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Rethinking Jerusalem: The Political and Global Stakes of U.S. Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital

**Jerozolima w nowej perspektywie:
polityczne i globalne implikacje uznania przez USA
Jerozolimy za stolicę Izraela**

Keywords: Israel-Palestine conflict, Jerusalem, Middle East peace process, Donald Trump, UN, U.S. Embassy

Słowa kluczowe: ambasada USA, bliskowschodni proces pokojowy, Jerozolima, konflikt izraelsko-palestyński, ONZ, Donald Trump

Abstract

In December 2017, the United States formally recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and announced plans to relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a process that was completed in May 2018. This policy shift marked a significant departure from decades of U.S. diplomatic practice, which had avoided formally recognizing sovereignty over Jerusalem pending a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and Palestinians. The decision generated intense debate among policymakers, scholars, and international actors. Based on the analyses of primary and secondary data, this paper examines the historical background of Jerusalem's political status,

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the domestic and international motivations behind the United States' policy change, and the broader diplomatic, legal, and geopolitical consequences. In this paper, the author concentrates also on Donald Trump's revolutionary effect on the Israeli-Palestinian relationship through his decisions and U.S. actions in the region. The article argues that while the embassy relocation decision reflected existing political realities and domestic political considerations in the United States, it also violated international law, altered the diplomatic dynamics in the Middle East and complicated the already fragile or even halted Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The decision to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem is recognized as Donald Trump's strong pro-Israeli stance in the ongoing conflict.

Streszczenie

W grudniu 2017 r. Stany Zjednoczone formalnie uznały Jerozolimę za stolicę Izraela oraz ogłosiły zamiar przeniesienia swojej ambasady z Tel Awiwu do Jerozolimy; proces ten zakończono w maju 2018 r. Decyzja ta stanowiła istotne odejście od wieloletniej praktyki dyplomatycznej USA, która polegała na powstrzymywaniu się od formalnego uznania suwerenności nad Jerozolimą do czasu osiągnięcia wynegocjowanego porozumienia między Izraelczykami a Palestyńczykami. Posunięcie to wywołało intensywną debatę wśród decydentów politycznych, badaczy oraz aktorów międzynarodowych. Na podstawie analizy źródeł pierwotnych i wtórnych artykuł omawia historyczne uwarunkowania statusu politycznego Jerozolimy, krajowe i międzynarodowe motywacje stojące za zmianą polityki Stanów Zjednoczonych, a także szersze konsekwencje dyplomatyczne, prawne i geopolityczne tej decyzji. Autor koncentruje się również na wpływie Donalda Trumpa na stosunki izraelsko-palestyńskie, wskazując na przełomowy charakter jego decyzji oraz działań Stanów Zjednoczonych w regionie. Artykuł dowodzi, że choć decyzja o przeniesieniu ambasady odzwierciedlała istniejące realia polityczne oraz specyficzne uwarunkowania wewnętrzne w Stanach Zjednoczonych, to jednocześnie zmieniła dynamikę dyplomatyczną na Bliskim Wschodzie oraz skomplikowała i tak już kruchy, a momentami nawet zahamowany, proces pokojowy między Izraelem a Palestyńczykami. Amerykańska decyzja o przeniesieniu ambasady do Jerozolimy jest uważana za silne proizraelskie zadeklarowanie się Donalda Trumpa w trwającym konflikcie.

Introduction

Jerusalem occupies a unique place in global politics due to its historical, religious, and political significance. The city holds sacred importance for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and has been at the center of competing national narratives for

both Israelis and Palestinians¹. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Jerusalem's political status has remained one of the most contentious issues in international diplomacy. The city of Jerusalem is among three pivotal issues at stake defining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The three traditionally defined obstacles for peace between the conflicted sides are: 1) The Palestinian loss of land due to Israel's expansion and settlement building; 2) the result of the expansion and settlement building, that has forced, mass displacement of the Palestinian refugees and finally; 3) Jerusalem as a home city to three main monotheistic religions (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) as its holy site².



