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The Position of the American Administrations on the Issue of Jerusalem (1948-2017)

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Abstract

President Donald Trump's decision on December 6, 2017 to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and his directives to transfer the U.S embassy to there, have signaled a sudden shift in the American adopted and declared policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. This decision is considered as one of the most dangerous regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This study examines the attitude of the American administrations towards the city of Jerusalem by monitoring the historical roots and studying their developments, through using the documents issued by American presidents from 1948 to 2017. It also analyses President Trump's motives to move forward in the announcement of this decision. The study has concluded that the US administrations dealt with the issue of Jerusalem from the point of view of management rather than resolution and that the United States of America has deviated from its course and position on the issue of Jerusalem, in accordance with maintaining the strategic interests related to Israel.

Key words: American administrations; Israeli-Palestinian conflict; Jerusalem

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of Jerusalem has been linked to the foreign policy of the United States since the end of the Cold War, the decline of British forces, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. This prompted the U.S to move in order to fill the political vacuum in the Middle East and to take Israel as a strategic ally with the aim of helping the U.S maintain its economic interests in the region.

The American administration's policy on Jerusalem is an integral part of its foreign policy towards the Palestinian cause. This in turn has led the different American administrations to show some sort of balance to some of the issues related to, it so as to make the international community see the U.S as neutral in its decisions and objective in its positions. But its policy towards Jerusalem has been characterized with complete harmony with that of Israel for the sake of maintaining the American interests in the Middle East, foremost of which is its oil and economic interests in one hand as well as keeping Israel superior in the region.

The religious importance of Jerusalem has granted it a special status for the Jews as the Promised Land and the land of their ancestors according to Jewish beliefs. Due to this, Israel, since the start of peace negotiations with the Palestinian side, has worked to postpone the negotiation of many of the core issues of the Palestinian cause to the final stage, including Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, and prisoners. This has been prevalent despite the existence of many international legitimacy decisions affirming the right of Palestinians to return to East Jerusalem, occupied since 1948, to be the capital of the independent Palestinian state. Hence, this study came to track and monitor the U.S position, as well as the nature of its foreign policy towards the issue of Jerusalem,

especially that it is the main sponsor of the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations.

1. THE RELIGIOUS IMPORTANCE OF THE CITY OF JERUSALEM TO THE FOLLOWERS OF THE THREE RELIGIONS

God chose to grant the city of Jerusalem special characteristics and qualities not found in any other city in the world and has made this spot sacred to all three religions revealed to His messengers in this part of the world (Almasri, 2016). It is the cradle of the divine messages and the land of prophets and messengers. According to Jewish beliefs, the Holy City is sacred in accordance with the divine promise to the Prophet Abraham, the Promised Land and the land of their descendants. They claim the right to restore Jerusalem as their capital because it was the capital of the kingdom of Judah (Jerjes, 1981). There is also the Wailing Wall (the Al-Buraq Wall in the southwestern part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and an integral part of it), which as Jews believe consists of the last of the remains of the Prophet Solomon's temple which was considered by Jews as their holiest site ("What is the importance of Jerusalem," 2017).

The Christians, in accordance with their beliefs, see Jerusalem as the symbol of holiness and the land of Christ where he was born, lived and crucified. Also in the Christian Quarter of Jerusalem, there is the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which is of a special importance to Christians throughout the world. It is the mother of all churches, located in the place that witnessed the death, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, they glorified the holy city. This religious significance was used to move the Crusades flowing from Europe towards the Muslim people of the country (Almasri, 2016, p18, and "What is the importance of Jerusalem," 2017).

As for the Muslims, the city of Jerusalem is a land blessed by God Almighty and granted the status of sanctity. There is Al-Aqsa Mosque which was the first Qibla for Muslims in their prayers and the second mosque of worship after the Kaaba. It is the third mosque in Islam after the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, in which a prayer in it equals 500 prayers being performed in any other mosque. It was from this place that the Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven during his nocturnal journey. It is also the land of congregation and resurrection. Furthermore, it is the stronghold of Islam during times of hardships and calamities (Saleh, 2002).

2. THE HISTORY OF JERUSALEM

The city of Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities in the world. Various people and nations ruled it. The Jebusites,

who migrated to Palestine from the Arabian Peninsula in 3000 BC, founded it. They developed their city known as Ursalim (the city of peace) after the name of their god Salem (Nofal, 1999). The city was subjected to many waves of invaders, ruled by both: The Hyksos and the Pharaohs.

