

THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND THE JERUSALEM QUESTION, 1948s-2017

Prof. Ngozi Ojiakor

Department of History & International Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Email: ne.ojiakor@unizik.edu.ng

&

Onwuka Polycarp Ugorji

Department of History & International Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Email: up.onwuka@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

It is a given that every state chooses its capital, a right that is intrinsic to its sovereignty. In the country Israel, the hope which kept the dispersed Jewish people connected to the *Eretz Yisrael* (land of Israel) for two millennia became their national Anthem in the country found on the edge of dicey eventuality. Israel's choice of Jerusalem as its undivided capital is an Act of the Knesset, the Jerusalem Law, 1980. The contrasting reactions and concerns that greeted American recognition of Jerusalem as Israeli's capital on December 6, 2017 call for re-evaluation of the Jerusalem status. The status of Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* (separated body) is the politically correct assumption or strategy which has failed to solve the old problem, the Israeli-Palestine conflict. It becomes pertinent to forge a new approach; because the Israeli question is pivotal to the intra-Mediterranean integration, global security and development. This study is a new approach, a historical approach into the Israeli question and its attendant interplay of war and peace, intimidation and occupation, development and contradiction which has marked its existence. While adopting qualitative method of historical analysis, which in the main is descriptive, chronological and thematic, the study examines Israel's history from 1948 to 2017 through the prism of Challenge and Response theory. It is the finding of this paper that Israel has the clearest and greatest historical connection to Jerusalem. This historical fact, the paper suggests, is the spring board upon which the peace process and two- state solution will stand.

Introduction

President Donald Trump's historic announcement on December 6, 2017, that the United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, provoked mixed reactions. Almost all media outlets were saturated with expressions of support and waves of protest. This intense debate spurred this research work, generating intriguing questions like – why the state of Israel? What is the root of the Jerusalem question? What has kept the hope of Israel and preserved its sovereignty in the midst of many adversaries?

In the land of Israel the Jewish nation was born; here the cultural, religious and political identity of the Jewish people was formed. The land of Israel, the Jewish religion and the state of Israel have inseparable historical connection; if not seen as one complex reality and a continual history, the result would be fragmentary, incoherent, lopsided and meaningless. It was Charles Krauthammer who asserted –

Israel is the very embodiment of Jewish continuity. It is the only nation on earth that inhabits the same land, bears the same name, speaks the same

language and worships the same God that it did 3000 years ago. You dig the soil and you find pottery from Davidic times, coins from Bar Kokliba, and a 2000 year old scrolls written in a script remarkably like the one that today advertises ice cream at the corner candy store.¹

Following the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by the Romans in 70CE, and the subsequent sack of the Jewish people in 135CE, they dispersed to different parts of the world.² Even in the Diasporas the hope of a return to the homeland was alive. The discrimination of the Jews in Europe and the anti-Semitic treatments fanned the embers of homeland dream. These found expression in Zionism. In poems and publications the Jewish elites gave the Zionist movement an ideological foundation. Zionists transformed the idea into a movement for independence of the Israelis. The Balfour Declaration of 1917³ gave strength to the activities and agitations of the Zionists.

On 14th May, 1948, the sovereign state of Israel was born, which officially is called, the state of Israel (in Hebrew *Medinat Yisra'el*). The state of Israel is a small country in the Middle East. Geographically, it belongs to the Asian continent and shares borders with a number of Arab countries; Jordan to the east and in the west is bound by the Mediterranean Sea. Syria and Lebanon border it to the north, Egypt to the southwest and the Red Sea to the south. Little had the independence of Israel declared than war broke out between Israel and her neighbours, the Arab countries. Israel has had a turbulent and checkered political history as a country found on the edge of dicey eventuality. Yet, it continues to build a robust democracy and vibrant economy.

On the 30th July 1980 the Knesset passed the Jerusalem Law which proclaimed Jerusalem (complete and united) as the capital of Israel. Jerusalem is the seat of the President of the State, the Knesset, the Government and the Supreme Court. This decision has not received a wide international recognition. The position of the international community has always been that of either considering Jerusalem as *corpus separatum* (separated body) or as owned by both Israel and Palestine. This has made a good number of the member states of the United Nations not to accord Israel the recognition of Jerusalem as its capital.

