



Croatian
International
Relations
Review

—
CIRR

—
XXIX (93) 2023,
91-117

—
DOI 10.2478/
CIRR-2023-0055

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UDC 327 (4-6
EU:73:55)

Motivations and Consequences of Trump's Recognition of Jerusalem

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Abstract

Key words:

Donald Trump,
Islam, Jerusalem,
Jewish, Joe Biden,
Peace Process

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the underlying motivations and subsequent consequences associated with President Trump's decision to officially recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This research employs a qualitative approach to investigate the historical and contentious decision made by Trump, exploring the underlying motives (both internal and external), the subsequent reactions, and the overall impact on the peace process between Palestine and Israel. The study proceeded to analyse the response of Joe Biden. The findings indicate that Trump's decision was influenced by his religious beliefs, political stance, and historical reputation, as well as other contributing factors such as Arab vulnerabilities and the perceived bias of US policy towards Israel. Moreover, the principal stakeholders, namely Arab and Muslim nations, responded unfavourably to the decision made by President Trump. The aforementioned action has significantly undermined the United States' credibility in its efforts to foster peace in the Middle East. Furthermore, it has been noted that the administration led by Joe Biden is focused on the restoration of diplomatic ties with Palestine, and seeks to build upon this initiative.

Introduction

Throughout history, there has been a prolonged and contentious conflict between Israelis and Palestinians regarding their conflicting assertions to the Holy Land, a region in the Middle East that holds significant historical importance for Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The subject of contention pertains to Jerusalem, borders, Palestinian refugees, and security (Ye'or, 1985). Following the outbreak of Arab-Jewish violence in 1947, the United Nations General Assembly conducted a vote to endorse the partitioning of Palestine into two distinct states: the Jewish State and the Arab State. Additionally, Jerusalem was designated to be administered under a unique international regime, as stipulated in United Nations Resolution 181 (Ben-Dror, 2013). The aforementioned resolution served as the legal foundation upon which the Jewish community residing in Palestine proclaimed the establishment of the independent state of Israel in 1948, subsequently leading to a significant influx of Jewish emigration (Rowley & Taylor, 2006).

The United Nations' action, backed and implemented by the United States in Palestine, was met with opposition from the Arab community in Palestine, resulting in an ensuing conflict (Robinson, 2013). According to Roberts (2013), the Arab community residing in Palestine maintained the belief that the Jewish population had encroached upon their native territory. They attributed the establishment of Israel and their subsequent defeat, commonly referred to as the Nakba or catastrophe, to the assistance provided by Western powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Subsequently, the enduring conflict between the Arab and Israeli factions has manifested itself through a series of multistate wars, acts of resistance, and armed uprisings commonly referred to as intifadas. As a result of this protracted conflict, a substantial number of Palestinian individuals have been displaced, leading to the emergence of millions of Palestinian refugees (Brecher, 2017).

The year 1967 marked a significant event known as the Six-Day War, which involved a conflict between the Arab nations and Israel. In response to actions taken by the Arab community, the Israelis initiated a pre-emptive military attack. As a result, they successfully gained control over several territories, including the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula ([Louis & Shlaim, 2012](#)). Following the events, Resolution 242 was adopted by the United Nations Security Council, thereby establishing the "land of peace" concept as the fundamental framework for future diplomatic endeavours in Arab-Israeli negotiations ([Monk, 2005](#)).

It is widely recognised that understanding the underlying causes of a problem is instrumental in finding a resolution to said problem. In the current international climate, where nations are collectively pursuing a two-state resolution through the United Nations, President Trump's decision to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel has garnered attention. This exacerbates the situation and undermines global endeavours aimed at achieving a lasting resolution to the longstanding Palestinian conflict, which has garnered international attention for over 75 years. Hence, the present study holds importance in its endeavour to ascertain the underlying motivations and rationales that prompted Trump to make this decision, with the aim of mitigating its repercussions and fostering global initiatives towards achieving an equitable and enduring resolution to the Palestinian predicament, encompassing the establishment of two autonomous nations (Palestine and Israel).

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the underlying reasons behind Donald Trump's executive action of acknowledging Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel and directing the transfer of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Furthermore, significant endeavours have been made by the United Nations and other influential nations to establish enduring peace between Israel and Palestine. This study will additionally investigate the consequences of President Trump's decision on the peace process between Israel and Palestine. Donald Trump was unsuccessful in his endeavour to secure re-election as the President of the United States for a second term. Joe Biden, the current President of the United States, has been implementing policy changes that diverge from those of his predecessor, Donald Trump.

Nevertheless, President Joe Biden has not adhered to the acknowledgment of Jerusalem or the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem. The present study aims to examine three primary concerns pertaining to the geopolitical dynamics involving Israel, Palestine, and the United States: The following are the justifications behind Donald Trump's executive order to officially acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and designate it as the site for the United States embassy. Secondly, it is important to analyse the impact of President Trump's decision on the peace process between Israel and Palestine, as well as the subsequent response from his successor, President Joe Biden, regarding the contentious matter of recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

The primary objective of the present study is to address the following inquiries: what were the underlying factors that motivated Donald Trump to make a decision of such magnitude? Furthermore, what are the ramifications of this decision in the Middle East? Furthermore, this analysis will explore the various factors that influenced Donald Trump's decision to implement the 17-year-old Congressional Act, which officially recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. These factors encompass the longstanding relationship between the United States and Israel, as well as Trump's selection of personnel. The influence exerted by the American Jewish community on Donald Trump's administration in the United States, as well as the pressure from Zionist organisations, and their involvement in electoral strategies.

