation for economic development, social betterment and national security.’²⁷ Molten and Tordoff argued that Kaunda’s promotion of Humanism engendered a process that inspired Zambian citizens to reflect upon what kind of society they wanted to create.²⁸ Kaunda’s critics, however, have claimed that Humanism was an inconsistent blending of many ideas, resulting in a philosophy that was largely abstract and hollow. As one scholar put it, ‘The weakness of Humanism, and it is a serious one, is that [it is] extremely vague and lacking in determinate application to concrete situations. The Humanist umbrella is so wide as to leave very few specific policy alternatives out in the rain.’²⁹ Similarly, Hinfelaar claimed that the most striking feature of Kaunda’s Humanism was its ‘opportunistic pliability’.³⁰

It was indeed the ambiguity of Humanism that enabled Kaunda and the UNIP to invoke the philosophy as the ideological basis for a wide range of policies, both domestic and foreign. The broad reach of the philosophy offered the political elite an ideal vision, but no clear policy guidelines. Robert I. Rotberg claimed that this was common among post-colonial leadership, as he wrote, ‘they have a grand but simple plan. They deal in destinies, dreams, and ultimate purposes, not necessarily in pedestrian and practical goals.’³¹ Perhaps inevitably, problems arose when it was time to implement these ambitious ideals. In postcolonial Zambia, it was quickly evident that enacting Humanism was a complicated and contested endeavor. These could be seen in Kaunda’s policies related to agricultural cooperatives.

The main tenets of Humanism paved the way for Kaunda and the UNIP’s cooperative initiative. In accordance with principles of mutual support, communalism, and egalitarianism, Kaunda promoted cooperatives as a ‘milestone of rural development’.³² In the 1965 Chifubu Appeal, Kaunda announced the UNIP program for the establishment of

26 C. Legum (ed.), *Zambia: From Independence to Beyond: The Speeches of Kenneth Kaunda* (London, 1966), 195.

27 T. Mkandawire, *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development* (London, 2005), 197.

28 R. Molten and W. Tordoff, ‘Conclusion chapter: “Independent Zambia: achievements and prospects”’, in W. Tordoff (ed.), *Politics in Zambia* (Manchester, UK, 1974), 370–1.

29 A. Martin, *Minding Their Own Business* (London, 1973), 107.

30 M. Hinfelaar, ‘Legitimizing powers: the political role of the Roman Catholic Church, 1972–1991’, in Gewalt, Hinfelaar, and Macola (eds.), *One Zambia*, 127–43 (130).

31 R. I. Rotberg, *Transformative Political Leadership: Making a Difference in the Developing World* (Chicago, 2012), 21.

32 Macola, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, 118.

government-sponsored cooperatives.³³ In this appeal, Kaunda called on Zambians to form producer cooperatives and pledged government support for citizens who organized such farms. Kaunda's enthusiasm for cooperatives in all aspects of the economy was linked to what he identified as a vague continuity with the communalism of precolonial society.³⁴ But in practical terms, the UNIP-led government lacked a clear strategy for implementing this ideal, as James R. Scarritt wrote, 'Most elite members found it difficult to say exactly how they did this, since it is readily agreed that a different type of cooperative is involved in precolonial villages and modern cooperatives.'³⁵

The ambiguity quickly filtered down into the cooperative initiative that followed the Chifubu Appeal, and contributed to its lack of success. Thousands answered Kaunda's call and formed agricultural cooperatives, eagerly collecting government loans and grants for tractors, seed, fertilizer, and petrol.³⁶ But it was soon realized that few had any understanding of how to actually maintain a cooperative farm.³⁷ As René Dumont wrote, 'It would be rash to say that the African peasants want to move towards socialism, because first they have to have a clearer idea of what it is.'³⁸ Stephen C. Lombard echoed this claim, saying that many of the registered cooperatives were defunct because peasants had no real knowledge of what cooperatives were. He charged that the poorly-planned program constituted a massive waste of funds.³⁹ Others have faulted the politicization of the initiative, claiming that the UNIP used cooperative subsidies to reward political supporters and never demonstrated any serious commitment to their success. Loans and subsidies for the creation of agricultural cooperatives were given out as a form of patronage in UNIP strongholds and there was little expectation they would be repaid.⁴⁰ Thus, the lofty principles of Humanism gave birth to the cooperative initiative, but the UNIP lacked the requisite resources and commitment to realize this grandiose agenda. As Macola has argued, the failure of Kaunda and the UNIP to deliver on one of the key promises of Humanism ultimately fostered popular discontent arising from 'unfulfilled expectations'.⁴¹ It is against this backdrop that we must understand Kaunda's enthusiastic embrace of Israeli technical assistance as a way of salvaging his cooperative initiative.

33 F. Albinson, 'Cooperative education in Zambia', in F. Albinson, J. Norbeck, and R. Sundén (eds.), *Folk Development Education and Democracy in a Development Perspective* (Stockholm, 2002), 13.

34 J. R. Scarritt, 'The decline of political legitimacy in Zambia: an explanation based on incomplete data', *African Studies Review*, 22:2 (1979), 13–38 (17).

35 Scarritt, 'The decline', 17.

36 R. Dumont and M. Mazoyer, *Socialisms and Development*, trans. R. Cunningham (London, 1973), 128.

37 S. A. Quick, *Humanism or Technocracy?* (published on behalf of the Institute for African Studies, University of Zambia, by Manchester University Press, 1978), 56.

38 Dumont, *Socialisms*, 135.

39 S. C. Lombard, *The growth of cooperatives in Zambia, 1914–1971*, Zambia Papers No. 6 (University of Zambia, 1971), 23–5.

40 See I. Scott, 'Middle-class politics in Zambia', *African Affairs*, 77:308 (1978), 321–34 (323); T. L. Moorsom, '“Black settlers”: hybridity, neoliberalism and ecosystemic change among Tonga farmers of southern Zambia, 1964–2008' (unpublished PhD thesis, Queen's University, Canada, 2016), 154; Macola, *Liberal*, 115.