The Middle-East is a very important and strategic region of the world because the stability of the region impacts on the global security. However, the state of Israel and the consequent Jerusalem question is the pivot around which security of the region revolves. Some scholars and political analysts have viewed the history of Israel as a country that is occupying other people, whereas other scholars consider Israel as a country that is existentially threatened by her neighbours. This paper is a synthesis study of the many sides and narratives that interact to shape the complex reality of today's Israel and the Jerusalem question. And as such, it serves the needed historical and academic knowledge of the state of Israel which is relevant to understanding the problem of the region.

The Jerusalem question is purely a historical problem, and that explains why all peace efforts based on the old assumptions failed to achieve the expected result. In almost all the Peace Summits and Conferences organized to broker peace between Israel and Palestine the Jerusalem question was either removed from the table of discussion or given a politically correct solution; this attitude has reduced the peace-efforts and the Israel-Palestine relations

into either an “incongruous peace-process without victory” or “military victories without peace”. It becomes pertinent to forge a new approach, a historical solution to the Jerusalem question. This paper therefore, toes a historical lane in re-examining the Jerusalem question. It is the finding of this paper that Israel has the clearest and greatest historical connection to Jerusalem.

Theoretical Framework

Challenge and Response Theory

Arnold Joseph Toynbee in his work, *A Study of History, 1934-1961*, presented a monumental synthesis of world history; he examined the universal rhythms of rise, flourishing and decline of civilizations through the prism of Challenge and Response theory. The central tenet of his theory was that,

*Man achieves civilization, not as a result of superior biological endowment or geographical environment, but as a response to a challenge in a situation of special difficulty which rouses him to make a hitherto unprecedented effort.*⁴

Toynbee refuted the traditional explanations, which includes- environment, race, leadership, possession of land and access to natural resources, as wrong or too narrow. Instead he looked for the underlying cause that explained societal success or failure. By “Challenge” Toynbee meant some unpredictable factor or event that posed a threat to the ways in which a group of people had made their livelihood in the past. But “Challenge” was not all negative. It carried in it the germ of opportunity. As for “Response”, he explained it was the action taken by the same group of people to cope with the new situation. It would arise as the result of many things which nobody had knowingly created. Response requires vision, leadership and action to overcome the threat and create a basis for survival and hopefully, prosperity.

This theory offers a suitable approach to analyzing the emergence of the State of Israel in 1948. The group in question here were the Jewish people, and the Challenge was the numerous mass expulsions, ostracism and threats of various kinds experienced by the Jews in the then Europe and other parts of the world. These terrible conditions continued for many years, but the period 1899 to 1939 represent a high point in anti-Semitism in western societies.

The Jewish “Response” in the face of the multifaceted threats was that their minds were turned to their ancestral home at Palestine. Notable Jewish scholars, the likes of Rabbis Yehuda Bibas, Zvi Hirsch Kalischer and Judah Alkalai promoted a range of proto-Zionist ideas through their literary works. These men gave a concrete, practicable platform and frame work to political Zionism. An Austro-Hungarian journalist, Theodor Herzl was outstanding among many of such elites. “Response” requires vision and the vision was created by Theodor Herzl who formed the Zionist Organization and promoted Jewish immigration to Palestine in an effort to form a Jewish state. Another important part of “Response” is leadership, and that aspect was filled by men like, Yaacov Thon, David Yellin, Pinhas Rutenberg, Yitzhak Ben Zvi, David Remez and David Ben-Gurion. Action is the last part of “Response”, and in this context, declaration of independence was the necessary action. The Jews realized they were faced with a radical problem; the coming extinction of the Jews. And they realized that radical problem calls for a radical solution; the transformation of the Jews, a transformation that could take place only in Palestine, the Jews’ ancient homeland.⁵

Geography and the People

The state of Israel, *Medinat Yisra'el* (Hebrew) or *Dawlat Isra'il* (Arabic) is the only Jewish nation in the world today, and the region that now falls within its borders has a lengthy and rich history that dates from pre-biblical times.⁶ It was part of the Roman Empire, and later the Byzantine before falling under the control of the fledgling Islamic Caliphate in the 7th century CE. Although, it was the object of dispute during the Crusades, the region then generally known as Palestine, remained under the sway of successive Islamic dynasties until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, when it was placed under British mandate from the League of Nations.⁷

Before the establishment of the British Mandate for Palestine, the land was barely a “geographical expression”, to borrow Prince Metternich’s dismissal of Italy.⁸ There was no clear cut definition of the geographical and territorial limits of the area known as “Palestine”. This explains why Encyclopedia Britannica described it as a “nebulous geographical concept.”⁹ It was the Sykes-Picot Treaty of 1916 that divided the region that later became Palestine into four political units. According to Biger,