Source: M. Huczko, *One-State Solution, Two-State Solution or No Solution? The Realpolitik Paradigm of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, „Cywilizacja i Polityka” 2024, p. 61.

The three major recognized points of conflict between Israel and Palestine are strongly interlinked. The territorial growth of Israel, as seen on the infographic above, at the expense of Palestine creates new Palestinian refugees. Jerusalem, as discussed in this paper, is a pivotal aspect among the three.

Israel declared Jerusalem its capital in 1949 and gradually located most of its governmental institutions there, including the Knesset, the Supreme Court, and

¹ M. Dumper, *The Politics of Jerusalem Since 1967*, New York 1997, p. 28.

² M. Huczko, *One-State Solution, Two-State Solution or No Solution? The Realpolitik Paradigm of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, „Cywilizacja i Polityka” 2024, p. 61.

the Prime Minister's Office. However, the international community largely refused to recognize this claim, arguing that the city's final status should be determined through negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians³. As a result, most foreign embassies were located in Tel Aviv rather than Jerusalem. And this is the unchanged situation until today, with Jerusalem as a place for embassies only for the United States, Kosovo, Italy, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Guatemala and Honduras⁴. Other states decided not to act upon such diplomatic actions.

For decades, the United States maintained a policy of strategic ambiguity regarding Jerusalem's status. Although the U.S. Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act in 1995 calling for the relocation of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, successive presidents signed waivers delaying the move due to concerns about regional stability and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process⁵. It was acknowledged by following American presidents, that while moving the embassy to Jerusalem would satisfy Israel, it would become a serious obstacle in bringing Israel and Palestine to the negotiation table. This decision would also bring no benefits to the U.S.

In December 2017, President Donald Trump announced that the United States and his administration would officially recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the American embassy there. Vice-President Mike Pence, drawing upon the Bible, acknowledged: *God decided Jerusalem was the capital of Israel more than 3,000 years ago during the time of King David*⁶. The embassy was formally opened in Jerusalem in May 2018. This decision represented a major shift in American foreign policy and had far-reaching diplomatic and political consequences for the whole region and the future of U.S. relations with Israel and Palestine alike. This decision is recognized as the White House discontinuing the honest broker approach towards the conflicted parties, which was already questioned before.

³ J. Quigley, *The Statehood of Palestine: International Law in the Middle East Conflict*, Cambridge 2016, p. 180–181.

⁴ *Foreign diplomatic missions in Israel*, <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/dynamiccollectors/israel-abroad-consular?skip=0> [accessed: 6.12.2025].

⁵ M. Indyk, K. Lieberthal, M. O'Hanlon, *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, Washington 2012, p. 138–140.

⁶ B. Plett Usher, *Jerusalem embassy: Why Trump's move was not about peace*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44120428> [accessed: 6.12.2025].

Historical Background of Jerusalem's Political Status

Understanding the significance of the U.S. policy shift requires examining the historical evolution of Israel's and Jerusalem's status; both the domestic evolution of the state as well as Israel's international position in the changing geopolitics since its creation. A broader study into the historical role of Jerusalem in the region and its cultural and religious significance could shed into the complexity of the problem, often diminished in international policy shaping and even studies.

During the British Mandate period (1917-1948), tensions between Jewish and Arab communities intensified over the future of Palestine and Jerusalem as the most important city for everyone in the region. In 1947, the United Nations proposed the Partition Plan (UN General Assembly Resolution 181), which recommended dividing the territory into Jewish and Arab states while designating Jerusalem as an international city administered by the United Nations⁷. This was a thoroughly analyzed decision, aiming at soothing high outrage among Arabs and the unrealistic ambitions of the Jews. A UN administered Jerusalem would entail free access to holy sites for all, mutual respect and possibly becoming a cornerstone for future nation building. However, the plan was rejected by Arab leaders and never implemented due to the outbreak of war following Israel's declaration of independence in 1948. The Arabs rejected creation of the new State of Israel in the Middle East on land that was cultivated by Arabs for generations.