41 Macola, 'It means ...', 43–56.

THE ISRAELI MOSHAV IN ZAMBIA

At the start of 1964, before Zambia gained independence, Israel sent a delegation to Lusaka to lay the groundwork for establishing diplomatic relations.⁴² At the time, however the situation was unstable and local officials were reluctant to make commitments. Privately, however, important figures were enthusiastic about establishing ties with Israel: as the then minister of home affairs (later minister of foreign affairs) Simon Kapwepwe stated, ‘We will need your help and we will greatly appreciate it, but currently the British are not rushing to hand over the government, and we must achieve everything through pressure, but after we gain our independence, it will be different.’⁴³

Israel’s overtures to Zambia were part of the broader history of Israeli diplomatic initiatives in Africa in the 1960s. In 1958, Israel had established an international aid agency, MASHAV, as part of an effort to strengthen ties with newly-independent African and Asian states. The goals were both political and ideological. Through the aid program, Israel hoped to counter diplomatic isolation resulting from the Arab-Israeli conflict. In addition, key political figures such as David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir claimed that providing assistance to developing countries was a moral imperative for Israel.⁴⁴ MASHAV offered a variety of programs concentrated in Africa, including schemes in agriculture, irrigation, regional planning, community development, health care, and youth movements. Between 1958–71, tens of thousands of Africans were trained in MASHAV courses both in Africa and Israel, and over 2,700 Israeli technical experts were sent to provide assistance in local projects.⁴⁵

Israel’s investment in Africa was intended to win diplomatic support, and some have evaluated this strategy as a success prior to the June War in 1967. As Rodin wrote, ‘Israel’s assistance paid excellent diplomatic dividends.’⁴⁶ But in the case of Zambia, this support was not immediately forthcoming, as officials feared Arab opposition to an alliance with Israel. A 1964 circular from the Zambian Foreign Ministry revealed some hesitation in establishing ties: ‘aid would be accepted from anyone provided it was useful and provided there were no strings attached. However, the sense of recent Cabinet minutes indicates that there is still a reluctance to accept aid from Israel.’ The memo claimed that Israel did not appear on the Cabinet’s list of ‘politically acceptable donors of aid’, and advised ministries to await further instructions before committing themselves to accepting Israeli assistance.⁴⁷ In later correspondence, the foreign minister questioned ‘whether on balance Zambia stands to gain more by accepting this aid, taking into account the risk of incurring the displeasure of the Arab members of the OAU’.⁴⁸ One official in

42 Israel National Archives, Jerusalem (INA), Zambia General, 1926/4.

43 INA 1926/4, 26 June 1964.

44 A. Oded, *Africa Ve’Israel, Yehudiut Vetahapuhot Be’Yehase Hutz shel Israel* [Africa and Israel, A Unique case of Radical Changes in Foreign Policy] (Jerusalem, 2013).

45 J. Peters, *Israel and Africa: The Problematic Friendship* (London, 1992).

46 T. S. Rodin, ‘Political aspects of Israeli foreign aid in Africa’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nebraska, 1969).

47 Zambia National Archives, Lusaka (ZNA) NCDP 2/3/2, Aid Israel, Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Ministry, 23 Dec. 1964.

48 ZNA NCDP 2/3/2, Aid Israel, 7 May 1965 and 11 May 1965.

fact warned that accepting the Israeli aid could 'spoil our name'.⁴⁹ The issue was resolved by Aaron Milner, secretary of home affairs, who unequivocally instructed ministers to accept offers from Israel as part of Kaunda's 'aid from anywhere' policy.⁵⁰ In a 1965 meeting with the Israeli ambassador, Kaunda himself acknowledged the international pressure, but he assured the ambassador that he was not worried about political fallout from Israel's involvement in Zambia, and he was anticipating friendly relations between the two countries.⁵¹

Once political concerns were set aside, Zambian officials in several ministries welcomed Israeli assistance. Specifically in the area of cooperatives, the Zambians hoped to learn from Israeli expertise.⁵² As Vice President Reuben Kamanga wrote in a 1964 memo, Israel had earned 'a worldwide reputation in the field'.⁵³ After arriving, a team of 11 Israeli technical experts was given control over several struggling settlements near Lusaka and in the Copperbelt region. Two of the cooperatives already in existence, *Tubalanga* and *Zambia Independence*, were located outside of Lusaka. One Israeli expert was assigned to the Mkushi agricultural settlement for refugees from Rhodesia.⁵⁴ After becoming acquainted with each of the existing schemes and the problems they were experiencing, the Israelis proposed transforming these settlements according to the *moshav* cooperative model, which had played a major role in the early development of Israel. Israeli recommendations initially met with resistance within the Department of Cooperatives, as Zambian officials opposed what they saw as radical changes. The Israeli technical advisors argued that in order to turn these projects around, it was necessary to shift from communal farming to cooperatives based on smallholders, which would encourage individual initiatives among the farmers lacking such motivation in the communal system. Resistance came from Zambian officials who feared that the new model betrayed Kaunda's Humanist vision of communalism. To quell some of the opposition, the Israelis proposed to begin with the *Zambia Independence* cooperative outside of Lusaka, of which Kaunda himself was a member. If the changes proved positive at *Zambia Independence*, they would then be implemented elsewhere. This plan worked, and by the end of the first growing season, there were significant improvements in outputs on the individually-farmed lands. Pleased with this outcome, the Department of Cooperatives authorized the Israelis to implement similar changes at the rest of the settlements.⁵⁵

The projects in the Copperbelt played a pivotal role in establishing the reputation of the Israeli technical experts. The Department of Cooperatives entrusted the Israelis with the task of planning and implementing Kafulafuta, a large-scale settlement block south of

49 ZNA NCDP 2/3/2, Aid Israel, 30 Apr. 1965.

50 ZNA NCDP 2/3/2, Aid Israel. Given the centralized nature of Kaunda's rule, this directive was likely coordinated with the President. On Kaunda's centralized rule, see S. Chan, *Kaunda and Southern Africa: Image and Reality in Foreign Policy* (London, 1992), 14–24.

51 INA 13546/2, Letter from Zafiti, 18 June 1965.

52 Scarritt, 'Elite', 45.

53 ZNA NCDP 2/3/2, Aid Israel, memorandum of Vice President, n.d.

54 ZNA FA/1/367, Note no. 0614, 14 June 1972. For a detailed overview of the mission from 1966–9, see D. Yadin, *Three Years of Israeli Agricultural Aid in Zambia* (Report submitted to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, 1969).