*Under the British Mandate for Palestine, the first geo-political framework was created that distinguished the area from the larger countries that surround it. The boundary demarcation at this time did not introduce geographical changes near the frontiers and both sides of the border were controlled by the British administration.*¹⁰

Israel is located to the north of the Equator around 31° 30^l north latitude and 34° 45^l east longitude. It measures 424 km (263 mi) from north to south and at its widest point 114 km (71 mi), from east to west. At its narrowest point, however, this is reduced to just 15 km (9 mi). It has a land frontier of 1017 km (632 mi) and a coastline of 273 km (170 mi). Israel’s area is approximately 20,770 km² (8019 sq mi) of inland waters. The area described by the United Nations as the Israeli Occupied Territories include the West Bank 5879 km² (2270 sq mi), East Jerusalem 70 km² (27 sq mi) and the Golan Heights 1150 km² (444 sq mi).¹¹

The people of Israel are the descendants of Abraham and the notion of the Promised Land emerges precisely at the moment that the Jews’ story begins. The Land of Israel is part of Jewish people’s story from its very first moment. The introductory paragraph of the Declaration of Independence alluded to the faith, experience and philosophical expression of the Jewish people; –

*The land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of books.*¹²

In the said declaration mention was made to the prophets of Israel and the Rock of Israel. The expressions were born of the Jewish faith, the faith that Abraham received. When the Bible describes the moment at which the Jewish people was born it states: “The Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your native land...to the place that I will show you’. Abram obeys, and shortly later, God says to him, ‘I will assign this land to your offspring’” (Gn. 12:7).

Daniel Gordis summarized Genesis and Exodus books of the Bible this way;

Abraham makes Canaan (as it was then known) his home, but occasionally (especially during famines), he and his off springs have to travel to

*neighbouring lands to ensure their survival. The Book of Genesis, (the first of the five books of Moses, collectively called the Torah) is, in many ways, about the land. It is about building cities and digging wells, purchasing burial caves and dividing the land around the family. It is about leaving the land and returning to it. So it is fundamentally the story of Abraham's complex family, but central to that story is the land on which they have been told to live.*¹⁵

The two thousand years of Jewish dispersion in different parts of the world did not diminish the hunger for the homeland instead it fostered it. Faced with existential threats, economic boycott and other forms of segregation, the Jewish intellectuals started expressing their desire for the home land. Although, ideas of political action began to surface amongst Jewish circle in 19th century, Zionism that was born 1897 became a stroke of a genius; it transformed the Jews of Diaspora to a people of sovereignty.¹⁶ It was George Eliot who asserts,

*A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection.*¹⁷

Daniel Gordis completely agreed with this line of thought when he wrote;

*For Jews, memories of Zion were "inwrought with affection because of the Bible, the book they had seen as a kind of 'national diary'. To be sure, for religious Jews, the Bible was God's revealed word; full with commandments about how they were to live their lives. For all, though the Bible was the book that told the story of their people: what they had loved, where they had lived, how they had succeeded, and when they had failed. It was the story of their family. And central to the story of that family was the land of Israel, the land to which Theodor Herzl was now urging them to return. There could be no Jewish nation, and no Jewish family, their 'diary' intimated, without their land at the center of the story.*¹⁸

Though Israel could be said to be a semi-secular state, the Israeli national anthem includes references of religion; "As long as the Jewish spirit is yearning" and "the two thousand-year-old hope", are both lines in the anthem, 'Hatikvah' (The Hope). Other religious symbols have found their way into Israeli national symbols. For example, the flag of the country is similar to a *tallit*, or prayer shawl, with its blue stripes. The national coat of arms displays the menorah. All of the above connects the Israeli state to the Jewish religious heritage which the land of Israel is the central promise.



