

MAPPING RECENT UNIVERSAL AND PARTICULAR CLAIMS RELATED TO JERUSALEM "AS CAPITAL OF ISRAEL" IN OFFICIAL ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN STATEMENTS

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DOI: 10.55535/RMT.2023.4.18

A few years ago, the United States (US) officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and shortly afterwards the American diplomatic mission was relocated from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem/al-Quds¹, although internationally the decision was heavily criticized and met with protests on several levels. The US initiative was adopted as such by other countries supportive of US policy overseas, while Israeli and Palestinian politicians were given a new subject of confrontation at least at the level of speeches and official statements. The purpose of this research is to map universal and particular claims linked to the historic Jerusalem/al-Quds in official Israeli and Palestinian statements at the beginning of the 21st century in selected speeches or official statements of the following Israeli and Palestinian politicians: Naftali Bennet, Benjamin Netanyahu, Ismail Haniyeh and Khaled Meshaal by using discourse analysis in order to identify to which type of techniques and arguments the analysed political personalities resorted to in their speeches, in order to convince and influence their audience.

Keywords: Palestine; history; discourse analysis; Hamas; colonization; Israel; self-determination;

¹ It is here with reconfirmed that any data or term used in this research is without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area (A.N.).

INTRODUCTION

The year 1948 from the Gregorian calendar represents a year in which at least two competing developments came to an intersection in history: proclamation of the State of Israel and *an-Nakba*, i.e., the *Palestinian Catastrophe*. Although the Gregorian calendar is the most utilized nowadays, it is not the only timeline used around the globe. In fact, the Hebrew lunar year 5784 *Anno Mundi* (from Latin for the Year of The World) began on 15 September 2023 (Gregorian) and the Muslim lunar year 1445, observed also in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, began on 19 July 2023 (Gregorian). This is just one of the many situations in which simplifying statements based on a "well-known" or "broadly accepted" claim does not encompass the entire meaning of a date, event, or statement.

From this perspective, the first qualitative assumption of current research is that broadly accepted theory, be it popular or scientific (verified through data and/or experiments), may be limited by its background constraints, geographical, temporal span, as well as number and interest level of the addressees, hence not "universally" accepted. And the fact that the size of the universe is not precisely known is another reason to distinguish between absolute/"universal" claims and particular/conditional claims.

It is therefore important to establish which theoretical framework can be used when assessing claims from two parties involved in one of the longest modern conflicts, ongoing since 1948, especially when the claims are dynamic in time and their directions are also evolving. At present, English terminology is "broadly accepted" in scientific research at international level. Its terms have been adopted in many fields like politics, security, law, but their meaning and historical development may relate to events or contexts. The association of existing terms with new developments may be justified and considered legitimate due to various reasons contextually (convenience, particular/temporary needs etc.), while development of new terms to describe existing or recent contexts in another manner may be associated with language innovation.

For example, the relatively known term "neutrality" is often encountered in political discourse, and represents "the position of a state that is not party to a war...". At the same time, "neutralism" represents "not the declaration of neutrality, but rather the practice of showing an intention to remain neutral in any eventual conflict..." (Scruton, 2007, pp. 472-473).

Thus, the second qualitative assumption is that units of language, i.e., words or expressions, are not always representative for all concepts and all implications of adopting a concept. On the contrary, some concepts require thorough studies or a long list of clarifications to utilize them in certain contexts, which is not always practical or feasible. However, reducing concepts and background implications to units of language to communicate efficiently is a typical practice and does not always include all implications or associations. Neither it always excludes them. Argumentative discourses generally aim to convince audiences, mobilize, and motivate at individual level, but their effect may be short or long and secondary effects may be related to supporting or aiming community- or state-level decisions and actions. From a constructive communication setting perspective, the only alternative to a discourse dominated by excessive background clarifications on terms implies clarifications or further communication. Conflictual claims have been nuanced and instrumentalized in many historical periods and places around the globe. It must be noticed that nowadays instruments to influence, propagandize are much more advanced than three millennia ago, and their reach is larger, but at the same time the attention and readiness of societies to digest information has become more fragmented.

The flood of information, often changes to discourse and claims, countless attempts to redefine or weaponize history for political purposes instead of strictly maintaining it as a science that elegantly serves societies and helps to enrich science, may all increase motivation but also determine a decoupling of population segments from informational pressure sources as the words-concepts connections may represent a source of infinite interpretation.