Literature Review

US' Multiple Sides Relationships History

The United States, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, has consistently played a significant role in the ongoing conflicts between Israelis and Arabs. According to historical accounts, the United States holds the distinction of being the initial nation to acknowledge the sovereignty of Israel as an independent state. Following the conclusion of the Six-Day War in 1967, the United States made efforts to facilitate mediation between the conflicting parties of the Arab and Israeli factions ([Schoenbaum, 1993](#)). During the Yom Kippur war of 1973, a conflict that took place between Israeli forces and the Syrian and Egyptian forces, the United States found itself compelled to support the Israelis and assume a leading role in the diplomatic efforts. This was due to the challenging circumstances faced by the Israelis in their efforts to safeguard their interests ([Handel, 1977](#)). During the period of 1978-1979, President Jimmy Carter of the United States played a pivotal role in facilitating the peace process by convening a summit at Camp David. This summit brought together the Egyptian President and the Israeli Prime Minister, resulting in the signing of a significant peace treaty for the Middle East. Subsequently, a robust bilateral relationship has been established and upheld between the United States and Israel ([Quandt, 2010](#)).

The United States' association with Israel encompasses a spectrum of aspects, including domestic backing, security cooperation, shared strategic objectives in the Middle East, and a mutual dedication to democratic principles ([Sharp, 2015](#)). The United States established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between governments, with a duration of 10 years, to provide guidance to the Congress regarding the allocation of foreign aid to Israel in successive periods ([Zanotti, 2021](#)). The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been implemented in a continuous manner for three consecutive periods starting from 1999.

During the tenure of President Clinton, an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) was established for the period spanning from FY1999 to FY2008. This MOU entailed an agreement to allocate a total of \$26.7 billion in financial assistance to Israel, which was intended to be disbursed over

the subsequent period from FY2009 to FY2018. The Bush administration pledged a financial allocation of \$30 billion to Israel through the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) spanning from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2028. During the tenure of Donald Trump's administration, the United States, contingent upon congressional allocation, consented to allocate a sum of \$43 billion to Israel.

This financial support was specifically designated to assist Israel in various areas, including military aid, missile defence, bilateral assistance, and financial aid, among other forms of assistance (Beinin, 2020; Shalom, 2016; Sharp, 2018). US provided Israel with a significant economic assistant between 1971 and 2007. However, from 2008 till date most of the bilateral aids of the US to Israel is in the form of military assistance (Sharp, 2018). It has been noted that the US till date have provided \$1146 billion dollars (current value) to fund Israel in the form of missile defence and bilateral assistance (Beinin, 2020; Zanotti, 2018).

The primary mode of assistance provided by the United States to the Palestinians predominantly encompassed governmental initiatives and humanitarian endeavours. From 1994 to 2018, the United States allocated a total sum of more than \$6 billion to the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) with the aim of providing assistance to Palestinian refugees, as well as residents of the West Bank and Gaza. The United States is positioning itself as a significant contributor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2019).

In the year 2018, the Palestinian funding experienced substantial reductions under the administration of Donald Trump. The objective of this initiative was to encourage the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian Authority to engage in diplomatic negotiations led by the United States concerning the peace process between Israel and Palestine (Zanotti, 2018). Based on recent scholarly investigations, it has been observed that the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian Authority terminated their diplomatic communication with the United States subsequent to President Trump's 2017 declaration to relocate the embassy to Jerusalem and acknowledge the city as the capital of Israel (Patz et al., 2017).

Despite the legal requirement stipulated by the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, which mandated the relocation of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, subsequent administrations in the United States have consistently exercised their discretion to waive this obligation. This decision has been motivated by a desire to avoid impeding the ongoing peace process and to safeguard the interests of the United States. Donald Trump, in contrast, chose not to engage in the aforementioned action (Watson, 1996). This action sparked extensive discourse regarding the potential impact of this decision on the ongoing peace negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian parties. There has been a contention that the acknowledgment of Jerusalem by the United States may potentially

conflict with principles of international law (Kattan, 2018). Khalidi posited that the decision aligns with a lengthy chronicle of favouritism towards Israel and signifies the renunciation of the preceding facade of impartiality maintained by the United States (Khalidi, 2018).

The actions undertaken by Donald Trump are in clear contravention of the established agreement and are anticipated to have detrimental consequences for the ongoing peace process between Israel and Palestine. Over time, this phenomenon has the potential to exacerbate tensions in the Middle East (Gause, 2018). The actions undertaken by Donald Trump are widely regarded as detrimental to the ongoing peace process that has been facilitated by both the United Nations and the United States with the aim of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Furthermore, this course of action can be deemed insensitive as it entails bringing forth significant matters for discussion without effectively attaining a consensus that can yield a sustainable resolution (Golan, 2020).

In consideration of this matter, it can be observed that Israel, as a nation, has its foundations deeply rooted in the religious traditions of Judaism and Christianity, whereas the Palestinian Arabs find their roots in the Islamic faith. Jerusalem is widely regarded by Christians worldwide as a fundamental cornerstone of the Christian faith (Hummel, 2019). The United States, being a prominent nation with a Christian majority, also holds this perspective as morally justifiable. This observation demonstrates the reasons behind the alliance between Israel and America.