After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan. Israel controlled West Jerusalem, while Jordan controlled East Jerusalem, including the Old City and many major religious sites. While control over the City of Jerusalem was more of a technical issue, access to the Old City was a matter of honor and domination. This division remained until the Six-Day War in 1967, when Israel captured East Jerusalem and later extended Israeli law and administration to the entire city. This moment also signified an unwritten diplomatic capitulation of the UN and also the beginning of Israeli *facts on the ground* policymaking that became more actively executed by this state in the 21st Century.

In 1980, Israel passed the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel, declaring unified Jerusalem as the country's capital, as a complete and undivided city that would seat the government but also prohibited the transfer of the authority over

⁷ *The Question of Palestine, Resolution 181 (II). Future government of Palestine*, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-185393/> [accessed: 6.12.2025].

the city to any foreign entity⁸. The international community largely rejected this claim, viewing Israel's act as not only unlawful but also a decision that could spark open hostility of the Arabs that could lead to future wars. The international community, in its passivity, correctly predicted the consequences of the Basic Law. Yet, the only action taken was the United Nations Security Council adopting Resolution 478 declaring the law "null and void" and calling on states to withdraw diplomatic missions from the city⁹. This UN Resolution created a long-standing international norm for keeping embassies outside of Jerusalem in favor of Tel Aviv, and this norm was followed until Trump's decision to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which is going to be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs. This international diplomatic isolation of Jerusalem has not defused the growing hostility of the Arabs over the City of Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem Embassy Act and U.S. Policy Before 2017

Although the United States historically refrained from recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, domestic political pressure for such recognition increased over time. In defining such pressure, the generally understood pro-Israeli lobby in the USA, with its uniqueness and the role in the American society (political life), is the clue. The Pro-Israeli lobby is well-recognized, since the main focus of their activity is building a strong relationship between the USA and Israel. The fact that the pro-Israeli lobby is concentrated in key electoral college states is strengthened further by the fact that American Jews are politically aware and active. This is a result of above-average educated citizens, and this is also the case of American Jews who attend colleges and universities investing in education. The two factors, practicing democratic virtues of voting and speaking in one voice, make these minorities especially effective and valuable in the eyes of politicians and decision-makers in Washington. And while the popular opinion of American Jews was skeptical about moving the embassy to Jerusalem, the lobby groups together with the evangelical Christian and executive branch (strongly influenced by the pro-Israeli lobby) had been putting pressure on the White House to be more Israel friendly.

⁸ *Israel Passes Basic Law on Jerusalem*, <https://israeled.org/basic-law-jerusalem/> [accessed: 6.12.2025].

⁹ *Resolution 478*, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/25618?v=pdf> [accessed: 6.12.2025].

In 1995, the U.S. Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act, which stated that Jerusalem should remain an undivided city and called for the relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. However, the law included a national security waiver allowing presidents to delay implementation every six months¹⁰. The Embassy Act was satisfactory for the pro-Israeli lobby, yet the waiver allowed the president to hold the final decision. Consequently, Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama all used this waiver and deferred the final decision on the relocation of the embassy to a later date. Their administrations argued that prematurely recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital could undermine peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

During the Oslo peace process of the 1990s and early 2000s, Jerusalem was designated as one of the *final status issues* to be resolved through negotiations alongside borders, refugees, and security arrangements¹¹. Consequently, U.S. diplomats believed that maintaining neutrality on Jerusalem's status was necessary to preserve the credibility of the United States as an impartial mediator. At that time, and understood by the earlier mentioned presidents, it was still believed that only such a role of the United States can serve as a catalyst for change, that is permanent peace between Israel and Palestine, that was long awaited by the U.S. and the international community.

The 2017 U.S. Recognition of Jerusalem

Beginning with Donald Trump's election, the waiver on the Jerusalem Embassy Act had been questioned by the White House. As a result, on December 6, 2017, President Donald Trump announced that the United States would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and begin preparations to relocate the U.S. embassy¹². The administration justified the decision by arguing that it acknowledged the practical reality that Israel's government institutions were already located in Jerusalem. This was also Trump's campaign promise, and he argued that he is just delivering on his promises in order not to disappoint his electorate. This decision

¹⁰ S.1322 – *Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995*, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/104th-congress/senate-bill/1322> [accessed: 15.12.2025].