The nowadays confrontation to control territories in *Historical Palestine* (term utilized in the same sense as "Palestine" was used in the Balfour Declaration, not subsequent definitions) is not new. The fact that Balfour Declaration utilized the term "Palestine" and not other terms like "Holy Land", "Promised Land", represents a historical record that counts as one of the important elements contributing

to the 1948 developments. Whether the term was correctly used or not or whether it was historically just or not do not represent research directions in this article. The nature and scope of conflicts evolved from ancient times of scattered communities to Persian, Roman and Ottoman empires, British and French colonial rule, followed by the two World Wars and the events from 1948. Therefore, history plays a major role and represents an important source of claims related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One of the latest concepts introduced in the conflict was related to the status of Jerusalem, a city related to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim interests. The Israeli Knesset enacted a law stating that "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel" (Woolliff, 2018) and immediately afterwards Mahmoud Abbas claimed that "eternal" "Jerusalem shall be the everlasting capital of the State of Palestine" (Wafa News Agency, 2018).

Given the history and diversity of the population, Jerusalem, a city which may lack completeness and unity from some observation angles five years after laws were enacted and other stances were adopted, such claims must be analysed in detail. The aspects related to relativity of historical claims are multiple. "History of human civilization" is sometimes considered to have started with the first humans or their precursors. First known inscriptions date back 30,000 years, which may be another important milestone or criterion to define the beginning of civilization. According to some nowadays religious texts or beliefs, the world may have begun six millennia ago. The Ancient Egyptian early dynastic period started more than five millennia ago, but Mesopotamian/Sumerian civilization preceded it, certainly in another form. The essential statement that all these claims are made based on limited data and that future discoveries may change parts or the entire understanding of a fundamental historical topic may be missing and considered self-evident.

While this is a legitimate assumption in scientific proceeds, extracting parts of scientific information and creating or fuelling popular myths that depart from the initial scientific evidence are problematic developments that cannot be simply addressed. Individual freedoms, the right to associate and share values and thoughts are just a few arguments that demand caution when assessing claims related to general interest topics. Irrespective of the legal status or enforcement at societal level of fundamental conventions like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in various countries, individual perceptions may diverge significantly in the same or different societies.

At the same time, the basic assumptions of the fourth industrial revolution, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), suggest that a winning technology (which is vast but ultimately it delivers a single/standardized/educated solution in a particular case at a precise moment) will replace billions of human perceptions and outcomes with the result of best learning, understanding, reasoning and interaction. These developments hint that opinion generalizations may compromise on diversity and are thus no universal claims, calling an opinion "representative" as well and new technologies may replace the option to diverge in opinions with answers standardized at a certain time. *Two important aspects are further considered with respect to the claims related to Historical Palestine:* a) the sensible relation between perceptions related to this territory and scientific historical data as it was presented by historians and b) historical evolution of claims related to political/administrative control of (not presence in) territory in Historical Palestine. The fact that the crusades organized mainly by European actors to "reclaim" land in Historical Palestine and the Middle East ended with the Ottoman Empire taking over the entire region for many centuries clearly indicates possible side effects of depleting resources in long confrontations.

CLAIMS SPACE AND UNITS OF ANALYSIS

Like the claims on eternity of Jerusalem by one side or the other, the political discourse has reached a strong tone. Besides its Christian theological meaning, "universalism" is defined in literature on political thought also as "the belief in universally valid principles of government and individual rights, usually founded in a theory of universal human nature" (Scruton, 2007, p. 712).

Scruton mentions universalist doctrines like international socialism, human rights, and Kant's moral law, opposed by "national particularism" and some types of conservatism.

Another related concept that may be utilized to characterize claims is that of "absolutes", associated by Scott John Hammond with "universals, objective principles, moral realism" (Hammond, 2009, p. 1).

The definition also refers to terms like "transcendent moral and political principles", "transcendent justice", "eternal and essential reality behind all things", "objective absolute principles", "law that is in itself and exists by nature", "divine wisdom", "right reason" etc., as mentioned in cited literature.