Similar to other nations with Christian majorities, the United States endeavours to safeguard the sacred city of Jerusalem to the best of its abilities. According to several scholarly sources (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008; Jotischky, 2008; Spector, 2019), it can be argued that any entity that is perceived as a threat to this particular course of study could also be viewed as a potential adversary to the United States. Despite President Joe Biden's commitment to reinstate US aid of \$235 million to Palestine refugees through UNRWA, it is important to note that the US embassy continues to be located in Jerusalem. This paper will analyse the underlying motivations and subsequent ramifications of President Trump's decision in relation to the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians (Kattan, 2018).

The close alliance between Israel and the United States is evident. Indeed, within the Middle Eastern region, Israel stands as the United States' most formidable ally. This suggests that due to their shared objective of combating terrorist organisations predominantly influenced by Iran, it is justifiable for Donald Trump to undertake this course of action in order to preserve the diplomatic ties between the United States and Israel. It is important to acknowledge that the diplomatic relations between these nations deteriorated during the presidency of Barack Obama (Mossalanejad, 2016; Thompson, 2018). According to Donald Trump, Benjamin Netanyahu experienced negative consequences during Barack Obama's presidency as a result of the disagreements between their respective countries regarding Iran and territorial expansion.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Donald Trump proclaimed himself a president engaged in a state of war. He holds the belief that in order for the United States to regain its former greatness, it is crucial for its allies, particularly those in the Middle East, to assert their influence in addressing persistent issues that can effectively mitigate or eliminate acts of terrorism (Telhami, 2019). Benjamin Netanyahu has consistently expressed a firm stance on the imperative of reclaiming the entirety of Jerusalem and extending citizenship to individuals seeking recognition as Israeli residents. The actions taken by Donald Trump have evidently alleviated any existing scepticism that may have arisen during Barack Obama's presidency regarding the strength of the relationship between Israel and the United States (Abdiel, 2020; Rodgers, 2015).

Palestinian and Israeli Relationship

Prior to the implementation of Donald Trump's executive order, it is pertinent to analyse the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel. The historical conflict between Palestine and Israel has its roots in ancient times. Following the Roman devastation of Jerusalem in 70 CE, a considerable number of Jewish individuals departed from the city and dispersed across diverse regions worldwide, including several European nations. Nevertheless, owing to the profound religious importance of Jerusalem, nations such as Britain determined that a designated area ought to be established within the city to accommodate the Jewish population (Armstrong, 2011; Khatib et al., 2018; Lybarger, 2007).

The underlying cause of the dispute among Palestine, Jordan, and Israel regarding Jerusalem can be traced back to the British Empire's endeavour to establish a settlement for Jews following a prolonged period of absence and displacement (Tilovska-Kechedji, 2018). The aforementioned policy implemented by the United Kingdom is commonly referred to as the Balfour Declaration. This declaration included provisions that allowed non-Jews to continue living in cohabitation with the remaining Jewish population. Nevertheless, the British government failed to provide a comprehensive delineation of the terms pertaining to the boundary or border separating Jewish settlements from non-Jewish settlements. Subsequently, deaf Jewish individuals who had returned to the cohabitation arrangement initiated the expulsion of non-Jewish individuals from the settlement region (Elgindy, 2019).

Regarding the territorial boundaries of Jerusalem, the Balfour Declaration did not explicitly delineate the precise parameters of said borders. The author posits that the British government's adherence to the Balfour Declaration was lacking in sincerity due to their failure to fulfil the commitment of safeguarding the housing rights of non-Jewish inhabitants (Montero Ortiz, 2015). However, it is evident in contemporary times that the issue at hand pertains to the management and governance of geographical regions.

It is noteworthy to observe that following the Arab-Israeli war, the complete occupation of Israel by Jews did not transpire. Instead, Israel

obtained approximately 54% of the territory, while Palestine acquired 46% of the territory. Both parties expressed discontentment with the settlement, and subsequently, they have been facing significant challenges ([Grossman, 2003](#)). The underlying issue between these two nations pertains to the question of which entity should possess complete authority over the political matters concerning Jerusalem. The primary regions subject to dispute are the Gaza Strip and the West Bank territories. The prolonged dispute between these two nations has provided opportunities for terrorist organisations to cause casualties in both countries.

The Gaza Strip and the West Bank are characterised by high levels of poverty, a socio-economic condition that facilitates the recruitment of individuals by terrorist organisations to garner support for their activities within the ongoing conflict ([Fanning, 2019](#)). According to Encarta, the transfer of the Gaza Strip to the Palestinian government occurred within the timeframe of 1993 to 1998. The population of Palestinians in this region exceeds that of Israelis. Israel endeavours to safeguard its citizens within this region, whereas Palestine aspires to assert complete autonomous jurisdiction over the area ([Pappé, 2011](#)).