¹¹ D. Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, New York 2004, p. 116.

¹² *Statement by President Trump on Jerusalem*, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-jerusalem/> [accessed: 15.12.2025].

was also undermining the long, yet informally, internationally binding two-state solution concept for the future of Israel and Palestine, where Jerusalem would be divided and possibly serve as a capital for both, if so decided¹³.

Supporters of the decision argued that decades of diplomatic caution had failed to advance the peace process. They suggested that acknowledging existing political realities might create a more realistic framework for negotiations. The more impartial American approach aiming at only providing negotiation space and building a sufficient environment for conflicted parties proved ineffective, therefore switching strategy could yield better results.

However, critics argued that the move risked destabilizing the region and undermining the United States' long-standing role as a mediator in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict¹⁴. Palestinian leaders condemned the decision and suspended certain diplomatic contacts with the United States. Also, other Arab states of the region (The Arab League) recognized Trump's decision as counter-effective to the ultimate and declared goal of reaching a peace deal between Israel and Palestine.

The embassy officially opened in Jerusalem on May 14, 2018, symbolizing the implementation of the new policy, also coinciding with the 70th anniversary of Israel's founding. The Israeli celebratory mood linked to the event infuriated Palestinians and sparked international condemnation. Palestinian riots broke out leading to an Israeli retaliation leaving 52 Palestinian killed and over 2,000 wounded¹⁵. Palestinian leaders (both Hamas and Fatah) who recognize East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state said that Trump's move disqualifies the U.S. as a peace mediator.

Diplomatic and Political Implications

The U.S. decision produced several major diplomatic consequences – bilateral and multilateral, regional and more global. It also affected American esteem that the U.S. started to rebuild in the Middle East following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, that Obama opened with his *A New Beginning* speech in Cairo in 2009.

First, it strengthened the strategic relationship between the United States and Israel. Israeli leaders welcomed the decision as historic validation of Israel's claim

¹³ M. Huczko, op.cit., p. 71.

¹⁴ M. Lynch, *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East*, New York 2016, p. 26.

¹⁵ *World leaders react to US embassy relocation to Jerusalem*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/5/14/world-leaders-react-to-us-embassy-relocation-to-jerusalem> [accessed: 16.12.2025].

that Jerusalem is its capital. While this relationship historically has been strong and Israel has been strongly supported by the U.S. economically, militarily and also diplomatically, before Trump's first and second term, never this support was that unquestioned. And simultaneously, Palestinians have never before experienced such drifting apart with Washington. On the contrary, as mentioned above, Trump's first term (and the second one) have made Israel stronger on many levels – not only upgrading the status of Israeli Jerusalem by moving the embassy but also: in 2019, officially recognizing the Golan Heights (captured from Syria in 1967) as part of Israel, helping negotiate agreements where several Arab countries normalized relations with Israel (the Abraham Accords), withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal and imposing heavy sanctions, reducing U.S. engagement with the Palestinians and also by proposing a pro-Israeli peace plan in 2020 known as *Peace to Prosperity* plan¹⁶. To commemorate Trump – Israeli friendship, a massive, gold-lettered sign was erected saying *Trump Heights*, on land seized from Syria in 1967 and which has been disputed since then.

Second, the decision generated strong opposition from Palestinian leaders, who viewed it as undermining their aspirations for East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state and also undermining any future negotiation efforts. These leaders' rhetoric was interpreted by the Palestinians to demonstrate their disapproval of the decision. Palestinian reaction was multilevel: Palestinian leaders rejected the move outright and argued it violated international law, The Palestinian Authority decided to cut off official contacts with the U.S. administration, Large-scale protests and clashes broke out in both Gaza and the West Bank (leaving 55 Palestinians killed) and the Palestinians pushed for international condemnation at the United Nations (because of the U.S. veto, the Egyptian resolution to halt the action did not pass in the UN Security Council)¹⁷. Enforcing the Jerusalem Embassy Act, together with other anti-Palestinian decisions of Donald Trump like the 2018 announcement that The U.S. State Department stops all funding to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). Under Donald Trump U.S.-Palestine relations went from strained to nearly nonexistent.