Scruton presents "particularism" (Scruton, 2007, p. 712) as the opposite of universalism. To this research, particularism may represent the characteristic of a claim that is not valid continuously in time although it pretends so by stating or omitting a time span, not valid continuously in the space mentioned and not representative for the entire population represented. Since political decision-making and certain government positions in Westphalian democratic states are determined through majorities, such systems are generally not concerned with universal-particular identification, but representativeness, which may be representative but not universal/absolute representations of political will. Furthermore, recent moves to better consider minorities' rights and dynamics in decentralization within states confirm that majority-based decisions represent a pillar, but not the entire solution to political endeavours.

The classification either as universal or as particular claim of various concepts from units of analysis presented below is not exhaustive, i.e., does not address the entire set of issues related to claims on Historical Palestine, but it aims to identify possible elements of claims that are either not mentioned or not considered. Furthermore, the research will examine whether inconsistencies in messages transmitted are present in the documentary sources analysed. Discourse analysis is employed to identify claims and the analysis of their elements will be essentially comparative.

The units of analysis are presented in *table 1*. All videos, transcripts represent primary sources, while newspaper articles are considered secondary sources, hence a possible bias of authors in representing primary information is considered. These include interviews with former Prime Minister of Israel Naftali Bennet, former and current Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, former Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal and current Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau Ismail Haniyeh. The materials selected have been considered sufficient to identify the most relevant and popular claims on Historical Palestine territories and Jerusalem that are mainly competing in similar discourse directions. The selection does not minimize moderate or less confrontational voices, it rather focuses on what has a higher potential to slow down a potential peace process.

Table 1: Selected primary and secondary sources for analysis of recent claims on Historical Palestine/Jerusalem
(units of analysis)

Nr.	(Main) Speaker	Title	Posted on (channel)	Length	Youtube link
V01	Naftali Bennet	Bennett on CNN: "First beat terror and then talk peace"	22.11.2012 (Naftali Bennet)	4 min 11 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2E1dhe_Z5k
V02	Naftali Bennet, Tim Sebastian	Bennett vs. Sebastian - Fighting for Israel in hostile interview	08.11.2015 (Naftali Bennet)	25 min 35 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heW_JCWMUNG
V03	Naftali Bennet, Mehdi Hassan	Israeli minister: The Bible says West Bank is ours – Up Front	24.02.2017 (Al Jazeera English)	16 min 06 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Png17wB_omA
V04	Naftali Bennet	Bennett on BBC Hard Talk defends Netanyahu & Jerusalem: "Palestine" is a Fake State	18.12.2017 (Naftali Bennet)	22 min 47 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9uaZd5GX5U
V05	Naftali Bennet, Christiane Amanpour	Bennett to CNN's Amanpour: You're voicing a lie	20.04.2022 (Naftali Bennet)	14 min 48 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zWyGevkGU8
V06	Benjamin Netanyahu	Benjamin Netanyahu: "God bless Jerusalem, the eternal, undivided capital of Israel"	14.05.2018 (France 24 English)	00 min 28 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXvJjsS77C4
V07	Benjamin Netanyahu	Netanyahu says Palestinians should "Abandon the Fantasy that They Will Conquer Jerusalem" (HBO)	15.05.2018 (VICE News)	05 min 08 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whJf2NsC-cc

Nr.	(Main) Speaker	Title	Posted on (channel)	Length	Youtube link
V08	Benjamin Netanyahu, Matt Crouch	Benjamin Netanyahu: Israel's FUTURE and The State of The Middle East Praise on TBN Israel	29.11.2022 (TBN Israel)	55 min 48 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRuzueJyPgU
V09	Benjamin Netanyahu, Jordan B Peterson	Does Israel have the right to exist? PM-Elect Benjamin Netanyahu EP 311	05.12.2022 (Jordan B. Peterson)	1h 28 min 10 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40CaMRLTyGI
V10	Benjamin Netanyahu, Piers Morgan	Piers Morgan vs Benjamin Netanyahu FULL Interview with Israeli Prime Minister	27.02.2023 (Piers Morgan Uncensored)	34 min 54 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O17MP7qE24
V11	Khaled Meshaal, Jamal Elshayyal	Talk to Al Jazeera – Khaled Meshaal: Struggle is against Israel, not Jews	07.05.2017 (Al Jazeera English)	24 min 45 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDf_DvTPQgQ
V12	Khaled Meshaal	Hamas senior leader Khaled Meshaal talks to MEE	25.05.2021 (Middle East Eye)	30 min 31 sec	https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestine-hamas-khaled-meshaal-movement-leads-struggle
A13	Khaled Meshaal, BestoonKhalid	Former Hamas leader discusses missile attacks, Middle East with Rudaw (Transcript, English)	07.04.2022	-	https://www.rudaw.net/english/interview/07042022 (secondary source)