Then, the Prophet of God David entered it and founded his kingdom there. After that, the Prophet of God Solomon inherited the city in the period of 1004-923 BC (Palestinian National Authority, 2015). Next, it was divided into the kingdom of Israel in the north, and the Kingdom of Judah in the south. Then, it fell into the rule of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans and the Byzantines. It remained under the rule of the Byzantines until the Islamic conquest of the Levant in 636 AD (Saleh, 2012). The Crusaders' rule of the city continued until 1187 AD, when it was liberated in the Battle of Hattin under the leadership of Saladin. It then fell under the Mamluk rule and followed by the Ottoman rule in 1517. The Holy City remained under their rule until it fell under the British occupation of Palestine on 6 December 1917, (Nofal, 1999). Britain was granted mandate over Palestine by the League of Nations (Ayoub, 2017), with the aim of the implementation of Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, under which the British government pledged to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine ("British Mandate of Palestine", 1922). Because of the British Mandate policy and the Arab revolutions against its policy, Britain on 29 November 1947 referred the Palestinian issue to the United Nations. The United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 181 (Ayoub, 2017), which divided Palestine into two states: An Arab state (43%) of the area of Palestine, and a Jewish state (56%) of the area of Palestine. Britain introduced a special system for the city of Jerusalem, making it a separate entity, under a special international system (Abdel Hay, 1999).

Then the Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion announced the establishment of the State of Israel, which resulted in the Nakba War of 1948, that led to the partition of the country. Subsequently, the city of Jerusalem divided into two parts, (Aldwik, 2002) a western part, under Israeli control, and an eastern part under Jordanian control (Qassimiah, 1979). In 1967, the Six Day War broke out. Consequently, Israel occupied the rest of the Palestinian territories under Jordanian control, including the West Bank. The successive Israeli governments adopted policies and procedures to change the status of the city by enacting a set of laws and regulations to further assert the city as Jewish (Alkhateeb, 2016), and confiscate its lands. Such laws and regulations include the Confiscation Law for Public Interest, the Emergency and Public Security Law, the Absentee Property Law and the Compensation Law, as well as the Law for the Restoration of Jews to Their Properties (Halabi, 1999).

As a result of these policies, the area of West Jerusalem that Israel controlled prior to the 1967 war increased from 28,000 dunums to 72,000 dunums after the annexation and confiscation of land in East Jerusalem (Nofal, 1999). East Jerusalem with its extended borders actually became under the control of the Municipality of West Jerusalem. The Israeli government legalized the annexation process by ratifying the Basic Law of July 30, 1980, which stated that Jerusalem is a complete and unified eternal capital of Israel, and that the headquarters of the Head of State, the Knesset, the seat of the Supreme Court, and the offices of the Israeli Government be located in Jerusalem, (Jerjes, 1981). The Security Council, by virtue of Resolution 478 which condemned the annexation of East Jerusalem and denounced Israel's refusal to respect and implement international resolutions concerning the city (Nofal, 1999), rejected this law. In 2000, the Israeli parliament passed an amendment to the Basic Law with the approval of 61 members to transfer any area within the existing boundaries of the city of Jerusalem to other places (Ayoub, 2017).

3. THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATIONS ON JERUSALEM (1948-1967)

The American position on the Palestinian issue began since the United Nations adopted the resolution to partition Palestine and the U.S support of that resolution. U.S. President Harry Truman (1945-1953) supported this decision. He supported The Zionist movement and his administration adopted the Jewish Agency Project, which included the partition of Palestine into two states. America was the first country to recognize Israel, 11 minutes after Ben-Gurion announced its establishment on 14 May 1948 (Shoma'a, 2018), President Truman signed the document recognizing Israel rather as a "Jewish state." He deleted the word Jewish with his own hand and pen, replacing it with Israel, being aware that the US Constitution bans him from engaging in any activities of a religious nature (Qasim, 2018).

He also did not recognize Israeli sovereignty over West Jerusalem, which Israel occupied during the Nakba War, out of his conviction of a bi-national state to include Jews and Arabs from the Palestinians. But the moves made by the Israelis in Britain and America, the threat of using the Jews ballot card in American elections as well as other religious considerations made President Truman move towards the idea of partition, and the internationalization of Jerusalem by the borders guaranteed in the partition resolution (Shoma'a, 2018).