55 *Ibid.* 29.

Luanshya and also requested that the Israelis take control over the Kafubu block, an existing settlement scheme that was experiencing considerable difficulties.⁵⁶ The Kafubu settlement had been hastily established by the government in 1966, with inadequate planning and investment plaguing the venture from the very start. The area consisted of 12,000 acres divided between 23 cooperatives of 10–12 farmers each.⁵⁷ The soil at the site was not optimal for agriculture and the water supply was inadequate. The early settlers were drawn from among the unemployed in mining cities, and came to Kafubu following government promises for resources and training that were never provided.⁵⁸ Settlers faced many hardships and struggles as they lacked experience in cooperative farming, and the Department of Cooperatives offered little assistance. By the time the Israelis arrived, many of the first settlers had already abandoned the area and the project was near collapse.⁵⁹

The Israelis immediately restructured the cooperative, and took control over planning, marketing, and financing. All of the 23 cooperatives were united under the Kafubu Cooperative Union. The settlers were given individual plots to farm with their families instead of the communal fields. These changes took hold in the second year and the individual holders began to generate surpluses. New crop varieties were introduced, and cultivation was expanded. The poultry sector was particularly successful, expanding rapidly to become the showcase project of the entire Kafubu block.⁶⁰ Production was so great that in 1971, the Israelis made an urgent appeal to find consumers for the surplus of six million eggs, which allowed Kaunda to boast that he had fulfilled his post-independence promise to provide each citizen with one egg a day.⁶¹

The Kafulafuta settlement block experienced similar success. The cooperative was established through a collaborative process involving UNIP officials, the local Lamba traditional authority, Chief Mushili, and an Israeli advisor, Dan Yadin. The Kafulafuta Union was allotted 5,000 acres that were divided into three villages, each able to accommodate 500 families. Despite some difficulties with removing stumps, by 1968, thousands of acres were cleared for vegetable cultivation, and pig and poultry farming were also introduced.⁶² By 1970, there were 140 farmers settled, and a total of 110 permanent houses built.⁶³ According to Schwartz et al., between October 1970 and October 1971, production at Kafubu reached 189,000 kwacha (\$135,000) and 100,000 kwacha (\$71,400) at Kafulafuta. In the following year, the two settlement blocks doubled this production, and farmers' gross income per capita reached 130 kwacha per annum (US \$93), as compared to the average rural income of 26 kwacha per annum of the rest of Zambia.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 4.

⁵⁷ Schwartz and Hare, *Foreign Experts*, 80.
Yadin, *Three*, 40–1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 35.

⁵⁹ Schwartz and Hare, *Foreign Experts*, 80–1.

⁶⁰ Yadin, *Three*, 40–1.

⁶¹ Schwartz and Hare, *Foreign Experts*, 94.

⁶² *Ibid.* 89.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 90.

⁶⁴ M. Schwartz, P. Hare, O. S. Saasa, E. Nwana, K. Devkota, and B. Peperkamp, *Israeli Settlement Assistance to Zambia, Nigeria and Nepal* (Veenstra, Groningen, 2002), 22; Schwartz and Hare, *Foreign Experts*, 91.

The success of these projects had implications for the rest of the cooperative movement in Zambia. In 1968, the government commissioned a Swedish agricultural economist, Gunnar Olund, to make recommendations to improve the productivity of cooperatives throughout the country. Olund examined many under-functioning cooperatives as well as the Israeli-run settlements, and his review found that the smallholder model as introduced by Israel had enabled significant increases in productivity. He reported that under the communal system, it had taken 298 families two months to cultivate 600 acres, whereas the family-based farms established under the Israelis had cultivated 1,100 acres in one month.⁶⁵ Kaunda subsequently announced his support for reorganizing all agricultural cooperatives according to the *moshav* individual holder model.⁶⁶

Kaunda lavishly praised the work of the Israeli experts in public and private forums alike, telling the Israeli ambassador in 1968 that ‘only the cooperatives in which the Israelis are involved are worthy of their name’.⁶⁷ In a 1971 *Observer* article entitled ‘African Kibbutz’, Kaunda asserted that: ‘These settlements are the pride of our nation. If we can duplicate these experiments in all the other districts of Zambia, we will be on our way to establishing a self-sustaining economy.’⁶⁸ In another interview in 1971, Kaunda proclaimed that the Israeli-led initiatives were ‘an achievement which deserves the admiration of the country as a whole ... here we may be pretty close to the answer to grassroots development for which we have been searching since independence.’⁶⁹ To the incoming new Israeli ambassador in 1971, Kaunda expressed his appreciation for the Israeli expertise:

One of our cornerstones in the country is the construction through the cooperative effort and we do realise that in this respect you are one of the few who specialise, and indeed we have learned from your experience here, that those areas where our Israeli friends have worked alongside with their Zambian brothers we have succeeded in creating a successful cooperative effort in the Republic. We appreciate this very much indeed.⁷⁰

The Israeli projects became the showcase for Kaunda’s cooperative initiative, and the Foreign Ministry regularly brought visiting statesmen and dignitaries to see the projects firsthand.

Among Zambian officials, initial uneasiness with the Israelis gave way to tremendous enthusiasm once the success of the programs became clear. The turnaround could be seen in the remarks of one official at the minister of state to an Israeli diplomat in 1969: ‘the personnel we have received from your country have proved to be the right type of people. They have demonstrated their skills. I have seen the *Zambia Independence* cooperative and was very impressed.’⁷¹ Following a visit to the Kafubu block, Kaunda looked to extend

65 Lombard, *The Growth*, 25.

66 Quick, *Humanism*, 112.

67 INA 4191/36.

68 *The Observer*, 15 Dec. 1971.

69 *Zambian Farmer*, 17 Aug. 1971, quote in Shimeon Amir, *Israel’s Development Cooperation with Africa, Asia and Latin America* (New York, 1974), 32.