¹⁶ R. Margalit, *Trump's Legacy in Israel*, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/donald-trumps-legacy-in-israel> [accessed: 19.12.2025].

¹⁷ A. Yadlin, *Moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem: Opportunities, Risks, and Recommendations*, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/moving-us-embassy-jerusalem-opportunities-risks-recommendations/> [accessed: 19.12.2025].

Third, the decision triggered widespread international reactions. While a few countries (listed above) later followed the United States in relocating their embassies to Jerusalem. Yet, most governments continued to maintain embassies in Tel Aviv and reiterated their support for a negotiated settlement regarding Jerusalem's status. Since in the UN General Assembly, unlike the UN Security Council, no country has veto power, the issue was debated again. This time the voting over United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-10/19 (resolution declaring the status of Jerusalem as Israel's capital as *null and void*) was critical of the U.S. decision: 128 countries voted in favor of rejecting the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, 9 voted against (including the U.S. and Israel) and 35 abstained¹⁸. The UN General Assembly resolution overwhelmingly passed showing strong global opposition towards Trump's decision, yet it failed to stop or reverse the U.S. decision.

Finally, the decision affected perceptions of U.S. neutrality in the peace process and raised questions about Washington's ability to act as a mediator in future negotiations. Trump's first term in the White House, as presented above, was devastating towards any potential peace talks. The U.S. strategy to strongly favor Israel, with symbolic and territorial decisions as the embassy one or recognition of the Golan Heights as Israeli, together with a serious deterioration of diplomatic relations, resulted in the U.S. losing its position as an honest broker of peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This also refers to the United States as a partner for third parties wanting to engage into peace seeking efforts.

Legal and International Law Considerations

The legal status of Jerusalem remains deeply contested under international law and heavily disputed. This refers to the current state of the city but also to all the changes that have occurred historically since the establishment of the State of Israel.

From 1948 until 1967 Jerusalem was occupied by Israel and by the Kingdom of Jordan. Israel had control over modern Jerusalem and Jordan had control over the Old City. Both states annexed the section which they controlled. These two annexations, however, cannot be equated due to the different nature of this control. Israel's annexation was a flagrant violation of international law carried out

¹⁸ *Status of Jerusalem: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1468436?v=pdf> [accessed: 19.12.2025].

by an occupying power against the will of the original inhabitants while Jordan's action was not, strictly speaking, an annexation by an occupying power, but was, in fact, the result of the union of Jordan and Palestine which was carried out in accordance with a resolution adopted on April 24, 1950 in Amman by a national assembly composed of an equal number of Palestinians and Jordanians¹⁹. In June 1967, as a consequence of the Six-Day War between Israel and Arab States of the region as Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, Israel captured and annexed the Old City and since that date it has been in occupation of the entire City of Jerusalem.

It remains to be examined further whether the occupation and annexation of Jerusalem have affected the legal status of Jerusalem. In this regard, two periods may be distinguished: the period from 1948 to 1967 and the period from 1967 until the present day. Yet, Israel's occupation of Jerusalem, whether in 1948 or in 1967, was an aggression against Palestinians. Israel's excuse that its forces occupied modern Jerusalem during the war which broke out in 1948 between itself and the Arab states is questionable because Jewish forces had seized and occupied the Arab quarters of modern Jerusalem in 1948 before the end of the Mandate and before any Arab armies penetrated Palestine²⁰. Similarly, in 1967, Israel captured the Old City and claimed that it was a defensive war when, in fact, it was clearly aggression on its part. This capture and occupation, in result, was Israel's *facts on the ground* strategy to advance territorially in the region and only later engage into any debates over this fact.