The matter of ownership and control over Jerusalem is akin to a potentially explosive landmine, which, if mishandled, has the potential to escalate into a volcanic eruption. Leaders from various regions including Arab countries, Europe, and Asia have collectively acknowledged the gravity and delicacy of this issue. The decision made by Donald Trump to include in his campaign promise the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem can be interpreted as a deliberate disregard for established international legal frameworks and existing arrangements pertaining to the status of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is a historically significant urban centre boasting a rich biblical heritage. The city in question holds significant religious importance for adherents of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. To whom, then, does ultimate authority over this venerable sacred metropolis belong? The urban centre has been a subject of dispute among the nations of Jordan, Israel, and Palestine. According to [Alfasi and Fenster \(2005\)](#) and [Rinehart \(2018\)](#), recent scholarly investigations have indicated that on November 29, 1947, the United Nations reached a consensus with all involved parties regarding the status of Jerusalem as a city. It was determined that Jerusalem should not be exclusively affiliated with any particular religion or state, but rather be recognised as an international city. An international city refers to a self-governing city that is not under the jurisdiction of any particular state, but instead operates in accordance with international legal frameworks. These states may have been subject to disputes among various parties, and in order to address this matter, the international community designates them as being collectively owned without exclusive ownership ([Benvenisti, 1996](#); [Emmett, 1997](#)).

Jerusalem is a city renowned for its rich historical heritage, encompassing numerous significant sites. Additionally, the city is marked by ongoing conflicts and tensions arising from religious and racial divisions.

Nevertheless, this arrangement or state of affairs was met with dissatisfaction among the conflicting parties. Consequently, the conflict evolved into a full-fledged armed conflict. Following the cessation of hostilities in 1949, the United Nations (UN) made the decision to assume governance over Jerusalem, leading to the subsequent relocation of a majority of embassies to Tel Aviv (Rinehart, 2018). Nevertheless, in the year 1950, the decision was made by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion of Israel to transfer the administrative centre of the government to Jerusalem.

The aforementioned action was found to be in contravention of the agreement established by the United Nations with the parties involved in the conflict (Selzer, 2020). According to Rinehart (2018), the Israeli forces assumed control over the eastern part of Jerusalem in June 1967 as a response to the violence in the city. This action was met with disapproval from other involved parties. The Basic Law of Israel, enacted by the Israeli government in 1980, established Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish people. The act carried out by the Israeli government was condemned by the United Nations Security Council. Israel attempted to mitigate the situation by offering Palestinians the option to establish permanent residency as Israeli citizens. However, a significant number of Palestinians vehemently declined this proposal and even contested the notion of Jerusalem serving as the capital of Israel (Zureik, 2015).

The ongoing conflict between the Jewish and Palestinian populations over the acquisition of complete authority over Jerusalem has led to instances of violence, diplomatic disputes, and adverse circumstances for both inhabitants and tourists. The primary cause of conflict between Israel and Palestine is not religion, but rather the issues of territorial control and security (Khatib et al., 2018). Israel asserts that Jerusalem holds a significant religious and everlasting status for them, whereas Palestinians argue that their claim to Jerusalem is based on its uninterrupted habitation during periods of Jewish absence throughout history (Adelman & Elman, 2014). Hence, the ongoing dispute persisted, leading to a series of offensive actions and retaliatory measures.

Scholarly reports have indicated that the United States has consistently served as a dependable mediator in facilitating peace negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli governments (Quandt, 2010). The Jerusalem Embassy Act was established by the United States government in 1995, with the aim of authorising the President to transfer the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Watson, 1996). Nevertheless, it is important to note that there exists a provision within this legislation that grants the president the discretion to delay the implementation of said action, contingent upon the prevailing political unrest in the Middle East.

Presidents such as Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama have consistently deferred the implementation of this legislation on a biannual basis. The issue at hand was passed down to Donald Trump upon assuming the role of President of the United States. In order to address this matter, he implemented rigorous measures while simultaneously upholding the

strong relationship between Israel and the United States ([Rahman, 2018](#)). Upon assuming the presidency, Donald Trump fulfilled his electoral commitment by officially acknowledging Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and subsequently transferring the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem ([Abdiel, 2020](#)).

Previous US Presidents have made commitments regarding the undivided status of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, but it is noteworthy that Donald Trump is the only one who has successfully fulfilled this pledge ([Albertus & Wicaksana, 2020](#)). Donald Trump, as characterised by certain individuals, is perceived as a person who consistently follows through on his verbal commitments. According to David Friedman, who served as the Ambassador to Israel during Donald Trump's administration, it can be argued that Donald Trump's decision to relocate the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was not made unilaterally, as it was supported by legislative measures. This is due to the fact that Congress had approved the relocation since 1995. Over the course of the previous 17 years, successive Presidents of the United States have refrained from undertaking the aforementioned action, until the administration led by Donald Trump ([Abdiel, 2020](#); [Albertus & Wicaksana, 2020](#)).

The Era of Donald Trump

Donald Trump appointed individuals of Jewish descent to his cabinet, assigning them to positions of significance and responsibility. The aforementioned action undertaken by Donald Trump can be interpreted as a strategic component of his overarching agenda to restore and enhance the greatness of the United States, as noted by Payne in his scholarly analysis ([2017](#)). Hence, adhering to this strategy, President Trump has appointed individuals who are actively aligned with his vision of revitalising the United States, with a notable representation of individuals of Jewish heritage within his team. According to [Curran \(2018\)](#), there is evidence to suggest that Trump aims to enhance America's prestige by showcasing its military capabilities on a global scale. By officially acknowledging Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, President Trump demonstrated preparedness to address and confront any potential responses. Based on the findings of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, it has been observed that a notable number of individuals with Israeli heritage hold significant positions within the administration of President Trump ([Thompson, 2018](#)).