70 INA 4581/39, Report of the ceremony of the arrival of the new Israeli ambassador, 14 Oct. 1971.

71 ZNA NCDP/213/11, External Aid Policy Israel, minutes of a meeting, 29 July 1969.

the duration and scope of Israeli activity and he proposed expanding the cooperative assistance program across the entire Western Province. As he wrote to the Israeli ambassador:

I was deeply impressed by the performance of the Israeli team responsible for the Kafubu Block Development project. . . . I have found it necessary to ask for the assistance of your government to provide teams of Israeli experts to work in each district in the Western Province . . . in this exercise to which I attach very great importance for it will serve the interests of our people greatly.⁷²

It was also suggested that Israel assist in developing small industrial concerns around the Copperbelt cooperatives, such as bakeries and garages, to employ settlers who did not succeed at farming.⁷³ The Israelis also proposed establishing a regional agricultural high school for Kafulafuta and Kafubu, to serve hundreds of students from the two settlements.⁷⁴

These initiatives however were never realized, as Kaunda broke off relations with Israel in October 1973, issuing a directive that called for the expulsion of the MASHAV advisors within weeks. The Israelis left with their capital resources and know-how, and the local cooperatives suffered from the abrupt withdrawal of resources and expertise. The projects experienced a quick demise over the course of months as debts mounted, funds disappeared and banks repossessed equipment. By the end of 1976, both Kafubu and Kafulafuta cooperatives had collapsed completely. Zambia's decision to break ties with Israel thus came at the price of abandoning one of the country's leading developmental showcases. What led Kaunda to reach this decision? The scholarly literature examining the breaking of ties between Israel and Africa at this time is overwhelmingly generalized, and provides analyses that consider 'African states' as a whole.⁷⁵ Most studies conclude that Africans ultimately succumbed to Arab pressure. There are few detailed analyses of the specific challenges and foreign policy concerns that particular states weighed in coming to this decision. In the case of Zambia, it is clear that there were a whole set of challenges in the foreign policy sphere that came into play. A detailed analysis of the evolution of Zambia's position with regard to the Middle East over the course of the First Republic moves beyond a general assumption that 'the Africans' finally gave in to Arab pressure, and instead brings into focus the specific dilemmas and interests that shaped Zambia's postcolonial diplomacy.

ZAMBIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

While Israel had anticipated that technical assistance to Zambia would solidify good relations between the two countries, Kaunda made it clear from the start that foreign aid would not sway Zambia's political agenda or ideological principles. As in the domestic sphere, Humanism provided Kaunda with the key principles justifying his foreign policy

72 ZNA NCDP/213/11, External Aid Policy Israel, letter from Kenneth Kaunda, 28 Aug. 1969.

73 ZNA NCDP/213/11, External Aid Policy Israel, minutes of a meeting, 29 July 1969.

74 INA 4832/2, Aug. 1973.

75 One important study of the Ghana case study is Z. Levey, 'The rise and decline of a special relationship: Israel and Ghana, 1957–1966', *African Studies Review*, 46:1 (2003), 155–77. For generalized views on the continent as a whole, see Z. Levey, *Israel in Africa: 1956–1976* (Dordrecht, 2012); Peters, *Israel*.

positions. He invoked the doctrines of dignity, racial equality, and autonomy to maintain Zambia's non-alignment, independence, and neutrality in the pursuit of national interests.⁷⁶ Thus, at the start of independence, Kaunda insisted that Israeli aid would not compromise Zambian neutrality, nor would pressure from Arab states lead him to refuse relations with Israel. As he told the Israeli ambassador in Lusaka:

We strive and try to achieve our objectives, objectives which we have set ourselves under the philosophy and the banner of humanism. It is this approach to life that makes us find ourselves in a situation where we accept all our fellow beings as human beings and any country which has a basically similar approach to us, we receive here and that it why we have found it difficult to accept countries like South Africa and others in that region, which do not accept their fellow humans beings as human beings.⁷⁷

Once ties were established, Kaunda's exchanges with Israeli representatives revealed his cognizance of international pressures, as well as his avowal of Zambia's autonomy. As he assured the Israeli ambassador in Lusaka in 1971: 'Politically, as you know, the fact that you are here means that we accept the presence of the State of Israel on this earth and we have no quarrel with her at all.'⁷⁸

Despite these early assurances, throughout the First Republic, Kaunda did in fact become an increasingly vocal critic of Israeli policies. Starting with the June War in 1967 until the breaking of ties in 1973, Zambia gradually emerged as a leading figure in the international condemnation of Israeli policies, voting consistently against Israel in the UN General Assembly, and as a member of the Security Council from 1969–70, Zambia initiated most of the resolutions condemning Israel.⁷⁹ Scholars who have tried to make sense of Zambia's foreign policy in these early years have been divided in trying to assess what motivated Kaunda. His habitual reprise of Humanist principles in explaining Zambia's foreign policy positions during the First Republic has led some scholars to conclude that Kaunda was largely motivated by ideology. Others have called into question the depth of his principled stances, and claimed instead that Zambia was in fact mostly pragmatic in constructing its foreign policy.⁸⁰ DeRoche has recently argued that Kaunda's policies were neither purely economic nor ideological, but rather evolved in accordance with Zambia's 'national interests.'⁸¹ While DeRoche's argument is sufficiently flexible to make it plausible, the question of 'Zambian interests' takes on an interesting perspective when applied to the issue of Middle East politics. A close examination of Kaunda's evolving position with regard to Israel and the Middle East conflict reveals complexity in attempting to understand what drove Zambia's positions.

Engagement with the Middle East afforded Kaunda and his government a departure point for positioning themselves on a variety of political and ideological issues, and an

76 Anglin, *Zambia*.

77 INA 4581/39, Report of the ceremony of the arrival of the new Israeli ambassador, 14 Oct. 1971.

78 *Ibid.*

79 INA 4025/16, Report on Israel–Zambia relations; Report at the end of Elron's term, 7 July 1971.

80 For a review of the various positions, see A. J. DeRoche, "You can't fight guns with knives": national security and Zambian responses to UDI, 1965–1973', in Gewalt, Hinfelaar, and Macola (eds.), *One Zambia*, 77–97.