Nr.	(Main) Speaker	Title	Posted on (channel)	Length	Youtube link
A14	Ismail Haniyeh	Future of Jerusalem: Hamas leader Ismail Haniya addresses Jerusalem	07.12.2017	30 min 05 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHPrD2dyVE
A15	Ismail Haniyeh, Authors: Dana Khraicheand Gwen Ackerman	Hamas Calls for Intifada Against Israel After Trump's Jerusalem Declaration	07.12.2017	-	https://time.com/5053804/hamas-intifada-jerusalem-israel-trump/ (secondary source)
A16	Ismail Haniyeh / Author: Aaron Boxerman	Hamas hails "victory in battle for Jerusalem" after onslaught on central Israel	12.05.2021	-	https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-hails-victory-in-battle-for-jerusalem-after-onslaught-on-central-israel/ (secondary source)
A17	Ismail Haniyeh / Author: Sally Ibrahim	Hamas chief says no guarantees to not escalate against Israel	30.05.2022	-	https://www.newarab.com/news/hamas-gives-no-guarantees-not-escalate-against-israel (secondary source)
A18	Ismail Haniyeh / Author: Jack Mukand	Hamas leader threatens Israel over "plans" for Temple Mount	14.12.2022	-	https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-political-chief-issues-warning-against-zionist-plans-for-temple-mount/ (secondary source)

The materials selected focus on public declarations or appearances of Israeli or Palestinian leaders in English language. Some of them are standard interviews from media networks, while V08 or V09 combine biographic elements with positions on subjects of public interest.

MAIN CLAIMS IDENTIFIED AND THEIR MAPPING IN THE UNIVERSAL-PARTICULAR SPACE

Sampling claims has been performed by repeatedly reading and watching the materials from *table 1*. In a primary phase, over 150 separate claims were selected, some of them representing similar instances of the same claim (basically the same claim in terms of context, direction, words, and concepts utilized). In a secondary stage, the claims were consolidated, and the ones that were repeated the most and are considered the basis for action by one camp or the other have been selected and presented below. The order of analysing claims is random.

As a general background for the claims, the terms "conflict" and "war" appear repeatedly and relate to a long situation. The definition provided by Scruton will be utilized to distinguish between "conflict" and "confrontation", the later being "the point of a conflict between two interests, when all conciliation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication and bargaining has been put aside, and where force is mutually recognized as the only remaining course of action" (Scruton, 2007, p. 127). It is considered that throughout the entire conflict, periods of confrontation have alternated with periods of attempts to bargain or seek mediation/arbitration that might have stopped confrontations. Likewise, the confrontational tone adopted in some speeches is specific to conflicts and was probably meant to both motivate own camp and try to discourage the opposite camp. Such a characteristic of (public) speech is admitted for example by Khaled Meshaal in source A13 (*table 1*): "... But some differences are being felt in the ways remarks are made, such remarks sometimes provoke some people, some remarks might be excessive or wrong – we admit that". Both camps, but apparently the Israeli representatives more, utilize terminology related to "terror" and "terrorism" in their public speeches. Given the possible legal implications of such terminology and other aspects, like for example the fact that the International Committee of the Red Cross considers that "from a legal perspective, there is no such thing as WAR AGAINST TERRORISM" (ICRC, 2015), a simple definition is considered: "intentional creation of widespread fear

and dismay by violence of a random and arbitrary kind” (Scruton, 2007, p. 685) (without any legal implication or suggestion whatsoever) as defined by Scruton. This conservative approach does not diminish any fact, be it claimed or confirmed, but allows focusing on the nature of claims rather than interpretation and any possible wrong framings.

CLAIMS RELATED TO HISTORY AND JERUSALEM

The claims related to the region’s history and population appear very often in the selected speeches of Israeli leaders and they can be considered a pillar of the argumentation related to the conflict with Palestinians. These have been identified basically in most of videos (V01, V02, V03, V04, V05, V07, V08, V09, V10).