Plate 1: Israeli National Flag

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Israel

Brief History of Jerusalem

This section of the study examines the historio-cultural cum religious relevance of Jerusalem to Israel, its linchpin in the Arab-Israeli conflicts, and the impacts of the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital in the Middle Eastern politics and the world at large. The first signs of settlement were witnessed especially, in the part called the city of David in the 4th millennium BCE. It was then an encampment for nomadic shepherds and was called Urusalim. During the Israelite era construction activities began in the 9th century BCE and a century later, it became a city developed into the religious and administrative center of the kingdom of Judah.¹⁹ During its long history, the city has been destroyed at least twice, besieged twenty-three times, captured and recaptured forty-four times, and attacked fifty-two times. It was Amos Orz who wrote;

Jerusalem contains more different versions of Heaven than any outsider can imagine. Despite, or perhaps because of this, its geopolitics has posed a sort of diplomatic hell for millennia. Holy to Islam and Christianity and central to Judaism....Jewish Jerusalem was found 3000 years ago when king David took a hill town from the Jebusites. Solomon built the Temple there atop Mount Moria, on which the Bible says Abraham offered Isaac up to God. While the Jews were exiled to Babylon they expressed their love for Jerusalem in a song²⁰

For the Diaspora community of Judaism, Jerusalem also holds a special resonance. Ever since King David conquered the city, Jerusalem has been considered sacred by believing Jews. The Jews in the Diaspora direct their prayers towards Jerusalem and for hundreds of years prayed for a return to their Zion. It was AbYehoshua who in 2006, in an address to celebrate the centenary of the American Jewish committee inferred that Judaism only had a true meaning and chance of survival in Israel and not outside it.

The population of Jerusalem in 2016 was about 882700, of which Jews comprised 536600, Muslims 319800, Christians 15800 and 10300 unclassified.²¹ Jerusalem is sacred to the Christians because Jesus Christ was crucified there and sacred to the Muslims, because according to the Islamic tradition, in 610 CE it became the first 'qibla' and the Dome of the Rock and al Aqra Mosque were there. The Jewish Temple Mount with its Western wall stood there. These holy sites gave Jerusalem its religious importance.

After the War of Independence the western Jerusalem came under the control of Israel while the Eastern part was under Jordanian government. Israel captured the East Jerusalem from Jordan during the 1967 Six Day war²² and merged the two parts into one united Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Act of 1980 made Jerusalem the undivided capital of the state of Israel. All branches of the Israeli government are located in Jerusalem, including the Knesset (Israel's parliament), the residences of the Prime Minister, the President and the Supreme Court. However, the United Nations partition plan drawn up in 1947 envisaged Jerusalem as a separate "international city" to be under the watch of the UN. That was the UN General Assembly Resolution 194.²³

Moreover, the control Israel has over Jerusalem was gotten in a legitimate self-defense. Following the declaration of independence by Israel in 1948, Arab armies attacked the new state but it survived and took control of the West Jerusalem. It also gained control over East

Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967 in another Arab war that avowed to annihilate the Jewish state.²⁴

It was a fact that the Oslo Agreements between Israel and Palestine Liberation Organization accepted that the status of Jerusalem would only be subject to negotiations. This implies that Israel's claim was legal or it would be unnecessary to negotiate.

The Palestinian Claim

On November 15, 1988, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) declared an independent Palestine, purporting to exercise national self-determination over Jerusalem. This is the most important claim competing with Israel's. A majority of UN members voted to recognize Palestine in 2012, sequeing Jordanian to Palestinian sovereignty. UNESCO has since declared East Jerusalem "a part of the occupied Palestinian territory" in terms that deny its Jewish character.

In review of the aforementioned developments Gregory Rose argues thus,

*How can a state be occupied if it is not there? No Palestinian Arab state existed under the Ottoman Empire or British Mandate. A Palestinian Arab state cannot exist by merely strength of UN resolutions (which are recommendations not binding as laws). Currently, the Palestinian Authority lacks essential international legal prerequisites for a sovereign country, such as borders, a defined population and a national government exercising control.*²⁵

American Recognition

The journey to American recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital and the attendant movement of the American Embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem began in 1995. In 1995, the United States Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act, which required subject to conditions, that its embassy be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.²⁶ President Bill Clinton supported the idea in principle. President W. Bush declared that he would move American embassy to Jerusalem in 2000 but didn't fulfill the promise. Barrack Obama referred to the city as the capital of Israel and said it must remain undivided.²⁷ Then on December 6, 2017 President Donald Trump officially announced America's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

In Trump's preamble to the announcement he mentioned that this course of creation was to the best interest of United States of America and the pursuit of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. He said that it was a long overdue step to advance the peace process and to work towards a lasting agreement. The strongest point in the move is that United States had toed the old path of negotiating Jerusalem between Israel and Palestine for 25 years with no results. Hence, he considers it expedient to state the obvious, that Israel as a sovereign state has right to choose its capital. He eventually added, that the recognition did not resolve the dispute over Jerusalem borders. This announcement was greeted with reactions from different quarters.