The selection of personnel by Donald Trump suggests a strong emphasis on fostering personal and national ties with Israeli counterparts. When the matter of relocating the embassy and acknowledging Jerusalem as the capital is brought up for deliberation among a group of individuals such as this, it becomes evident that there would be minimal or negligible opposition to the proposed policy. Furthermore, the act had already received support from Congress. However, the Jewish community's primary concern was identifying the individual who would take the initiative to address the issue. Ultimately, President Trump, who has been

likened to Cyrus the Great by some, successfully fulfilled this role. According to the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, additional individuals, including billionaire Sheldon Adelson, played a significant role in ensuring Donald Trump's electoral success and his commitment to recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Donald Trump maintains a personal connection with individuals of Israeli nationality due to the familial ties he shares with his son-in-law, who is of Jewish heritage. It is evident that President Trump's decision will encounter minimal opposition from his cabinet ([Thompson, 2018](#)).

The Jewish community in the United States wields significant influence in the realm of policymaking. According to [Light and Isralowitz \(2019\)](#), Jewish individuals in the United States have transitioned from being passive observers in politics to actively engaging in political activities, particularly in matters pertaining to the well-being of Jewish communities in both the United States and Israel. It is pertinent to acknowledge that within the United States, three religious traditions have wielded significant influence, namely Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. As a result, Jewish individuals experienced a sense of belonging and acceptance in the United States. Has the United States of America been beneficial for the Jewish community? The response is unequivocally affirmative. In contrast to historical and contemporary experiences in various nations, the Jewish community in America has been afforded the opportunity to actively engage in religious, social, political, and educational domains ([Slezkine, 2019](#); [Thompson, 2018](#)).

In the United States, there exists a multitude of pressure groups whose influence cannot be disregarded, particularly in matters pertaining to the well-being of the Jewish community. In order for a political leader in the United States to garner favour among Christians, including both Protestants and Catholics, it is imperative that they refrain from endorsing any policies that may compromise the significance attributed to Jerusalem within the Christian faith. According to [Furstenberg \(2016b\)](#), these groups can be classified into three categories. The initial collective comprises individuals who identify as Christians united for Israel. The primary objective of this organised group is to engage in lobbying activities aimed at advocating for policies that are conducive to fostering a positive Jewish-Christian relationship within the context of government affairs. The founder of this organisation, Pastor John Hagee, holds the viewpoint that governmental entities, whether at the national or international level, ought not to partition Jerusalem between Jewish and Palestinian populations.

The subsequent organisation is recognised as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). The primary objective of this organisation is to engage in lobbying activities aimed at influencing the United States Congress to either support bills that are deemed favourable or oppose bills that are considered unfavourable. The evidence demonstrates that reality shows possess significant influence in advocating for favourable policies to appease both the Israeli population in the United States and Israel itself. The third category comprises the Conference of Presidents of Major

American Jewish Organisations. This organisation ensures that the executive branch of the United States government refrains from implementing policies that are not conducive to the well-being of the Jewish community. These groups cannot be exempted from exerting influence on Donald Trump's decision to acknowledge and relocate the US embassy. All individuals express the viewpoint that Jerusalem should be unconditionally allocated to Israel without any form of partition ([Furstenberg, 2016a](#)).

Zionism can be characterised as a political movement that seeks to establish a lasting homeland for the Jewish people in the region of Israel ([Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.](#)). The proponents of Zionism are known for their proactive and influential engagement in pursuing this objective. According to [Khalidi \(2018\)](#), it has been observed that Zionists engage in efforts to influence lawmakers and other influential individuals within the United States government, aiming to advance and achieve the interests of Israel through the American government. According to a recent study conducted by [Seltzer \(2021\)](#), contemporary research indicates a decline in the strength of Zionism. This observation is supported by survey data revealing that the younger Jewish population does not assign significant importance to the complete occupation of Jerusalem for their collective identity. However, following the official acknowledgment of Jerusalem by Donald Trump in 2017, it can be argued that Zionism continues to exhibit its presence as it endeavours to establish a lasting and protected homeland for the Jewish population within the Middle Eastern region ([Waxman, 2017](#)).

According to sources, Sheldon Adelson, a reputable Zionist and billionaire, utilised his considerable resources to effectively influence the decision-making process of US President Donald Trump, resulting in the official recognition of Jerusalem ([Aswar, 2018](#); [Weiler, 2020](#)). Based on reports, the Zionist movement holds a firm belief that Jerusalem is exclusively designated for the Jewish population. The report highlights the strong opposition that would be encountered by any policy aiming to partition Jerusalem among two or three separate states ([Abdiel, 2020](#); [Beinin, 2020](#); [Sharp, 2018](#)).

Zionist groups engage in lobbying efforts aimed at securing favourable responses from the United States Congress regarding issues pertaining to Israel, including the recognition of Jerusalem as its capital. In parallel, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) focuses its lobbying activities on influencing the executive branch on similar matters. A president who aspires to cultivate a positive relationship with the Jewish community will frequently prioritise the interests and concerns of the Jewish population. Donald Trump has exhibited emotional frustration towards extremists belonging to religious groups such as Muslims while demonstrating impartiality towards Judaism. Zionists perceived this particular stance and the campaign promises made by Donald Trump as the most effective means to achieve their objectives ([Nacos et al., 2020](#)). The inception of the Zionist movement can be traced back to the year 1897, during which a gathering of individuals, comprising both Jews and non-Jews, convened in Basle, Switzerland.