The (continuous) presence since ancient times of Jews in Historical Palestine, Judea, Samaria is one of the claims associated with the 1948 proclamation of the State of Israel (considered by Palestinians to have determined an-Nakba): *“We have been here for thousands of years”* (V01), *“The land of Israel has always been Jewish for thousands of years, will always be Jewish”*, *“This has been our land for roughly 3800 years, before Islam came to the world”* (V03) etc. There are at least three aspects that require clarification vis-à-vis the presence of Jewish presence on the territory:

a) It is not specified what happened before 3800 years ago. Or before first year Anno Mundi. The claim that the land was barren before the 19th century Zionist Movement may be invoked also in this situation, but given the fact that it is utilized to demand international recognition of sovereignty over a territory, factual evidence must be convincing: some timelines are questioned by the interviewers, especially with Prime Minister Netanyahu and a clarification on why the period chosen is the most relevant may help;

b) Continuity of presence claimed in some statements is confused with political control over the territory, and fails to provide an accurate depiction of the *“presence”*: *“(Living here) roughly continued until 6-7 century after birth of Christ. The loss of our land occurred when the Arab conquests took place, they did something that no other conqueror... they started taking over the land of the Jewish farmer, they brought in military colonies that took over the land...”* (V09). Such a claim hints that the territory was not under continuous control of Jewish political leaders, which does not contradict the claim of continuous presence, but the claim *“The land*

of Israel has always been Jewish...” (V03) may require clarifications if a territory is to be considered as *“belonging”* to the ruling entity: individual, community or nation. If one does not consider a territory to belong to the ruling entity, and Israeli claims over the territory, then it is not clear what the basis for land reclamation is;

c) From a conservative perspective, it is assumed that a continuous presence can be the presence at any time of at least one person considered ancestor of post-1948 Israeli citizens. If this theoretical *“presence”* definition was acceptable, then the claim of presence might eventually be seen as universal. Furthermore, this would allow to claim a continuous presence, but not in a precise manner as to claim a particular cultural and civilizational exclusivity over a precise territory. The historical exclusivity of presence and/or control of the territory (only an entity present, not more), or at least the dominance over this territory would have to be demonstrated to raise a universal claim.

However, statements from the sources analysed clearly indicate that not even the strongest Israeli supporters of the *presence* claim support such a thesis. The speeches appear to encompass a sum of discourse arguments rather than a concise treaty demonstrating a continuous presence and domination of the area as compelling arguments in claiming universal sovereignty over the territory in question.

The rationale presented above *does not dismiss* Israeli claims, it *reiterates* questions about the universalism or particularism of claims on ownership/control, continuity of control that have been already raised also by Israeli leaders themselves. Besides the examples discussed, the fact that crusades took a couple of centuries, and finished with an at least temporary failure of achieving the central goal, is another testimony to the fact that military and political dominance was exerted over this territory by another entity. Likewise, some representatives of this entity may have decided or not to call some of these places their homeland: were there crusaders that became Palestinians, Arabs, Ottomans or joined a Jewish community? Confusions between presence in a territory and its control can be considered normal especially in political motivational speech, but state policies and international relations are generally requiring a more concise framework in order to produce lasting results.

Similarly, the Palestinians also cannot lay a universal claim related to historical control of this region such as to demand continuity and exclusivity on ruling

the territory. This is not necessarily due to the fact that some Israeli claims specify the Palestinians are not the "Philistines from the Bible" or that Greek population was present on this shore of the Mediterranean Sea in ancient times – not Palestinians (*"The Jewish tribes are united under King Saul. He is beaten by the Philistines who are not Palestinians, they are a Greek seafaring people on the coast and they choose a new King, David, who establishes the Kingdom of Israel. And it is united for 80 years and then it splits"* – V08), but there is clear evidence that other entities exercised control over disputed territories throughout history and either developed their civilizations here or utilized resources from this region to develop their civilizations in other parts of the world, despite Jewish or Palestinian presence.