81 DeRoche, "You can't fight guns with knives", 77–97.

effective juncture at which to raise Zambian prominence in the international arena. Particularly during the years when they were members of the Security Council, Zambian representatives to the UN realized that engagement with the Middle East conflict was essential for any country seeking international influence. As Ambassador Mwaanga wrote, “There is no doubt in my mind that the Middle East Crisis is the most explosive and controversial problem which will continue to occupy the Security Council for some years to come. It is, therefore, important for us to formulate a policy which will act as a guide to us here in the United Nations.”⁸²

Zambia’s engagement with the Middle East was entangled with a diplomacy agenda closer to home. Kaunda’s main foreign policy concern was always the situation in southern Africa. The 1965 UDI in Rhodesia constituted a fundamental threat to Zambia, and Kaunda hoped that a quick military intervention by Britain would resolve the crisis. Once it was clear that Britain would not intervene, Kaunda searched for more strategies to respond to the threat. International pressure and alliance-building were among the few tools available to the Zambian political leadership, and Kaunda exploited various forums and relations to advocate for non-racialism and respect for human rights. Some critics have argued that Kaunda’s militant rhetoric masked an accommodating approach to both UDI and the apartheid regime in South Africa, and it was clear that by the mid-1970s, Kaunda settled on compromise with these regimes to protect Zambia’s economic interests.⁸³ But as Shaw and others have argued, this shift to accommodation only came in 1974, and during the First Republic, Kaunda maintained a more combative tone and policy.⁸⁴ According to DeRoche, Kaunda’s stubborn insistence on opposing the white-minority regimes aroused growing opposition within Zambia, as politicians such as Harry Mkunbula protested that Zambia should focus on the domestic needs of Zambians.⁸⁵ Despite this domestic pressure, DeRoche claimed that Kaunda’s government in the First Republic decided on a path of aggressive opposition to the UDI in order to defend ‘the Zambia core values as they perceived them’.⁸⁶

This is essential background for understanding Zambia’s Middle East policies. Many of the concerns that Zambia voiced over the situation in the Middle East reflected anxieties about the minority-rule and colonial regimes that surrounded Zambia. The identification of Israel as a settler regime became part of Zambian discourse, and with it came some harsh criticism of Zionist claims to the land of Israel. For example, Rupiah Banda, the Zambian ambassador to the US in 1967, completely rejected the Zionist movement’s historic-religious claim over the Jewish homeland promised to Abraham in biblical times, calling it ‘as ridiculous as it is absurd’. He went on to claim that for 1,300 years, the Arab inhabitants of Palestine had acquired rights to live there, and ‘stale arguments cannot obscure the fact that Zionists have committed monstrous crimes against humanity

82 ZNA FA/1/272, Israel-Arab Conflict – Middle East Crisis, Report of security council condemnation of Israel on 8 Apr. 1969 from V. J. Mwaanga.

83 R. Hall, *The High Price of Principles: Kaunda and the White South* (London, 1969); K. Good, ‘Zambia and the liberation of South Africa’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 25:3 (1987), 505–40.

84 Shaw, ‘The foreign policy of Zambia’, 103.

85 DeRoche, “‘You can’t fight guns with knives’”, 77–97.

86 *Ibid.* 96.

by their actions in the Middle East'. Banda was emphatic that Zambia had a clear self-interest in condemning the expulsion of Arabs from Palestine, as aggression by similar settler states in southern Africa might be condoned. As he wrote, 'Very soon Zambia will be told to accept that whites must rule Rhodesia. Africa will be asked after a few more years to accept the *fait accompli* of white South Africa. We must reject superficial power-based righteousness.'⁸⁷

Zambia's international campaign against neighboring minority regimes was framed within the Humanist ideology, and Kaunda promoted himself as a colonial liberator who sought human rights for all the populations of the region. Kaunda and the Zambian political elite continually justified the foreign policy positions they embraced as an extension of the Humanist worldview, and this was then deployed on a universal basis to provide a set of justifications for Zambian officials confronted by Israeli officials protesting Zambia's positions. Thus, when Israeli Ambassador Dagan came to protest Zambia's co-sponsorship with Pakistan and Algeria of a UN resolution condemning Israel, Foreign Minister Mudenda claimed that Zambia's stance on the Middle East was driven by Humanism and constituted a service 'to the common man'.⁸⁸

Certainly, the Middle East conflict offered Kaunda an opportunity to raise his profile in the international political arena. Particularly in the first decade of his rule, Kaunda accepted leadership roles in international organizations and then used his influence to build support for his southern Africa agenda. As a member of the Security Council, the Chairman of the OAU (1970–1), and the Secretary General of the Non-aligned Movement (1970–3), Kaunda promoted himself as the liberator of colonized peoples worldwide. The Middle East conflict thus provided him another outlet for cementing solidarities with countries that identified with his agenda. As the Israeli ambassador in Lusaka reported to Jerusalem in 1971:

The prestige [Kaunda] has gained in these positions has been earned through uncompromising support from the more 'progressive' countries and he will do nothing to damage this alliance. These alliances support the Arab side in the Middle East conflict, and this is the main determinant that has led to Zambia's support of the Arabs and nothing will move them from this.⁸⁹

This strategy was reflected in a 1967 report from the Zambian ambassador in Tanzania, who claimed that Zambia's leadership role in the international condemnation of Israel following the June War, 1967 was helping to strengthen the alliance with Tanzania. Zambia coordinated her position with the Tanzanian government, leaving 'no stone unturned when it denounced Israel and her possible allies for having provoked the war which, of course as she rightly put it, was and is being agitated and engineered by big powers.' The Zambians were sure that 'the whole approach by Zambia and Tanzania was well timed and well received by all who shared the views that without outside world power-hungry and war-mongers[sic], Israel alone with its limited manpower could not have attempted to provoke the situation. For this reason, Tanzania welcomes Zambia's joint denunciation of Israel

87 ZNA FA/1/208, Israel-UAR Conflict – Middle East Crisis, Banda in Washington, DC to Kapwepwe, 30 June 1967.

88 ZNA FA/1/272, Israel-Arab Conflict – Middle East Crisis, 26 Aug. 1969.

89 INA 4025/16, Report on Israel – Zambia relations, 7 June 1971.

and her allies as the aggressor.⁹⁰ He also claimed that Zambia had improved its status with other foreign missions: ‘total admiration and compliments have been accorded to Zambia’s strong denunciation both at home and in the United Nations, which we are still enjoying through courtesy calls from different ambassador particularly those who were seriously concerned with the crisis’. Zambia was bolstered by the congratulations they received from countries such as Sudan, Algeria, Somalia, and Syria.