During the term of President Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961), when Israel announced in 1953 the transfer of government departments to Jerusalem with the aim of imposing a fait accompli and forcing other

countries to deal with the city as the capital of Israel, the administration of President Eisenhower considered the transfer of Israeli ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a provocative act, and a contradiction to international norms and charters. The administration also informed the staff of the US embassy in Israel not to deal with the implementation of the decision to move, and the US State Department, which was led by Dallas protested to that decision in 1953. He justified this for some reasons that stem from the fears of the US State Department that this move would enable the Soviet Union to lure some influential Arab countries, including Egypt, to its areas of influence. However, in 1955, US Ambassador Lawson presented his credentials in Jerusalem (Shoma'a, 2018)

In the era of President John F. Kennedy (1961-1963) and President Lyndon Johnson (1963-1969), the American position was based on the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the solution of the refugee problem and their right to return and compensation (Nadav, 1978). Thus, the administration did not consider the issue of Jerusalem as a political issue, but rather a religious issue centered around the holy places, securing free access to all followers of the three divine religions, and a humanitarian issue related to refugees (Rajab, 2018) On the eve of the Israeli occupation of the city of Jerusalem in the war in June 1967, the US administration did not show a clear position. In his June 19, 1967 speech, US President Johnson ignored the status of Jerusalem and presented a peace project in which he emphasized arrangements for recognizing the special interests of the three divine religions in the holy places of Jerusalem («United States Policy », 1969). When the Israeli authorities announced their annexation of the eastern part of Jerusalem on June 28, 1967, a statement was issued by the US State Department stating: "... the United States has never considered such unilateral acts by any of the countries of the region as controlling or abolishing of the issue of the internationalization of Jerusalem ("Report on Israeli Settlement", 1994)

When Security Council Resolution 242 was issued on 22 November 1967 calling for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Arab territories occupied in the Six-Day War, the United States of America declared its consent (Musallam, 1973).

4. THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATIONS ON JERUSALEM (1967 - 2017)

In the era of President Richard Nixon (1969-1974), the American position did not change much. On July 3, 1969, the United States voted in favor of Resolution 267, which calls on Israel to cancel all measures, including the establishment of settlements and all measures aimed at

changing the status of Jerusalem (Dannon,2017). At the end of December 1969, US Secretary of State William Rogers presented an American project calling on Jordan and Israel to agree on Jerusalem and to keep Jerusalem a unified city, open to all people of all religions and nationalities (Nofal, 1999).

This proposal was a fundamental contradiction with the previous American positions that rejected the “Israeli” unilateral measures. The American view of Jerusalem is similar to that of all other occupied areas, while these statements of Rogers recognized the need to keep Jerusalem united. This showed that the United States recognized the Israeli resolution to annex Jerusalem. This proposal ran contrary to the voting by the United States in the Security Council in favor of resolution 267, which called for the inadmissibility of acquisition of land by military force, as well as considering all legislative and administrative measures, including the confiscation of land, null and void. The resolution also called on Israel to abolish all actions it took and refrain from taking any action aimed at changing the status of Jerusalem (Shama’a, 2018).

During the 1970s, in the term of President Gerald Ford (1974-1977), the president declared that Jerusalem was the historic and legal capital of Israel. In 1974, Ford in his capacity as a member of the Congress, called for transferring the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Alshiqqi, 2017) But he couldn’t do so, due to political calculations. However, the attempts and controversy continued but to no avail (Qamorih, 2016).

In the era of President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), the president asserted in September 1978 that America still considered Jerusalem occupied, but it was merely a formality as no practical steps were taken to deter Israeli practices against Jerusalem (Ayoub, 2017). When The Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel were signed under American auspices (1978-1979), the United States and Israel agreed to remove all the clauses on Jerusalem from the table of the Convention (Dannon, 2017). Washington focused on keeping the city of Jerusalem united without partition, as President Carter expressed it on March 3, 1980: “For Jerusalem, we firmly believe that Jerusalem must remain united with free access to the holy sites of all religions, and that the status of Jerusalem must be determined through negotiations for a lasting and comprehensive peace”(Jerjes, 2002). This position was based on the weakness of the Arab position during that period, especially after Israel managed to avoid the Jerusalem issue from the discussions and ongoing negotiations at Camp David (Report on Israeli Settlement, 1994).