The primary objective of this assembly was to lay the groundwork for the creation of a lasting homeland for Jews in Palestine (Shapira, 1999). Subsequently, the British government endorsed the resolution formulated during this assembly, leading to the formulation of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 (Linfield, 2017). Since the year 1917, the Zionist movement has experienced a notable increase in momentum and achieved significant successes in its endeavour to establish permanent settlements for displaced Jewish populations residing in various nations. As a well-established and seasoned institution, they perceived Donald Trump as a prominent figure who, in contrast to previous presidents, displayed a greater inclination towards supporting the Jewish aspiration for a unified Jerusalem. Subsequent events have demonstrated that they have made progress towards their objective (Louwerse & Dart, 2017; Rossinow, 2020).

Donald Trump explicitly expressed his disdain for extremists, specifically those adhering to the Islamic faith, throughout his campaign, thereby garnering support from individuals identifying as Christians and Jews. There is evidence to suggest that Donald Trump garnered significant support from the Christian community (Whitehead et al., 2018). Judaism and Christianity are distinct religious traditions, albeit sharing certain theological tenets that engender similarities between them. Christians and Jews share a mutual interest in Jerusalem, as it holds significant religious importance for adherents of both faiths. Given the substantial presence of Jews and Christians within the American electorate, Donald Trump's decision to officially acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was met with approval from both Jewish communities and influential Christian factions (Elgindy, 2019; Engberg, 2020).

According to reports, a prevailing belief among many Christian groups is that Donald Trump embodies the role of a contemporary Cyrus figure, capable of securing enduring Jewish ownership of Jerusalem, thereby transforming it into a Christian city. Trump was perceived as a political saviour, leading to his selection as the preferred candidate in comparison to other contenders (Antwi, 2018; Gorski, 2019). In order to maintain support from Christian voters, Donald Trump strategically seeks to align himself with Christian interests. His recent decision regarding Jerusalem is seen as a calculated move to solidify his standing in both Christian and Jewish spheres (Durbin, 2020; Martí, 2020). The observation was made that the Jewish community is not a marginalised religious or social group, and possesses the ability to exert influence on electoral outcomes in the states of New York, California, and South Florida. These cities hold significant importance in terms of voting, as they have the potential to alter the trajectory of an election. Donald Trump, in conjunction with his campaign officials, recognised the necessity of attracting Jewish voters by offering them favourable commitments (Dalin, 2018; Galston, 2017).

The present study's findings will make a valuable contribution to the broader body of literature on US foreign policy, specifically in relation to the future considerations surrounding US presidential elections.

Methodology

This research employs qualitative methodologies as it is rooted in a subjective standpoint and provides a comprehensive comprehension of the subject matter being examined. The research methodology employed in this study involved the utilisation of document analysis. This approach entailed the gathering of relevant documents pertaining to the subject matter, followed by a comprehensive interpretation of the acquired information (Bowen, 2009). The data were organised by sorting publications obtained from both libraries and search engines. The qualitative research data was utilised to identify a methodology for analysing and categorising the data in order to address the research inquiries. Consequently, the outcomes are presented in a descriptive manner.

Documents serve various purposes, primarily due to their accessibility and ability to provide extensive and comprehensive information pertaining to the context in which they are produced. Furthermore, they serve as a formal declaration regarding an inquiry. Furthermore, it is readily traceable and verifiable by fellow scholars (Bowen, 2009; Sakarneh et al., 2016).

Findings

Effect of Recognising Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel by Trump's Administration

This paper will analyse the political, legal, religious, demographic, geographical, and Arab-American relations implications of President Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and relocate the US embassy to Jerusalem. It will also examine the potential consequences and outcomes of this decision on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

1. Political level: The resolution under consideration is regarded by scholars as detrimental to the peace process. Research has demonstrated that the United States, in its capacity as a mediator in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, exhibits bias, thereby rendering it unsuitable to serve as an impartial intermediary between the Israelis and the Palestinians (Gonzalez, 2015; Khalil, 2008). The recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel has been observed to potentially contribute to the process of Judaization in Israel. This could occur through the implementation of discriminatory policies that favour Jewish individuals, the intensification of annexation measures by Israeli authorities, and the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements. These actions are aimed at transforming Israel into a city predominantly inhabited by Jewish individuals (Arafah et al., 2017). Additionally, it has been observed that Israel's Housing Minister, Yoav Galant, has made an announcement regarding the proposal to construct 14,000 new housing units in Jerusalem specifically designated for Jewish residents (Arafah et al., 2017).