The 1967 war was in fact the turning point. Relations between Zambia and Israel turned from relations of cooperation and affinity to relations fraught with tensions and critique. According to Levey, the war created fissures in the relations between Israel and many African nations, who condemned the occupation of Arabs’ land that followed the war.⁹¹ As noted, the Israeli occupation was particularly contentious for Zambia, engaged in organized opposition to colonial regimes in southern Africa and where parallels were repeatedly drawn. Zambia’s condemnation of Israel thus became a moral imperative. An address made to the UN General Assembly by Zambia’s ambassador in the aftermath of the conflict is illustrative in this regard:

[W]e are concerned by the state of Israel’s resort to the use of force in settling international disputes. My government which shed the colonial yoke only a few years ago strongly believes in the development and maintenance of friendly relations with other nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and to that end my government has maintained and enjoyed friendly relations with both the Arab states and the state of Israel. The Middle East has cooperated with my country in its effort to solve economic, social and cultural and other human problems. The government and the people of Zambia have no quarrel with Israel. ... [but] aggression in the eyes of Zambia is inadmissible and worth nothing but strong condemnation. It should not be said that some states adhere to the United Nations charter only when it suits them. Members of a club must stick to the rules of the club without which the club is dead.⁹²

According to the Zambian representative, Israel was created by the United Nations and was therefore explicitly bound to accept the principles governing the organization and relations between members. Yet, he claimed, Israel had violated human rights protocols since its creation, and was deemed the aggressor in the 1967 war, which was secretly aimed at satisfying Israeli ‘territorial ambitions’. The Zambian delegate thus accused Israel of becoming a colonial power: ‘It is this Israeli policy of territorial aggrandisement and expansionism that my delegation strongly deplores and condemns. In the second half of the twentieth century, Zambia cannot and will not lend itself to the law of the jungle which can only give comfort to the enemies of self-determination, freedom and human dignity.’⁹³

This impassioned position reflected Zambian fears regarding international indifference to colonialism and human rights violations. In a telegram dated 20 June 1967, the Zambian delegation in New York described opposition to Israel as an imperative, both for moral reasons and for strengthening alliances with likeminded regimes:

It is in Zambia’s interest in condemning expansionist policies as we can be the next victim from unperceived South if we accept the principle of occupation by Fighter Squadrons at present

90 ZNA FA/1/208, Israel-UAR Conflict – Middle East Crisis.

91 Levey, *Israel in Africa*.

92 ZNA FA/1/208, Israel-UAR Conflict – Middle East Crisis.

93 *Ibid.*

practiced by Israel. For your information Israel did not vote with us on Rhodesia and on South West Africa. Arab countries are more than willing to indict racist regimes and unjustified oil supplies and have joined us in pressure against the West on important issues.⁹⁴

Zambia's fundamental opposition to the Israeli occupation could be seen in reports from a meeting between the Zambian Foreign Minister Mudenda and the Israeli Ambassador Elron in Lusaka, in September 1967. Elron came to voice his disapproval of Zambia's strong condemnation of Israel at the UN, but he found an unsympathetic response from the Minister. Minister Mudenda claimed that until the June War, Zambia had resisted significant pressure from Arab states, and advanced a policy that 'does not question the existence, the national independence, and sovereignty of Israel'. Israeli aid projects in Zambia affirmed the commitment of the two countries to maintaining strong ties. But Mudenda reported that he warned Elron of new obstacles that emerged in relations between the two countries in the wake of the war:

Zambia [has tried to] convince the UAR and her Arab friends that Israel as a state is there to stay and deserves recognition. ... I informed the Israeli Ambassador that Zambia is continuing to play this role but difficulties have been encountered, since the Arabs are bound to ask which Israel Zambia is referring to. Is it the Israel that existed before the outbreak of the war, that is on the 4th of June 1967? Or is the Israel which is the result of annexation as a result of the Six Days war in June? I emphasised that this is a question which it would be important for all people interested to resolve. ... I explained that the Zambian government insists on the need to define which Israel we are talking about if we discuss the issue with the Arabs.⁹⁵

Zambia's deep concerns with the outcome of the June War were summarized in 1968 by UN Ambassador Vernon Mwaanga, who claimed that the escalation of hostilities between the Israelis and Arabs in 1948, 1956, and 1967 had transformed Israel into a colonial power: 'Each war has brought about a changed situation. The first brought about the establishment of Israel, the second consolidated her position and the third brought her an Empire.'⁹⁶ Although Zambia's position regarding Israel began to shift at this time, Kaunda rather contradictorily adopted a policy of business as usual with regard to Israeli technical assistance in the cooperative schemes. This however was always fraught, particularly when Kaunda began to put himself forward as the broker for a peace agreement between Israel and the Arab nations.

TAKING THE LEAD: THE ZAMBIAN MIDDLE EAST PEACE MISSION

Kaunda's stubborn intransigence toward the UDI was rooted in both ideological and economic concerns, but it also reflected a sense of empowerment that characterized the political leadership of Zambia in the First Republic. The emboldened spirit with which this leadership entered independence played a role in shaping foreign policy, adding a layer of complexity to efforts to define 'national interests'. Part of the confidence Kaunda and his ministers displayed during the First Republic was linked to the availability of economic

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ ZNA FA/1/272, Israel-Arab Conflict – Middle East Crisis.

resources. It has been argued that copper revenues fostered some reckless choices and added to an exaggerated sense of security and power. As Kaunda himself bemoaned in later years, ‘the major problem’ in Zambia was that ‘we were born unfortunately with a copper spoon in our mouth’.⁹⁷ But Zambia’s bold foreign policy was also an outgrowth of Kaunda himself, and Zambia’s ambitious policies were infused with Kaunda’s strong character and determination. Some of Kaunda’s critics have condemned his ‘love for drama’,⁹⁸ while more sympathetic observers have described ‘creativity and flexibility’,⁹⁹ but in either case, it is clear that Kaunda’s immense aspirations found expression in the peace mission that Zambia sent to the Middle East in 1969.