From a modern society perspective, it is also important to analyse the claim that Palestinians were not present in Palestine in ancient times. Firstly, the question is whether nowadays Palestinians have to be the ones living in Historical Palestine for millennia: nowadays Palestinians may or may not be successors of ancient indigenous populations, Greeks or other sea peoples, of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Roman, Ottoman, European or any other ancestry. Every nation, including the modern Palestinian one, should be able to decide by itself how to utilize identity elements in organizing own population. In a space that prides itself to have hosted for centuries/millennia multi-ethnic and multi-religious populations (at least historic Lebanon, Syria, Iran), pushing the argument of recognizing a nation or its political rights only if ancient ancestry or personal geographic origin are demonstrated may be rather odd. Secondly, a characteristic of the Philistines mentioned in the Bible is that the Jewish population did not have good relations with them all the time. This will not be considered a factual argument, but from a lexical perspective, if somebody was present in Historical Palestine, was called Philistine and did not have good relations with Jewish groups, the possibility of being a Palestinian cannot be simply excluded. There was no significant claim identified in sources presenting Palestinian perspectives that question the presence of Israeli or Jewish ancestors in Historical Palestine. *The objections relate to other arguments, not the historical "presence"*.

Another important set of claims of historical nature formulated by Prime Minister Netanyahu imply that the territory of future Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory was barren land before the Zionist Movement: *"The Arabs who have conquered the land basically left it barren, they never made it their home. It was*

a barren land... practically it was an empty land ... and in the 19th century the idea of coming back next year in Jerusalem became a reality" (V09). Statements of visitors like Mark Twain and Arthur Stanley (Queen Victoria's British Court) are presented to audiences (V09). Such barren land concepts are not clear: there is no standard that specifies the minimum of constructions per unit of area to classify it as inhabited (the unit of area to be analysed is also unclear), some countries encompass large uninhabited deserts and cannot be dispossessed by their sovereignty over large uninhabited areas. Likewise, building skyscrapers is not a standard even nowadays, some countries do not have large cities or high buildings and their populations still call them homelands. There are third party materials that indicate human presence (Palestinian, Arab, Ottoman or other, Muslim, and Christian and Jewish) in the region. The Jewish Voice for Peace (the organization opposes Zionism) mentions in a document (Jewish Voice for Peace, 2017) that as of 1946, there were 29 towns and the three largest cities (Jerusalem, Haifa, and Jaffa) had 70,000 Palestinians and 30,000 Jews. A 2022 GIScience study estimated that at the end of 19th century, from 864 settlements identified, 697 were within the boundaries of Ottoman Palestine and had a population of approx. 335,000 (Zohar, 2022).

The main question of this research is related to the recent claims on *"Jerusalem as capital of Israel"*. The statement was and is connected to Israel's law from 2018 that, among others, proclaimed Jerusalem as capital of Israel, receiving confirmation of the US through American Embassy relocation to Jerusalem in 2018. Countries like Australia followed the US but dropped the recognition in 2022, asking settlement of the dispute on Jerusalem peacefully (NPR, 2022).

The claims that provoked reactions from Palestinians and more representatives of international community can be summarized by Prime Minister Netanyahu's statement at the inauguration of US Embassy in Jerusalem back in 2018: *"May the opening of this Embassy in this city spread the truth far and wide and may the truth advance a lasting peace between Israel and all our neighbours... God bless the United States of America and God bless Jerusalem, the eternal undivided capital of Israel"* (V06).

The "eternity" claim may be derived from or connected to the eternity of Jewish land analysed previously, which in the social imaginary of the nowadays Israeli population may be an absolute conviction. From such a perspective, the interruptions in presence of Jewish kingdoms in Historical Palestine may be viewed

as an exceptional and temporary state. But other entities that governed territory in this region or the entire region may hypothetically claim the same. In all cases, there is no historical data to claim the past part of eternity in a universal manner, and the future part is not assessed in this study.

In the materials analysed, the Palestinians do not appear to mirror Israeli claims by demanding similar "eternity", they focus on mentioning evictions of current generation, parents and grandparents. This does not imply that there are not documentary sources related to their presence, but the fact that claims of this type are not pushed in public speeches.

The "undivided" status of Jerusalem is an argument that requires no analysis: for most of its existence in past two millennia, Jerusalem was divided if one considers at least the multiple religious representations in this city. If the division referred only to physical barriers without consideration on political or administrative control, walls or fences may have also been present. The declarative exclusion of Palestinians from Jerusalem or the opposite, the exclusion of Israelis by Palestinians, can be assessed as confrontational in nowadays conditions. The Israeli claim goes further and renders US recognition as only marginally relevant: *"Recognition (by US) of Jerusalem as capital is not the source of Jerusalem being our capital, that's a given. Jerusalem is the Jewish capital much more than London is for Britain..."* (V04).