2. **Legal level:** The acknowledgment of this fact has resulted in the United States refraining from perceiving Israel as the occupying force in the city of East Jerusalem since 1967. Furthermore, it signifies the acceptance of the legal status of Israeli settlements in the eastern region of Jerusalem ([Salman, 2020](#)). Donald Trump's statement is in conflict with the principle of estoppel, which is a fundamental aspect of international law. Estoppel prevents a party from reneging on previous representations if those representations have led others to rely on them or have caused them harm. In this instance, Donald Trump acted in opposition to the 1948 UN Resolution No. 181, which stipulated that the legal status of Jerusalem should be determined through diplomatic discussions, as it fell within the purview of international legal principles ([Salman, 2020](#)).
3. **Demographic and Geographical level:** The decision made by Donald Trump to designate Jerusalem as the capital of Israel has raised concerns regarding potential discrimination and forced displacement of Palestinians residing in Jerusalem. In the year 2015, the demographic composition of Jerusalem revealed that Palestinians accounted for approximately 35% of the total population, predominantly residing in the eastern part of the city, commonly referred to as East Jerusalem. The escalation of Israeli annexation efforts is anticipated to result in the plundering of Palestinian territories and the infringement upon the human rights of Palestinians residing within and beyond the unlawfully annexed region ([Baumann, 2016](#); [Busgang, 2020](#); [Rodriguez, 2020](#); [Shtern & Rokem, 2023](#)).
4. **Arab-American Relations:** Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt are widely acknowledged as key allies of the United States in its efforts to counter Iran, thereby placing them in a strategically significant position. On one side, these nations lack the capacity to exert influence on the United States in order to compel its withdrawal from the resolution. Conversely, the United States has exerted diplomatic pressure on the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and several other Arab nations to foster the establishment of peaceful relations with Israel ([Hamdi, 2018](#); [Olimat et al., 2021](#)).

Reactions to the Recognition of Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel

Numerous governmental entities expressed discontentment with President Trump's proclamation, as indicated by various reports. Interestingly, even nations such as Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom, which are often perceived as having amicable relations with the United States, did not lend their support to President Trump's decision. Pakistan, the Netherlands, Germany, Lebanon, Jordan, Australia, Montenegro, Iran, Morocco, Poland, Greece, and Indonesia overtly conveyed their dissatisfaction with this action ([Ahmad et al., 2017](#); [Cavari, 2021](#); [Kramer, 2021](#)).

Reactions will be discussed from the prospectus of key players:

1. Palestinian Reactions

According to Mahmoud Abbas, the President of the State of Palestine, the recognition by President Trump of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel has resulted in the United States relinquishing its role as a mediator in the Israeli and Palestinian peace processes. As per the speech broadcast, President Mahmoud Abbas asserted that the aforementioned measures, which are deemed deplorable and unacceptable, are intentionally aimed at undermining all endeavours towards achieving peace. During the press conference held in Gaza, the Palestinian President characterised the actions of President Trump as a declaration of war against the Palestinian people. Consequently, he called for the initiation of an intifada. Following President Trump's speech, a militant organisation operating in Palestine initiated the launching of rockets towards Israel as a means to express their discontent ([Erdoğan & Habash, 2020](#); [Rodriguez, 2020](#)).

2. Arab Country Reactions

A number of Arab nations responded to President Trump's declaration acknowledging Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. According to scholarly sources, the Arab League has asserted that the decision made by Donald Trump is expected to have significant consequences throughout the Middle East region ([Moten, 2018](#); [Salman, 2020](#)). The researchers further examined the role of the United States as a neutral mediator. Iran contends that the decision made by President Trump has the potential to incite a popular revolt, as it contravenes an internationally adopted resolution. Jordan, a country that experienced territorial loss during the 1967 war, specifically East Jerusalem and the West Bank to Israel, also expressed opposition to President Trump's decision. As per Suleiman Al-Khalidi's report, the younger generation in Jordan has initiated a series of protests, urging the Jordanian government to annul its 1994 peace agreement with Israel.

According to his perspective, the United States is considered the progenitor of terrorism. The monarch of Jordan, King Abdullah II, has advocated for collaborative endeavours in order to address the consequences of this particular decision ([Feldman & Shikaki, 2018](#); [Frisch & Sokoloff, 2017](#); [Lynch, 2016](#); [Oxford Analytica, 2019](#)). The recognition moves by Trump elicited strong reactions from Arab leaders, which has the potential to negatively impact the foreign relations between the United States and several Arab nations ([Hamid, 2017](#)). For instance, the statement attributed to Muqtada Al Sadr, an influential Shiite cleric in Iraq, characterises President Trump's action as a provocative act that can be interpreted as an incitement to engage in hostilities against the Islamic faith. Al Sadr further proposes the closure of all United States embassies located in Arab countries as a response to this development ([Eriksson, 2018](#); [Hamid, 2017](#)).

3. Islamic World Reaction

The decision made by President Trump to designate Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was met with a negative response from various Islamic

nations across the globe. President Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey expresses scepticism towards the approach adopted by President Trump, asserting that the decision has the potential to ignite a volatile situation in the Middle East region. Michel Aoun, the President of Lebanon, observed that the decision made by President Trump will have a deterrent effect on the ongoing peace process. Furthermore, the decision regarding the relocation of the embassy or the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital was also met with rejection by King Salman of Saudi Arabia ([Aswar, 2018](#)). In his perspective, this decision would be regarded as a blatant act of provocation towards Muslims globally, as it undermines America's historical stance of neutrality as a mediator between Israel and Jerusalem.

4. International Reactions

The decision made by former President Donald Trump to officially recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and subsequently relocate the United States embassy to Jerusalem. The United Nations adopted a resolution urging the United States to reverse its decision to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, shortly after President Donald Trump made this announcement ([Asseburg, 2019](#)). According to [Judge \(2017\)](#), the decision made by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres is believed to pose a threat to the future peace process between Israel and Palestine. The rejection of this action by the European Union is based on the proposition of engaging in negotiations using a two-state solution to address the status of Jerusalem. The European Union maintains the position that Jerusalem should serve as a mutually shared capital for both the Palestinians and Israelis ([Kattan, 2018](#)). It is worth noting that the United Kingdom has explicitly stated that they do not have any plans to relocate their embassy from Tel Aviv, as supported by sources such as [Kattan \(2018\)](#) and [Kirecci \(2018\)](#). The United States, as a prominent participant in the United Nations, has unequivocally endorsed the declaration designating Jerusalem as an internationally governed entity under the auspices of the UN.