In December 1968, Vernon Mwaanga, the Zambian ambassador to the United Nations, was sent by Kaunda on a mission to investigate the conditions for achieving peace between Israel and her neighbors. From a contemporary perspective, this initiative in itself is remarkable for what it reveals about the role Kaunda envisioned for himself in world politics. Mwaanga traveled to Egypt, Jordan, Israel, and Syria, meeting with government officials in each place and studying the conflict firsthand. The detailed 45-page report he submitted following this trip reveals the significant investment Zambia made in engaging with the conflict.¹⁰⁰ Mwaanga returned ‘a sobered realist’ with a strong appreciation of the immense obstacles to peace. Although the effort did not produce any concrete results, the summary of the trip has much to teach us about the political aspirations of postcolonial Zambia, and how these shaped foreign policy in the complex landscape of postcolonial diplomacy.

The report begins with Mwaanga’s foregone conclusion: the creation of Israel is the main source of the conflict, and Zionism is the root of the problem. As he wrote, he came to the region looking ‘to identify that force most responsible for the start of that hostility: and then to examine its nature and its motivation’. This force was not difficult to identify: ‘It is Zionism, world Zionism.’ He tried to balance out this unequivocal conclusion with some insights from Jewish history, claiming that anti-Semitism was the antecedent to the emergence of Zionism. But this was mainly a problem for European Jews, while Middle Eastern Jews had maintained better relations with the Arabs. As Mwaanga wrote, ‘The conflict in my view is not specifically a product of racial incompatibility between Arabs and the Jews. The history of the Jewish communities in the Arab world is not half so terrible as the history of Jewish tribulation at the hands of Christian or Communist European societies.’ While he cited the historical precedents of peaceful relations between Jews and Arabs, Mwaanga charged that the current conflict was linked to the emergence of a Zionist state that simply ‘did not fit into the Middle East’.

97 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 22 June 1983 quoted in K. Good, ‘The reproduction of weakness in the state and agriculture: Zambian experience’, *African Affairs*, 85:339 (1986), 239–65 (241).

98 Chan, *Kaunda*, 12.

99 DeRoche similarly argued that the First Republic was a time of ‘high hopes for a bright future’. DeRoche, “‘You can’t fight guns with knives’”, 96.

100 ZNA FA/1/272, Israel-Arab Conflict – Middle East Crisis. The following quotes are all taken from the mission report of Vernon Mwaanga to the UAR, Syria, Israel, and Jordan from 10–17 Dec. 1968.

Mwaanga's report included an historical review of the provocations and retaliations between Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate, but he viewed the Zionists as the provocateurs. He also claimed that following the declaration of independence in 1948, Israel relied on force to achieve its goals: 'After the defeat of the Arab armies, Israel became a powerful force in the Middle East, and also attained not only a right to exist, but her power to exist.' Mwaanga blamed the Israelis for the Palestinian refugee problem, which he described as 'a by-product of the creation of the state of Israel' and 'the result of an overall preconceived Zionist plan'. Mwaanga also acknowledged the belligerency of the Arabs, who 'possessed their intention of eliminating Israel'. This explained the long-term impact that ongoing hostilities had on the Israeli worldview: 'The many years of retaliation for frontier incidents and of listening to Arab incantations about her destruction were not without effect on Israel. A siege mentality developed. Israel slipped into the habit of half-believing Arab propaganda and half-accepting the view in certain French and British colonial circles that "all the Arab understands is force".' Mwaanga was highly critical of Israel's ongoing resort to militarism:

There is no doubt in my mind that Israel is an impatient country. It is strange to find such resourceful people so ready to accept that in most situations in their arguments with the Arabs, there was no alternative to force. Israel's technical, social and economic achievements are outstanding compared to her Arab neighbours. Yet she does not appear to have developed any more than the Arabs in political terms. Why is this? I think that Israel's whole posture in militancy stems from the fact that the country was born in war, and it seem to have been the easiest way to maintain the national identity and the national momentum against a general background of war.

Despite Mwaanga's strong criticism for Israeli's ongoing use of force for a problem he called 'a political one with no military solution', the conclusions he reached at the end of the report reflected a shift away from the unequivocal condemnation of Israel that he delivered at the UN General Assembly immediately following the June War of 1967. His conclusions, undoubtedly linked to Zambia's southern Africa agenda, found that that neither side had anything to gain from ongoing confrontation. He thus recommended that the Arabs recognize Israel's existence and abandon their attempts to destroy Israel militarily: 'The Arabs should never hope to win a war against Israeli now or in the near future.' He also suggested that both sides must agree to disagree: 'Israel must be made to understand that although she is superior to the Arabs militarily and otherwise, she must face the fact in the Middle East that if she does carry out policies which upset the Arabs, she alone has the responsibility for living with that hostility both in the short and the long term.'

From the perspective of Zambia, the most significant aspect of Mwaanga's conclusions was his assertion that a resolution required international intervention and assistance: 'Judging from the attitude of both sides, it is futile to expect Israel and the Arab states to arrive at peace terms through direct negotiations and without a third party.' These conclusions reflected a strong faith in the role that the international community could and should play in resolving conflicts, with obvious implications for Zambia's own interests. As he wrote:

the Major Powers should apply genuine pressure on both sides to arrive at a peaceful settlement. I am convinced that no settlement regardless of what it is will be satisfactory to both sides, but there must be a settlement which will bring about peace to the areas. This means that the Arabs and the

Israelis do not have to love each other, but they should try to live in peace, because that is what is important.¹⁰¹