Politically Correct Solution

One of the strongest obstacles to peace is the fruitless effort to give a political solution to a historical problem. As long as the parties concerned and the global community shy away

from contextualizing the Arab-Israeli conflict within its historical realities and nuances, they would continue to offer the same failed politically correct solutions that have no historical foundation. The key question should be the Western Wall, the material remains of the second Temple was owned by which nation? Is Jerusalem whose capital before its destruction by Rome? During the war of Independence, the Six days war and Yom Kippur, if the Arabs had won, what would have been the fate of the Jews? As long as these questions were isolated from the Talks and Peace Conferences, peace would be a dream never to be realized. There is need for an honest evaluation of the Israeli-Palestinian historical narratives according to their utility in solving analytic and political problems.²⁸ It was Ze'ev Jabotinsky who in 1923 paper -"the Iron Wall" argued that; the Arabs would never end the conflict until they understood that the Israelis would not budge – it sadly seemed that he had been right. Israel was caught up between the existential threats and the survival occupations, hence, building a democracy of an uneasy peace.²⁹

The Global Concerns

This official recognition provoked a vortex of reactions from various parts of the world. Opinions and reactions toed the lines of the two-way paths of the Israeli-Palestinian divide. Under the subheading, Global concerns, this paper examines series of concerns and discussion provoked by president Trump's announcement of American recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital. Various circles of interaction will be studied with respect to regional and international actors and the overall effects this had in both exacerbating the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts and/or, its contribution to its resolution. Israeli-Palestinian conflict is perhaps one of the most deeply studied and most frequently addressed in the modern age. Its peculiar feature has been its "international character": it has always had far reaching consequences. Beverly argues that events in or about Jerusalem has greater impacts –

...barely a week goes past when the latest twists and turns of events in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories are not addressed in the news pages of European, North American, Asian and African press. Thus, since European 'rediscovery' of Palestine, it has been so for a variety of reasons events in Jerusalem matter more than in Johannesburg or Jeddah to foreign policy-makers, news gatherers and diplomats ... Jerusalem, in particular, is the symbol of three of the major monotheistic faith of the world and thus motivates its adherents to an attachment, an interest, an ambition, a spiritual commitment or commandment to come about what happens and play a part in shaping or determining its present and future.³⁰

Israel's Reactions

The earliest reactions came from Israel. The Prime Minister, in a recorded address, called the Wednesday, "a historic day". He continued.

it is rare to be able to speak of new and genuine milestones in the glorious history of this city. Yet today's pronouncement by President Trump is such an occasion. We are profoundly grateful for the president for his courageous and just decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and prepare for opening of the US Embassy here. I also want to make clear: There will be no change whatsoever to the status quo at the holy sites, Israel will always ensure freedom of worship for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike.³¹

In a brief historical remark the Prime Minister, Netanyahu said- Jerusalem has been the focus of our dreams, our hopes and our prayers for three millennia. From every corner of the earth our people yearn to return to Jerusalem: to touch its golden stones, to walk its hallowed streets. This decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital reflects president Trump's commitment to an ancient but enduring truth. It is an important step towards peace. Here our Temple stood, our kings ruled and our prophets preached. Jerusalem has been the capital of Jewish people for three thousand years and the capital of Israel for nearly 70 years.³²

The mayor of Jerusalem, Niv Barkal lauded the decision in an uncertain terms, -

*On behalf of the city of Jerusalem, the beating heart and soul of the Jewish people for more than 3000 years, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your commitment and intention to officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This historic step will send a very clear message to the world that the United States stands with the Jewish people and the state of Israel. In Jerusalem, we don't have to pressure and we don't let threats or violence stop us from doing what is right. President Trump, I encourage you to do the right thing: recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and bring the US Embassy home to Jerusalem.*³³

Many prominent American Jewish organizations welcomed the recognition and lauded it as a genuine move to true peace. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) expressed its support for an "undivided Jerusalem" and added that relocating the American embassy to Jerusalem would not "prejudge the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process". Malcolm Hoenlein, president of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organization registered his support thus,

*President Trump was doing the right thing. When he visited the Western Wall and made a declaration recognizing Jerusalem as holy to the Jews after the denomination of UNESCO, there was not even one warm-up, not one demonstration, because when you do the right thing, you do not have to ask questions, you just do it.*³⁴