The policy of the United States towards Jerusalem during the Carter era was marked by the shift from the “step by step” diplomacy led by then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in coordination and cooperation with Israel, to the policy of “comprehensive settlement”

of the Israeli-Arab conflict. The U.S affirmed its position on the issue of Jerusalem specified in the address of its delegates to the United Nations, that is, East Jerusalem for the United States of America is still considered an occupied territory, and is governed by the law of occupation of the war, which imposes obligations on Israel towards the occupied land and its inhabitants (Shama’a, 2018).

In the early 1980s, it was the beginning of the neoconservative policy in drawing up the American strategy in the region, which considered Israel an important element for the achievement of American interests. President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) formally assumed the US administration and appeared to be in favor of Israel on more than one occasion. Reagan declared in September 1982: “We are still convinced that Jerusalem must remain united and that its final status will be determined through negotiations between the parties.” He asked Israel to freeze the settlements for not meeting the security purpose, meaning that Reagan’s position did not change from that of his predecessors, and that the United States was committed to the protection of Israel (Report on Israeli Settlement, 1994).

On January 19, 1982, the United States signed a dangerous document with Israel concerning the status of occupied Arab Jerusalem. This document was called the “Rent and Purchase Agreement. Under the agreement “ The US government obtained a piece of land from the Islamic Waqf properties and private Palestinian properties in the West Jerusalem area of 1948 to build the U.S embassy on it. The US administration decided to transfer the embassy to the Arnona suburb adjacent to the High Commissioner’s residence in Jerusalem, where its consulate’s general was located. It would be temporarily operating from the consulate headquarters until the completion of the construction of a nearby large building to be the main headquarters (Hasan, 2017).

The US administration’s position on the issue of Jerusalem under President George HW Bush (1989-1993) witnessed a difference of views between the United States and Israel, which was caused by Israeli intransigence over Jerusalem and America’s desire to find a negotiated solution. President Bush opposed Israel’s request to be granted \$ 400 million in loans to the Soviet immigrant population in the early 1990s, on the grounds that East Jerusalem is an occupied territory (Rajab, 2018). However, the US administration agreed to pay housing loans after Israel had confirmed that it would use them in areas under the Israeli administration before the 1967 war (Alshanty, 2002). The U.S congress issued an important decision on 22, March, 1990 «keeping Jerusalem as a unified capital of Israel, with preserving the rights of others» (Abdullah, 1990,p91). And the United States supported Israel’s settlement policy when it used the veto to bring down a draft resolution that considered settlements “ In the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, illegal. This

means that the position of the American administration has become clearer on the issue of settlement (Ennab, 2018).

In 1991, the Madrid International Peace Conference in Spain for the Settlement of the Arab-Israeli Conflict was held to settle the Arab – Israeli conflict in a just and comprehensive way on the principle of “land for peace”. The United States of America was the main sponsor of the Conference. The United States, in its letter of assurances to the Palestine Liberation Organization, avoided the discussion of issue of Jerusalem during the interim period in addition to not referring to the reference of Jerusalem in the negotiations, except for Resolution 242 of 1967., It also limited the Palestinian demands to “East Jerusalem” (Ennab, 2018).

In the Clinton administration (1993-2001), President Clinton promised, during his election campaign, to move the US embassy to Jerusalem and recognize Jerusalem as the capital of “Israel” and said: “Jerusalem must remain an undivided city, but I believe that timing is the real element and that the transfer of our embassy there, while the negotiations are under way, may jeopardize the progress of the peace process in a way that defeats the goal we seek “(Adab, 2005). The Clinton administration did not oppose expropriation of land and settlement activities in” East Jerusalem “. It refused to describe the continued construction of settlements in East Jerusalem as a unilateral act, as described by previous US administrations («Report on Israeli Settlement», 1995).

The US administration worked hard to neutralize the United Nations and its organizations on the Palestinian issue. It strongly opposed the resolutions and statements issued by the United Nations dealing with the final status of Jerusalem and the settlements and sovereignty over them. The American position was reflected by the former US representative at the United Nations, Madeleine Albright who did not support the description of the land occupied by Israel in 1967 as occupied Palestinian land, since this language may be interpreted as meaning sovereignty (Journal of Palestine Studies, 1993).