Response of Joe Biden to the Recognition and Relocation Move

According to a report published in [The Lancet \(2020\)](#), Donald Trump was unsuccessful in his attempt to secure a second term as president. The current president has since undertaken the task of reorganising and altering certain policies implemented by the previous administration. In certain instances, policies enacted by the former administration have even been completely disregarded. What is the anticipated response of President Joe Biden to the recognition and relocation policy? The present matter can be examined through the following main aspects: Firstly, it is important to note that President Biden has indicated that he does not intend to reverse the actions taken by his predecessor, President Trump. Additionally, President Biden has expressed his unwavering commitment to providing comprehensive support to the nation of Israel ([Elman, 2018](#); [Talhami, 2017](#)).

It has been asserted that Joe Biden does not have any intentions to officially acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This implies that the White

House acknowledges the acknowledgment and potentially the relocation. The sole distinction between the actions undertaken by President Trump and the subsequent response by President Biden lies in the commitment of the latter's administration to persist in pursuing a two-state resolution to the ongoing Middle East predicament, while maintaining diplomatic relations with the Palestinian authorities ([Becher, 2020](#); [Schenker, 2020](#)). It is worth noting that a significant portion of the Israeli population, along with proponents of Zionism, express opposition towards the implementation of two-state solutions as a means to address the issue in Jerusalem. However, Joe Biden holds the belief that a partitioned Jerusalem represents the sole viable resolution to the security complexities faced by Israel ([Rynhold, 2020](#)).

Joe Biden's Policy toward the Palestinians and Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

Preliminary indications suggest that President Joe Biden of the United States has expressed his intention to reinstate the provision of economic development and humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people by the United States ([Shikaki, 2020](#)). President Biden has made a commitment to allocate a substantial sum of \$235 million (£171 million) in aid to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This financial assistance is intended to provide support specifically to Palestinian refugees. According to sources ([Devi, 2020](#); [Oxford Analytica, 2021](#)), it has been observed that the administration led by Joe Biden aims to reinstate its diplomatic ties with the Palestinians and reaffirm its endorsement of a two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Based on reports, the Joe Biden administration has expressed its commitment to addressing the strained diplomatic ties between the United States and Palestine, which were exacerbated during the tenure of Donald Trump. The acting ambassador of the United States to the United Nations Security Council has indicated that the new administration is formulating strategies to engage in discussions with the Palestinian government in order to revive economic agreements and alleviate limitations on humanitarian assistance. These restrictions were imposed by the previous administration subsequent to its recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel ([McCall, 2020](#); [Rynhold, 2020](#); [Schenker, 2020](#)).

Conclusion

The present study has yielded a number of significant findings through the examination and analysis of various reports, comments, and observations. These findings will now be presented in the subsequent paragraphs.

The actions taken by Donald Trump have significantly undermined the United States' commitment to fostering peace in the Middle East and have violated international law by altering the status of Jerusalem. Consequently, European nations, along with their Arabian counterparts,

are likely to view the United States unfavourably. Furthermore, President Trump neglected to engage with the other stakeholders in the Jerusalem dispute, particularly Palestine and Jordan. Instead, he disregarded their input and decisively deviated from the 1995 Congressional Act that had previously allowed for the possibility of recognising Jerusalem as the capital. Instead, he proceeded to establish and relocate the United States embassy to Jerusalem.

The decision made by President Trump is influenced by a variety of factors, with particular emphasis on his strong religious convictions and his aspirations for a notable political legacy. Furthermore, additional elements pertaining to the Arab region manifest in the form of Arab fragility, disunity, and the utilisation of the region by the Trump administration for its own gain. The decision made by the Trump administration was made possible due to the United States' neutralising influence on the United Nations, while concurrently maintaining a steadfast and biased approach towards Israel, particularly in terms of security assistance, in comparison to other nations in the Middle East. The decision made by President Trump was additionally endorsed by the Zionist lobby, various pressure groups, and individuals within close proximity to Donald Trump.

The resolution has affected the Palestinian-Israeli peace process and America's future bias role in the peace process as a neutral mediator. It weakened the Palestinians' negotiating position and strengthened Israel's position so that this move implies that US encouraged Israel to violate international agreements and resolutions with regard to Jerusalem.

Despite Joe Biden's policies, through which he tries to get closer to the Palestinians, he will not make a decision to retreat Trump's move. It is expected that Joe Biden administration will have a lot to contend with as it concerns participating in peace process between Israel and Palestine and other Middle Eastern contentions. More so, the new administration has made no substantial move to go against the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital but hope to establish a cordial relationship with Palestine again.

Recommendations

In the lights of the findings of the current study, the US foreign policy should take into consideration the sensitivity of the situation in the Middle East in general, and in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular before taking any decision, especially when this decision comes from the American presidency's decisions. Furthermore, in order to continue the peace process and reach a Middle East free of violence, there must be calm and not to be inflamed by the US administration in any step it takes in this regard. In terms of research, scholars around the world should focus their research on Middle East issues in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular, and explore how the US and the Western world deal with these issues.

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