This strategy is in opposition to international humanitarian law and the Israeli claim that the nature of the capture was a result of a defensive war is questionable. International legal scholars argue that East Jerusalem constitutes occupied territory under international humanitarian law following Israel's capture of the area in 1967²¹. Therefore, Israel has not, as a result of its occupation and annexation, acquired sovereignty over Jerusalem. Its status is that of a military occupier. The United Nations has invariably referred to Israel as "the occupying power." This description was emphasized in the resolutions of the Security Council, namely, resolutions 476 of June 30, 1980²². It is widely and legally recognized that an occupying power does not acquire sovereignty over the occupied territory, nor does its occupation destroy or extinguish the sovereignty of the legitimate sovereign.

¹⁹ K. Bojko, *Izrael a aspiracje Palestyńczyków 1987–2006*, Warszawa 2006, p. 32–33.

²⁰ T. Rempel, *Dispossession and Restitution in 1948 Jerusalem*, [in:] *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighborhoods and Their Fate in the War*, ed. M. Dumper, Jerusalem 2002, p. 202–208.

²¹ J. Quigley, *op.cit.*, p. 171–176.

²² *Resolution 476 (1980)*, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/25616?v=pdf> [accessed: 13.12.2025].

From a legal perspective, the U.S. decision taken under Donald Trump did not formally determine sovereignty over the city. American officials emphasized that the recognition did not preclude future negotiations regarding borders or the status of the holy sites. Yet, the decision to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, followed by such moves by a few other states, further complicated potential future peace talks between Israel and Palestine despite the legality and formal status of Jerusalem. Again, the Palestinians felt abandoned by the international community and order, while the Israelis managed to secure another milestone in building *Eretz Israel HaShlema*, which is a *Greater Israel* without regard to international law.

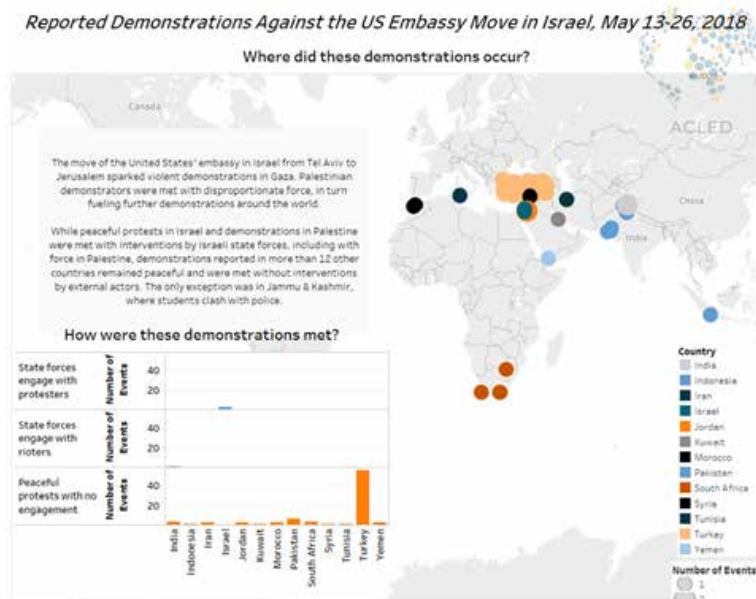
However, it is argued that recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital implicitly supports Israel's broader territorial claims and may weaken international legal norms regarding territorial disputes. It also demonstrates the ineffectiveness of international institutions and norms. Israel claims Jerusalem is its capital, with silent approval of several countries including the U.S., despite international criticism and UN resolutions. Simultaneously, it creates a precedent for possible further Israeli actions in the region and also becomes a case to follow for other states who wish to oppose international law and standards.

Regional and Global Geopolitical Effects

The embassy relocation also had broader geopolitical implications. The decision with the implications radiated beyond the Middle East.