The position prompted harsh declarations from Hamas leadership, which, despite their toughness, can be assessed as responses to Israeli pressure (*"It is time to tell the Palestinians: abandon the fantasy of destroying Israel, abandon the fantasy that you will conquer Jerusalem"* V07) rather than own initiatives: *"Our message is very clear...: Jerusalem is one, is united, no East or West Jerusalem. It is Palestinian, Arabic and Muslim and is the capital of the State of Palestine and I say today that Palestine is also united and together from the Sea to the River. It does not accept any splitting up or two states or any other state. Palestine is for us and Jerusalem is all for us"* A14. Despite the universal claims on Jerusalem, both sides seem to maintain a sense of reality and besides absolute claims also acknowledge the existence of the other and a possibility to reach an agreement. For example, Hamas leader acknowledges in 2017 the possibility to reach an agreement based on 1967 borders, if Jerusalem is Palestine's capital and the right to return is accepted (V11). However, a Palestinian state that would encompass the West Bank is constantly rejected by Israeli leaders in the sources analysed, but they also agree that Palestinians are present and a solution has to be found.

In V09 it is mentioned that the 1917 Balfour Declaration declared readiness of the British government to favour the establishment of a "national home", not a state. Prime Minister Netanyahu continues by claiming that the British then stopped migration from Europe and the Zionist Movement had to negotiate further with the US. He holds Theodor Herzl to be a modern Moses and mentions that Herzl tried to negotiate with the Ottomans but failed (V09).

Prime Minister Netanyahu's claim that Zionism begins with Abraham (V08) is confirming what other authors claim: relocation of Jewish population in Historical Palestine did not begin or was not initially considered shortly before 1917 or 1948. A 2011 article hints that Israel being a colonist entity is rather a myth: *"...the Jews were already re-establishing their presence independently in their Land well before the British and French dismantled the Ottoman Empire"* (Gold, 2011, p. 84). Prime Minister Netanyahu also mentions that Israeli employed a socialist economy before relatively recent reforms.

CLAIMS RELATED TO RIGHTS, LEGITIMACY

The notion of state, i.e., Palestinian state, appears relatively often in the videos of Israeli leaders, but not in a unitary manner: sometimes Gaza is presented as a Palestinian State (V01), sometimes it is suggested that Jordan would be a Palestinian State (V03) as well and in many instances the idea of a Palestinian State is dismissed (V04). The claim *"not everybody in the world that wants a state gets one"* (V03) might be a valid claim for a finite period or particular situation, but at the same time nowadays Israel is the proof that some who want a state get one.

Most Hamas leaders' claims are different in both scope and representation of the conflict. The nowadays presence of Israelis or their ancestors is not questioned. Hamas presents itself as a patriotic movement, a liberation movement within an Islamic frame of reference and belonging to the *"School of the Brotherhood"* (V11). The right of (Palestinian State) existence is generally not waved very often. However, the right to resistance is mentioned (V12).

The core Palestinian claims identified in the sources analysed relate to legitimacy: legitimacy of *"occupation, aggression"* (V11). Khaled Meshaal explains that the war is not religious, not directed towards the Jews but the *"Israeli occupier"* (V11), raising questions on the religious character of the conflict. While religious components are present on both sides and may differ in terms of claims related

to or determined by religion, it is certainly not the central component of the conflict. Israeli leaders from analysed interviews mention religion and insist on the role of the Bible especially in the Western Civilization, whereas Palestinian leaders claim, for example, that *“Palestine is the cause of the Ummah”* (V11).

Both camps claim national aspirations in the conflict, it must be acknowledged that the notion of state has many and various implications through the globe, and that both causes are supported by third parties, be it, only temporary or on long term. The type or volume support are also not unitary or comparable for the two sides.