The American negative position reached the peak following the Oslo agreement between the PLO and Israel in September 1993, through the position of US officials who said that the confiscation of land and building settlements in “East Jerusalem” should not be addressed in the United Nations or the Security Council. Instead, it should be discussed between Israel and the P.L.O («Report on Israeli Settlement», 1995), and the Declaration of Principles signed by the Palestinians under the Clinton administration as a result of American pressure on September 13, 1993, postponed the discussion of important issues to the final stage of the negotiations.

In general, the administration of President Clinton did not exert pressure on Israel over Jerusalem, arguing that this would impede the course of negotiations, due to conformity of the views of the American administration

and the U.S Congress on Jerusalem. The US Congress passed the October 23, 1995, “Jerusalem Embassy Act 1995, by a large majority (93 vs. 5 in the Senate, 374 vs. 37 in the House of Representatives) to begin funding the transfer of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, to be implemented no later than May 31, 1999 (Abdel Hay, 2017). Jerusalem would remain a unified city in which the ethnic and religious rights of each group are protected, as well as the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel (Alsharqawy, 2017) noting that this law included an item allowing the US president to sign a six-month exemption if he deems it necessary to protect American national security interests. Since the administration of President Bill Clinton, successive US administrations have automatically signed the waiver every six months. Although, they promised as candidates to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Abdel Hay, 2017).

In the era of President George W. Bush (2001-2009), on September 30, 2002, a congressional resolution was signed declaring Jerusalem unified with both its occupied parts in 1948 and 1967, the eternal capital of Israel. However, he noted that his signing of the resolution did not mean a change in his country’s policy towards Jerusalem (Shama’a, 2018), to lessen the Arab reaction to this unprecedented measure, US President George W. Bush said that Article 214 on Jerusalem new Foreign Relations Act “is in unacceptable conflict with the constitutional powers of the President regarding the foreign policy of the nation and supervising the executive part. He stressed that his country’s policy on Jerusalem did not change despite signing the law. He also stressed that the issue of Jerusalem should be resolved within the framework of the peace negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. He also stated in a letter to the US lawmakers that he reserved the right to ignore some of its articles that violate his foreign policy responsibilities. (Rubeiz, 2008).

On April 30, 2003, the Bush administration issued (a draft road map) prepared by the Quartet committee (Russia, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations). The third phase of which mentioned that the issue of Jerusalem would be part of final status negotiations such as borders, settlements and refugees. And this should be settled before the end of 2005 (UN, 2003). In the era of President Barack Obama (2009-2017), Obama, during his election campaign, declared his support of the unified Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel (Rubeiz, 2008), yet he withdrew his statement, and pointed out that the matter was to be left to the results of the negotiations between the two parties (Abu Khatlah, 2015, P 247, 248). President Obama postponed the transfer of the embassy of his country to occupied Jerusalem more than once, despite the pressure exerted by the “Jewish lobby” on the US administration, for fear of the explosion of anger among the Palestinians, and its negative reflections on Israel (Bishara, 2013).

After reviewing the positions of previous US administrations on the status of Jerusalem, we can say that they were based on the affirmation of all American governments to keep Jerusalem united in addition to its non-recognition of the right of the Palestinian people in "East Jerusalem" occupied in 1967. They also contributed to the postponement of status of the city of Jerusalem to the final and deferred negotiations, as well as, the permanent neutralization of the United Nations in the determination of the future of Jerusalem. It is also noted that, despite the occasional neutrality of American administrations and their pretense that they were against Israel, the Israeli measures were taken in Jerusalem. But in practice, they backed the Israeli actions in the city. Notwithstanding the discrepancies in the positions of the various American administrations, they all pooled in the interest of Israeli policy. They also often worked to obstruct the issuance of UN resolutions that are in favor of the issue of Jerusalem through the use of veto power.

5. THE UNITED STATES' POSITION ON JERUSALEM UNDER PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP 2017

After President Donald Trump came to power on December 6, 2017, his administration recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Trump justified this decision for three reasons: Israel was a sovereign state and had the right to determine its capital. And that this recognition is necessary for peace in addition to the fact that the United States of America recognized under the leadership of President Harry Truman the State of Israel, and since then Israel considered Jerusalem as its capital (Qasim, 2018). Trump took a different approach from that of the other American presidents, 22 years after three US presidents - Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama - postponed the application of the Congress resolution and signed decrees to postpone it since 1995 (Farel, 2018).