But dissenting voices also abound even amongst the Jews. The president of the Union for Reform Judaism, Rabbi Rick Jacobs said,

*Wednesday's announcement "ill-timed but expected". Trump affirmed what the Reform Jewish movement has long held: that Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish people and the state of Israel. Yet while we share the President's belief that the US Embassy should at the right-time, be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, we cannot support his decision to begin preparing that move now, absent a comprehensive plan for a peace process. The White-House should not undermine efforts towards making peace between Israel and the Palestinians by "making unilateral decisions that are all but certain to exacerbate the conflict."*³⁵

Another group the Anti-Defamation League called the step important and long overdue but urged all parties to work together to reduce tensions and create conditions conducive for the rapid resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations leading to a two state solution.³⁶

The Jewish Democratic Council of America while expressing support for Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital, but criticized Trump for neglecting to meaningfully support peace between Palestinians and Israelis. And the left-wing Mideast policy group, J Street said the timing was "premature and divisive"³⁷

The announcement was well received by the Knesset members of left, right and centers including YeshAtid, BayitYehudi, YisraelBaytenu and Likud. Isaac Heizog, the opposition leader in the Knesset, called the recognition an "act of "historic justice" but added that the next step was to "realize the vision of two states". In contrast, BezaelSmotrich of the BayitYehudi party issued a statement and said, "for30 years we have fallen into the pit of the Palestinian state as a realistic solution. The time has come to rethink things."³⁸

However, one of the strongest oppositions came from Joint List leader, AymanOdeh, a member of the Knesset,

*Trump hates people and therefore does not care about the fate of Israelis or Palestinians. His speech was a combination of ignorance and arrogance, and its ramifications don't interest him. Trump threw a match at the Middle East, and the two peoples will pay the price. Trump's America said officially that it is part of the occupying force and therefore cannot in any way be a sponsor for talks between Israelis and Palestinians. The Palestinian people, together with forces of peace in Israel, will continue their courageous struggle until the end of occupation and the achievement of real peace.*³⁹

Arab Reactions

The Palestinians greeted the announcement with protests in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza strip. The burned portraits and effigies of Donald Trump. The pictures of Salman bin Abdulaziz and Muhammed bin Salman were torn in protest. The Israeli military estimated that 3000 people in the West Bank and 4500 in the Gaza strip participated in protests on December 8, 2017.⁴⁰ President Mahmoud Abbas condemning the recognition said,

*This decision was tantamount to the US "abdicating its role as peace mediator. These deplorable and unacceptable measures deliberately undermined all peace efforts. Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the state of Palestine".*⁴¹

Ismail Haniya, the leader of the Islamist movement, Hamas, called for a new "Intifada" and said,

*The American decision is an aggression against our people. It is a declaration of war against our Palestinian people. We should call for and we should work on launching an intifada in the face of the Zionist enemy.*⁴²

The Arab League called it "a dangerous measure that would have repercussions" across the region, and also questioned the future role of the US as a "trusted mediator" in peace talks. Meanwhile, Jordan's king Abdullah called for joint efforts to "deal with the ramifications of this decision and a Jordanian government spokesman said Mr. Trump was violating international Law and the UN charter."⁴³

International Reactions

United States Secretary General Antonio Gutierrez opined,

President Trump's statement "would jeopardize the prospect of peace for Israelis and Palestinians. Jerusalem was 'a final status issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations between the two parties. Such negotiation must take into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides."⁴⁴

Nickolay Mladenov, special coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process told the Security Council;

It is now more important than ever that we preserve the prospects for peace. It was ordinary Israelis and Palestinians who would suffer from further violence, and that the legitimate national aspirations of both sides could only be achieved through a negotiated two-state solution. ... the abiding position of the United Nations on Jerusalem was that the city remained a final status issues to be determined through a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to be negotiated between the two sides concerned on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions and other agreements."⁴⁵

However, He recalled the UN Resolution 2334 adopted on the 23rd December, 2016 which concerns the Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. The resolution passed in a 14-0 vote by members of the UN Security Council, though United States abstained.