The decision triggered protests in several Middle Eastern countries and heightened tensions in the region. Arabs and Muslims of the region (globally as well) showed solidarity with the Palestinians being somehow stripped of East Jerusalem and also identified with the protest victims. Many governments expressed concern that the move could inflame political and religious tensions. As seen from the infographic below, the biggest number of protests took place in Turkey, but citizens of other states also peacefully protested²³:

²³ F. Stagni, *The Regional Impact of the US Embassy Move*, <https://acleddata.com/archived/regional-impact-us-embassy-move> [accessed: 16.12.2025].



Source: F. Stagni, *The Regional Impact of the US Embassy Move*, <https://acleddata.com/archived/regional-impact-us-embassy-move> [accessed: 16.12.2025].

The decision to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem also demonstrated the close strategic relationship between the United States and Israel, emphasizing an impartial approach towards conflicted parties. It also exposed divisions within the international community regarding how the status of Jerusalem should be addressed. As presented earlier, the international community in the UN General Assembly Resolution ES-10/19 showed a strong disapproval of Trump's decision. A special U.S. delegation attended the inauguration ceremony including Ivanka Trump – daughter and senior adviser to President Trump, Jared Kushner – senior adviser and Trump's son-in-law, Steven Mnuchin – U.S. Treasury Secretary, David Friedman – U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Jason Greenblatt – White House Middle East envoy, senators and members of the Congress as well as Evangelical pastors, but, as seen on the infographic below, it was boycotted by the leaders of many states including most of Europe, Canada, Australia, India, China and also the Muslim world²⁴:

²⁴ World leaders...

Who attended the US embassy Jerusalem opening?

May 14 event took place amid deadly protests at the Gaza-Israel border.

Amongst the attendees were representatives from:



Source: *World leaders react to US embassy relocation to Jerusalem*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/5/14/world-leaders-react-to-us-embassy-relocation-to-jerusalem> [accessed: 16.12.2025].

More significantly, the decision reflected shifts in U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and the changing diplomatic landscape of the region. As Trump argued, American strategies towards the conflict have proven to be fruitless and therefore a radical change, or delivering on the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, is an opportunity to change dynamics in the region and Israel-Palestine relations. The new strategy of exerting less pressure on Israel to change its behavior. And while this fresh approach could be convincing, especially in the light of the failed previous ones, Trump's unconditional support is receiving international doubt. Under Donald Trump, the U.S. is not perceived internationally as an actor capable of binding Israel and Palestine. Especially in the light of other Trump's decision such as the Abraham Accords which marginalized the Palestinian case, recognition of the Golan Heights as Israeli and in the second term military support in the confrontation with Iran. Bearing in mind that the United States is possibly the only one that can put effective pressure on both Israel and Palestine, the above biased stance which disregards the international institutions and opinion, can be perceived as detrimental for future Israel-Palestinian relations.

Conclusion

The United States' recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017 marked a major turning point in American Middle East policy. By relocating its embassy to Jerusalem, the United States departed from decades of diplomatic practice that sought to maintain neutrality regarding the city's final status. This neutrality, progressively, has been questioned by the international community and undoubtedly by the Palestinians. But, as presented in the text, the sensitive matter of the City of Jerusalem has been recognized by President Trump's White House predecessors and dealt with caution. This caution reflects the fragile question of Jerusalem and how it affects the general Israeli-Palestinian relations.

While the decision reflected existing political realities and strengthened U.S.-Israel relations, it also generated significant diplomatic controversy and complicated prospects for renewed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Historically it has been proven that the conflicted parties require a peace broker in negotiation efforts. Together with Trump's decision and the consequences of the decision, the American role as such a broker has been undermined.

Jerusalem remains one of the most sensitive issues in the Middle East conflict. As long as the broader Israeli-Palestinian dispute remains unresolved, the political and legal status of Jerusalem will continue to play a central topic in international diplomacy. At times this topic is overshadowed by other international affairs such as the war in Ukraine or the current war with Iran, but undoubtedly the question about the future of Jerusalem will return. The international community's voice must be considered just like Palestinian rights in the City of Jerusalem. Without an evenhanded and accepted compromise by both Israel and Palestine future peace between the parties is unattainable.

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