LESSONS FROM ZAMBIA'S FIRST REPUBLIC

Mwaanga's mission to the Middle East and his report from the trip reflected a set of moralizing principles that shaped Zambia's incursions in the arena of international diplomacy during the First Republic. In the eyes of Israeli Ambassador Elron, Zambian foreign doctrine was based on 'rigid principles of justice'.¹⁰² The 1969 peace mission also opens a window onto Kaunda's tenacious faith in the influence Zambia could sway in the international arena. Seen from the standpoint of Zambia's catastrophic economic and political decline of the 1970s, the Zambian Middle East peace mission reminds us that the political and ideological ambitions of Kaunda's government in the First Republic projected a very different future for Zambia. Until the collapse of the 1970s, the Zambia leadership brandished the Humanist doctrines of autonomy and independence. This spirit is important to recall not only for what it teaches us about Zambia's former international standing, but also for what it teaches us about domestic politics. Despite the domestic failures of the political elite in the First Republic, Kaunda's principled postures in this era have become a source of pride for Zambians, even among the victims of failed domestic policies.¹⁰³ As several scholars have found, Kaunda's tenacity in the international sphere has contributed to a romanticized popular memory and an 'undeniable nostalgia' for the political leadership in this era.¹⁰⁴

Dualist relations with Israel were another arena in which Kaunda's government staged these principles. Throughout the period under question, the Israelis were confounded by this dualism. Israeli officials in both Lusaka and Jerusalem were deeply frustrated by the stark dissonance between their relations with Zambia in the area of development aid on the one hand, and in the position Zambia consistently took against Israel in international forums and organizations. Again and again, the Israelis confronted the reality that the extension of aid would not translate into unconditional support in the United Nations and elsewhere. Despite all the success of Israeli interventions in Zambia, and the centrality of the aid program in helping Kaunda realize his Humanist vision for cooperative development, the Zambians played a leading role in international alliances that opposed Israeli policies. The Israeli Foreign Ministry urged its ambassadors in Lusaka to register complaints with local officials, but Israeli representatives on the ground understood that Zambian dualism would be very difficult to overcome. In 1967, Israeli Ambassador Tahan claimed that Israeli officials in Lusaka enjoyed an open door to most government ministries, and he boasted about his ability to arrange a meeting with the foreign minister 'within hours'. At the same time, he acknowledged that in international forums, Zambia's

101 ZNA FA/1/272, Israel-Arab Conflict – Middle East Crisis.

102 INA 4025/16, Report on Israel – Zambia relations, 7 July 1971.

103 This can be seen even among some of his staunchest opponents of the early years, as seen in Moorsom's study of the Tonga in the Southern Province. Moorsom, "Black settlers", 26–7.

104 Larmer et al., 'Introduction', 898.

position toward Israel had rapidly deteriorated. The ambassador concluded that Israel had little to no power in changing this unfortunate situation.¹⁰⁵ Zambia was an important partner in Africa, one that Israel was not willing to sacrifice. As Ambassador Elron summed it up in 1971, 'Israel has two options in her relations with Zambia. She can express her dissatisfaction through a purposeful limiting of our relations, which would include a reduction in our aid activity. Or, we can accept the situation, as it is important for us to maintain good relations with Zambia.'¹⁰⁶

Ultimately, it was not Israel but Zambia that terminated relations. For Kaunda and the political elite of Zambia, the dichotomy of the approach to Israel became increasingly difficult to manage. It was clear that on the eve of the October War in 1973, Kaunda was losing patience with Israel and summoned the Israeli ambassador for a meeting at the end of September, and asked him to convey the following warning to the government in Jerusalem:

We are more worried than ever before by the situation in the Middle East, just like we are worried about the situation in the southern continent of Africa. As a friend we want to say what is on our hearts and that includes a feeling that the leaders of Israel are intransigent. Israel is putting up obstacles in the way of realising UN resolutions. Other countries in Africa have cut their relations with Israel and other are threatening to do so, but we are among those who think that by maintaining relations with both sides, we can offer the moderate suggestions of a friend. Thus, through you we are asking the leaders of your country that they will act in a way that history will not prove us wrong. You win in war and you are stronger in your technological abilities, but time is not on your side and the time will come when the Arabs will also make progress in science and technology. It is difficult if not impossible for the defeated side to come to negotiations as you are asking them to while their lands are occupied. . . . In the name of expanding the relations and deepening the friendship between the two countries we are asking you to explain our perspective and our concerns to your government.¹⁰⁷

The plea became irrelevant within one month. Following the outbreak of the October War and the OAU resolution, Zambia finally cut ties with Israel and sent the technical advisors home, putting an end to Kaunda's balancing act with regard to the Middle East.

Kaunda used Humanism to establish himself as a charismatic and moral leader both within Zambia and on the international stage, but his grandiose pronouncements set him up for disappointments and 'unfulfilled expectations'.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, 'the personality of Kaunda and his public performances elevated Zambia's international profile far out of proportion to a realistic understanding of its capabilities'.¹⁰⁹ Such inconsistencies and shortcomings earned him an increasingly vocal chorus of critics from the 1970s onwards, and the gaps between rhetoric and policy grew. These criticisms notwithstanding, it is worthwhile to revisit the early years following independence.

Kaunda, like other nationalist leaders of his generation, approached many of the challenges presented to their new countries with considerable optimism regarding the potential

105 INA 4025/16, Report of internal matters in Zambia, 31 Oct. 1967.

106 INA 4025/16, Report on Israel – Zambia relations, 7 July 1971.

107 INA 4832/2, 24 Sept. 1973.

108 Macola, 'It means . . .', 43–56.

109 Taylor, 'Zambia's foreign policy', 57–8.

for African states to realize their developmental agendas and gain a prominent place in the international arena. The 1960s were an era in which political, ideological, and social aspirations were still imbued with the determination and spirit of decolonization and the independence movements that had spread across Africa. This was an era full of confidence and claim-making by African leaders. Ultimately, these aspirations were revealed as unattainable and, like many others, Kaunda failed to implement his postcolonial vision for Zambia. Kaunda's engagement with the Middle East conflict sheds new light on a leader described by a former aide as 'a brave man in a complex situation'.¹¹⁰ Zambia's relations with Israel reflected the contradictory concerns and dilemmas that plagued post-colonial leadership. But while histories of disappointment and disillusionment have been well recorded, it is nonetheless worthwhile to consider the ambitions, compromises, and contradictions that characterized the first decade of African independence.

110 Chan, *Kaunda*, 150.