Through a resolution adopted by a record vote of 128 in favour to nine against (Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Marshall Island, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Togo, United States), with 35 abstentions, the 193-member General Assembly expressed deep regret over decision concerning the status of Jerusalem. They demanded that all countries comply with Security Council resolutions regarding the status of Jerusalem.⁴⁶

Many world leaders and presidents reacted negatively. Pope Francis said,

I cannot silence my deep concern over the situation that has emerged in recent days. At the same time, I appeal strongly for all to respect the city's status quo in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions."⁴⁷

And the European Union called for the resumption of a meaningful peace process towards a two-state solution and said "a way must be found through negotiations, to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both states, so that the aspiration of both parties can be fulfilled."⁴⁸

French President, Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor, Angela Merkel and leaders of China, Russia and United Kingdom, all expressed their concern that the move could lead to an escalation of tensions in the region.⁴⁹

The varying comments studied so far reveal the inclination of the contributors and their emotional affiliations. However, Israel has the clearest and greatest historical connection to the land of Israel. The three sacred books, the Jewish Bible, the Christian Bible, and the Quran bear witness that the land of Israel belongs to the Jews. The material remains of the Jerusalem Temple, the western wall, and the teeming crowd of pilgrims that visit it daily,

point to the Jewish cultural heritage in Jerusalem. Recognizing this right of the state of Israel to Jerusalem is the spring board for genuine peace and the two-state solution.

Conclusion

“We cannot solve the old problem by making the same failed assumptions and repeating the same failed strategies of the past. Old challenges demand new approaches;”⁵⁰ with these lines President Trump announced the United States recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. This work studied the history of Israel from Independence in 1948 to this recognition of Jerusalem as capital of Israel in 2017, in search of the new approach to the Israeli question, which was pivotal to the intra-Mediterranean integration and global security and development; embedded in the Israeli question are the status of Jerusalem, the return of the Palestinians refugees to their homes and the final borders to the Palestinian state.

In order to better understand and analyze the problems and solutions therein in Israel’s history this work made use of the Challenge and Response theory. In the different forms of persecutions, discriminations and deprivation of the Jews all over the world, but especially in the Eastern Europe, this research work identified the existential threat which characterized their condition in Diaspora before their independence. This homelessness of the Jewish people was the core challenge that compelled them to think home, the ancestral homeland in Palestine. The only option which was the main response was the establishment the state of Israel in 1948.

What greeted the creation of the state of Israel was another challenge, namely, the survival of the new state. Three circles of enmity, the Muslim, the Arab and the Palestinian circles joined forces to abort the State by the force of wars. Arafat articulated the ambition of the Palestinians and the Arabs in August of 1970 when he said, “the Palestinian resolution’s basic concern is the uprooting of the Zionist entity from our land and liberate it”⁵¹. From the UN partition of 1947, to the declaration of Israel Independence, and the different peace efforts, what marked Arab response was concrete rejections every offer. This attitude of rejection which had assumed the weapons of war and violence against Israel had at every stage, left Palestinians and the Arabs at a loss: a greater loss of human lives (both fighters and civilians), a greater loss of their area of the 1947 partition, and loss of weapons.

On the other hand, the consistent response of Israel to this rejection and violence was the political will, the determination and a sense of duty to preserve the forces of order by confronting the forces of chaos. It was remarkable that Israel did not reject the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate, the UN partition plan of 1947, and other various parameters for peace. Though they weren’t always satisfied with the offers but they managed to accept them while continuing to push and build.

Nevertheless, the new approach identified by this research work is the historical approach: which asks the pertinent question; which nation has the clearest and greatest historical claim to Jerusalem? It was Israel. However, the circumstances of life and accidents of history have made the two state solutions, the only path to lasting peace.

This work recommends that to properly understand the Israeli question, the occupation by Israel and the intimidation of the Arab/Palestinians must be treated as one complex reality;

one naturally warranted the other. Again, Palestinians should accept the reality that Israel should exist alongside them. They should build and develop their land rather than weapons and vengeance. The rejection of peace parameters or offers and rejection of Israel had not bettered their lot; instead, it has added land to Israel and made Israel to create a better defense. Israel in the other hand should return parts of the occupied territory to the Palestinians. What Israel promised was fullness of life on the edge, a continuous growth through the painful wrestles for survival.