Thus, Trump was the first American president who, during his election campaign, promised to implement the resolution and then implemented it in deed (Abu Karim, 2017). This step contradicted UN resolution 181 of 1947, which placed Jerusalem's holy sites under international mandate and the U.S delegate's decision, as well as, UN Security Council Resolution 242, which acknowledged the West Bank, including "East Jerusalem" and the Gaza Strip, as occupied territory. It also contradicts the UN demands for states to withdraw their diplomatic missions from Jerusalem in accordance with Resolution 478 following the Israeli parliament (Knesset) decision in 1982 to consider Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel, Trumps decision also came in contradiction to the Oslo agreement of 1993, which stipulated that Jerusalem should be subject to final status negotiations (Shama'a,

2018) and contradicted Trump's pledge to work for a "just and lasting peace" between Israel and the Palestinians by negotiation between the parties. "I think my administration can play an important role in helping the parties achieve a just and lasting peace" (Abu Kareem, 2017). The message came at a time when Arab countries had pinned many hopes on an active American role in reaching a peaceful and just settlement of the issue.

5.1 The Causes and Motives of US President Trump in Implementing the Decision to Transfer the Embassy to Jerusalem

Trump did not agree with his advisers. While Foreign Secretary Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis and CIA director Mike Pompeo opposed it as a threat to American interests in the Arab and Islamic regions, which could lead to diplomatic isolation in the region, weaken its patronage of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, abort any peace proposals and lead to further violence in the occupied Palestinian territories (Diamond & Labott, 2017). Vice President Mike Pines, US Ambassador to the United Nations Nicky Haley, US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, his brother-in-law and adviser Jared Kouchner, and US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace Jason Greenblatt supported the announcement which will enable him to maneuver with the right-wing Netanyahu government if the US administration proposes a framework for a final agreement with the Palestinians (Terry, 2006).

Following are the most important reasons that led president Trump to implement the decision of the U.S embassy to Jerusalem:

5.1.1 Pressure and Influence of the Jewish lobby in America

The Jewish lobby plays an influential role in the American political decision-making process, with regard to the Middle East in general and the Palestinian cause in particular. The Jewish community is one of the most active political and social groups in the United States. Although Jews only constitute (2%) of the population of America (6 million). This community has a distinctive economic status that allows it to influence American policy. It has a high rate of education among its members, high income level, and hold high ranking positions. There are 75 independent pro-Israel organizations working to nurture Israeli interests and goals, through the AIPAC coalition organization, which has succeeded in blackmailing and influencing the US foreign policy making (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). According to various reports, after Trump's speech during the presidential nomination regarding his decision to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem, the Jewish billion Sheldon Adelson, the owner of the famous casinos and supporter of the Republicans, supported Trumps presidential campaign, and donated \$ 20 million to one of the electoral political committees in favor of Trump, and then he again donated 1.5 million N dollars for the organization of the Republican convention, which

officially announced Trump as presidential candidate (Landler, 2017).

5.1.2 Application of the Embassy Transfer Act 1995

President Trump justified his decision to declare Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, as a practical implementation of the law passed by Congress in 1995. Some analysts linked Trump's decision with his goal of diverting attention of the media to distance himself from the issue of contacts with Russia during his election campaign. Trump also needs the influential Jewish lobby in the congress to stand behind him in the face of his opponents who seek to overthrow him by isolating him through Congress. They recalled a similar incidence with the former U.S president Richard Nixon in the aftermath of the 1974 Watergate scandal (Okasha, 2017). Others also said that his decision came out of his desire to restore some of his falling popularity, through reassuring his voters, especially among conservatives, and the strong supporters of Israel, that he will fulfill his electoral promise (Adilby, 2017).

5.1.3 Pleasing Christian Evangelical Groups

Some people interpret President Trump's decision to transfer his country's embassy to Jerusalem in the light of his religious background, and a strong and well-established faith by a large group of the American people. Its principles have established what is known as "evangelical Christianity" (Afanah, 2017), these groups represent about 25% of the American people. These groups pressed President Trump to expedite the decision to transfer the embassy and declare Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, in fulfillment of his pledge during his election campaign (Lovett, 2017). According to the Pew Research Center, during the presidential election, 80% of Evangelical Christians voted for Trump, including US Vice President Mike Pines, who played a pivotal role in the US move that he fully supports, based on his religious convictions as a follower of this Church. Only 16% voted for Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton (Afanah, 2017).

It is well-known that Evangelical Christians believe in the sanctity of the alleged temple, the biblical prophecies about it, and everything mentioned in the Torah about the city of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. They also believe in the so-called Armageddon battle between the forces of good (Jewish Protestants) and evil (Arabs and Muslims) They claimed that ,by doing so ,they are fulfilling a divine command to hasten the second return of the Christ. Therefore, the issue of the transfer of the embassy for the evangelicals is not about political matters, but rather a prophecy that paves the way for the return of Christ on the way to the battle of the end of history. According to the legend, the Jews will accept the Christ "as their Savior after they rejected him before. (Bass, 2017). They also believe that the Jews have a sacred right to the Holy Land - Palestine - as" the chosen people of God ". Finally , they believe that the Jews have their own religious right in Palestine.

CONCLUSION

The study reviewed the importance of the city of Jerusalem to the followers of the three divine religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam , as a land blessed by God since ancient times. It is the cradle of the divine messages, as well as the place of messengers and prophets. The study shows that the position of the American administrations on the issue of Jerusalem, especially after the occupation of the eastern part of the 1967 war, has declined significantly. The American position after 1948 war was based on a comprehensive support to the idea of making Jerusalem an international city. Then that position shifted to the recognition of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel, ignoring all international resolutions regarding the status of the eastern part of the city of Jerusalem as part of the occupied territories in the Six-Day War, and stopping the measures that would change the status quo in Jerusalem before 1948. This came especially after the passage of the US Congress, in 1995, a law called the law of the transfer of the embassy, which called for the recognition of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel. This law was passed to meet the policy of *fait accompli* imposed by Israel after the occupation of the entire Palestinian territory In 1967 Under President Donald Trump, the American presidency was marked with a fundamental change in American policy toward the Palestinian cause. The American Foreign Minister ordered the transfer of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in accordance with the law passed by Congress since 1995. This move came as a result of the influence and pressure of the Jewish lobby in America , as well as to please evangelical Christian groups there. The decision also signifies a complete American bias towards Israel, and disregard for the historical rights of the Palestinians, in light of the inability of Arab countries to influence the US decision, as well as their weakness and preoccupation with their own internal affairs. Despite the United States' clear bias towards Israel and its failure to compel Israel to comply with international legitimacy resolutions on Jerusalem, Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular view the United States as the main sponsor of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. The study has reached many results, the most important of which are:

- The successive US administrations look at the Palestinian issue, in general and the issue of Jerusalem in particular, from the perspective of US interests, and this explains the behavior of US presidents towards Jerusalem, which weakens the credibility of the American role in peace negotiations and contributes to the liquidation of the Palestinian issue, according to the Israeli perception of the final resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict

- In case of an international recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, this move would mean the abolition of all international resolutions related to the preservation of the Arab and Islamic cultural heritage and

the undermining of all rights demanding the freedom of visits by Palestinians and Arabs to the holy sites in the city, as well as a direct threat to destroy AL Aqsa Mosque .This would finally lead to full halt of the peace talks and the Oslo Accords, and the freeing of the Palestinians from an unfulfilled promise by an impartial peace broker.

- US President Trump's decision to transfer the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, despite the international resolutions that opposed it and the lack of international recognition of its sovereignty over the city of Jerusalem ,proves that the United States is biased towards Israel. Such a move would give Israel a free hand in Judaizing the city and increasing the number of settlements in it. Consequently, this will undermine the political process with the Palestinians on the one hand, and refers to the partnership of the United States with Israel in a war crime, from the other hand. Furthermore it would constitute a violation of a fundamental principle of the relations between States, since the Second World War, that is the in admissibility of annexation of the territory of others by military force.

Based on what was mentioned above, the study recommends the following:

- The Palestinian leadership should reconsider its relationship with the United States of America and exert pressure on it by changing its policy and management of the negotiation process with Israel. It should show the U,S that the Palestinian side is a strong and important element in the region and that it has its own options and alternatives to make Israel comply with the international legitimacy's resolutions regarding the issue of Jerusalem .

- The Palestinian leadership must reorganize its strategy from that of reaction to an independent pro-active effort to achieve its national objectives with the help of other regional and international forces.

- It is necessary for the Palestinians to coordinate and cooperate with the Arab and Islamic countries, so that they become pressure forces on the United States of America pushing it in order to keep its interests in the region as well as to pressure Israel to move towards a just and comprehensive settlement based on the principle of land for peace.

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