Endnotes

1. Charles Krauthammer, "Brief History of Israel and the Jewish People", the Weekly Standard, May 11, 1998, 48
2. Eliezer Schweld, "Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought", in Essential Papers on Zionism, ed. Reinhartz & Shapira, 1996, ISBN 0-8147.
3. Balfour Declaration: a public statement of the British government in 1917 during the WWI announcing support for the establishment of "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.
4. Arnold J. Toynbe, *A Study of History: Volume 1 Abridgement*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, 193-194.
5. Lassa Oppenheim, *International Law: A Treatise*, Michigan: Longmans, Green, and Company, 2008, 135.
6. Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*. New York: Collins Publishers, 2016, 425.
7. The State of Israel, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/israel>, accessed March 20, 2019.
8. T G Fraser, Andrew Mango, *The Maker of the Modern Middle East*, Great Britain: Gingko Library, 2011, 1.
9. Gideon Biger, *An Empire in the Holy Land: Historical Geography of the British Administration in Palestine*, London: St. Martin's Press and Magnes Press, 1994, 41.
10. David Silverman, "The Geopolitics of Israel: Biblical and Modern", accessed June 30, 2019, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/geopolitics-israel-biblical-and-modern>.
11. Metz Helen Chapin, *Israel: A Country Study*, London: Kessinger Publishing, 2004, 8.
12. Israeli Declaration, en.m.wikipedia.org, accessed on June 30, 2019.
13. Gordis, *Israel ...*, 33.
14. Semar Zar, c46 years, Tour Guard; Interviewed at Capernaum, October 7, 2018.
15. Gordis, *Israel ...*, 35.
16. Gordis, *Israel ...*, 32.
17. George Eliot, Daniel Deronda, New York: Modern Library, 2002, 15.
18. Gordis, *Israel ...*, 37.
19. Mandy Katz, "Do We Divide the Holiest Holy City?", accessed January 10, 2020, <https://momentmag.com/d0-we-divide-the-holiest-holy-city/>
20. Amos Oz, "Jerusalem", accessed January 10, 2020, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem>
21. Dore Gold, "Jerusalem in International Diplomacy", accessed January 11, 2020, <https://www.jcpa.org/program/Jerusalem/>
22. Six Day War: a bloody but brief conflict fought in June 1967 between Israel and the Arab states of Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

23. "Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995", <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-104pub145>, accessed 2/4/2020.
24. Gregory Rose, "The Legal Status of Jerusalem: Is Trump Right?", Australian Outlook, December 13, 2017.
25. Gregory Rose, "The Legal Status of Jerusalem . . ."
26. Alexia Underwood, "The Controversial US Jerusalem Embassy opening, Explained", Vox, May 16, 2018.
27. President Trump's Statement on Jerusalem, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-jerusalem/>
28. Morgan Moore, Brad E. Kelle, *Biblical History and Israel's Past: The Changing Study of the Bible and History*, Cambridge: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011, 67.
29. Eric H. Cline, *Jerusalem Besiege: From Ancient Canaan to Modern Israel*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2004, 97.
30. Benjamin Netanyahu, "PM Netanyahu's Remark Statement on US President Trump's Statement", Recorded Speech, December 6, 2017, 19:34.
31. Gil Hoffman, "Israel hails 'historic Trump decision, Left predicts regional chaos'", Jerusalem Post, December, 5, 2017.
32. Benjamin Netanyahu, "PM Netanyahu's Remark . . ."
33. Andrew Harrer, "U. S. Jewish Groups Divided in Reactions to Trump's Jerusalem Announcement", Haaretz, December, 6, 2017.
34. Andrew Harrer, "U. S. Jewish Groups ..."
35. David Smith, "Trump's Jerusalem declaration draws mixed reactions from Jewish Americans", The Guardian, December 6, 2017.
36. Andrew Harrer, "U. S. Jewish Groups ..."
37. LahavHarkov, "Knesset Speaker: Thank You POTUS – now, the rest of the world, in The Jerusalem Post, December, 6, 2017.
38. LahavHarkov, "Knesset Speaker: Thank You ..."
39. Loveday Morris, Ruth Eglash, "Israeli jets hit Gaza following rocket fire, as protests surge in wake of Trump announcement", Washington Post, December 8, 2017.
40. "Jerusalem: Trump move prompts Negative World Reaction", BBC News, December, 7, 2017, accessed January, 4, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42250340>
41. "Jerusalem: Trump move prompts..."
42. "Jerusalem: Trump move prompts..."
43. "Jerusalem: Trump move prompts...".
44. Security Council Meeting 8128, accessed January, 4, 2020,
45. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/spv8128.php>
46. General Assembly Resolution, accessed January, 4, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/12/640152>,
47. "Jerusalem: Trump move prompts..."
48. "Jerusalem: Trump move prompts..."
49. "Jerusalem: Trump move prompts..."
50. Donald J Trump, "Speech on the Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital", New York Times, December 6,48
51. Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of Nation Reborn*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2016, 326-327