Related to the concept of *“peace”*, the positions vary. Israeli leaders claim for example: *“Gaza does not look for long-term peace”* (V01), *“there will never be peace based on a divided Jerusalem”* (V04), *“fight against Iran and achieve peace”* (V03), *“peace will be achieved by strength”* (V03), *“the moment they lay down their arms (neighbours), there will be peace”* (V03), *“you do not make peace with the weak, you make peace with the strong”* (Israel) (V08) etc. Palestinian leaders mention repeatedly that multiple religions lived in peace throughout this territory historically (V11, A13). The other type of claims is that both the Oslo Accords (V11) and the 2002 Arab peace initiative (V12) did not lead anywhere: the first is now being rejected by the Palestinians (Israel also appears to signalize discontent with the Oslo Accords – V02) and the second one was *“buried”* by Israel and the US (V12).

Therefore, it is retained that Israel’s conditions for peace gravitate around retaining the West Bank, retaining Jerusalem entirely, disarming of neighbours, Iran’s peaceful approach (which is a circular problem as Iran is mainly supporting Palestine and demands a resolution to the conflict among others). On the other hand, *Hamas also asks sovereignty over Jerusalem, sovereignty of the West Bank and the recognition of the right to return*. The main characteristics of the claims related to Jerusalem are the fact that the city is very important in the social imaginary of both sides and secondly, they can also be analysed from the perspective of *“maximalist demands”*, useful to obtain concessions in possible future negotiations. However, all other conditions appear to be basically not negotiable.

The documentary sources analysed do not appear to mention the issue of damages and claims related to damages. However, this appear to have been considered, at least in some instances, both regionally and internationally (Heller, 2006), (UNGA, 2006), (B’Tselem, 2017). From the opposite perspective, Israel

appears to have prepared a claim for compensation from other Arab countries, like Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, and Iran (The Times of Israel, 2019). The article mentions that the Palestinian Authority would have asked \$ 100 bln. in compensation for assets left behind by Arab population that left nowadays territory of Israel. Further claims are listed in *table 2*.

Table 2: Summary of universal and particular claims identified in documentary sources

Claim no.	Claim	Universal/particular	Comment
C1	Palestinian presence since ancient times	Possibly universal	Competing claims, not mutually exclusive
C2	Jewish presence since ancient times	Possibly universal	
C3	Jewish or Palestinian exclusive or continuous control over Historical Palestine territory	Particular	Not supported by historic records
C4	<i>“The land of Israel has always been Jewish”</i>	Particular	It depends on the definition of <i>“always”</i> , among others
C5	Philistines are not Palestinians	Particular	This is basically for the Palestinians to say in the first place if self-determination principle is considered
C6	Historical Palestine was barren land in 19 th century	Particular	Relative statement, cannot be assessed precisely
C7	Jerusalem eternal undivided capital of Israel	Particular	Competing claims
C8	Jerusalem one, united, capital of Palestine	Particular	
C9	Oslo Accords not relevant for both parties	Possibly universal	Both sides appear to reject their benefits or role
C10	We will find a way to make peace, it’s going to happen (V03)	Possibly universal	Not clearly defined

Claim no.	Claim	Universal/ particular	Comment
C11	Fight against Iran and achieve peace in the region	Particular	-
C12	Israel surrounded by Hezbollah, Daesh, Hamas, Syria, Iran (V04)	Particular	There is also Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, other countries
C13	Instability in the Middle East has nothing to do with Jerusalem or Israel (V04)	Particular	
C14	What everyone in this area cares about is how to block, how to check Iran from growing into a Shi'a empire from Teheran to the Middle East (V04)	Particular	Not necessarily, Palestinians definitely not
C15	We pulled back to the 1967 lines in Gaza about 15 years ago (V05)	Particular	Conditional, partial, interviewer provided counterarguments. Besides, 1967 lines do not refer only to Gaza
C16	These are not occupied territories; they are territories in dispute (V05)	Particular	Various international organizations and countries, Palestinians, call them occupied territory
C17	Iran is 50 times more dangerous than North Korea (V10)	Particular	-
C18	President Trump has delivered a message to the Palestinian people: the two-state solution is over (Saeb Erekat A18)	Particular	-

FINAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

The current research analysed a series of claims related to "Jerusalem as capital of Israel", along with a series of historical or related claims. The main purpose of the analysis was to establish the universal/absolute character to identified claims. In some cases, a rationale for establishing the type of claim was provided.

Most of the primary sources selected contain video interviews with either Israeli or Palestinian political leaders. The level of representativeness of statements and claims for various groups has not been analysed. Only the most relevant claims for the subject selected were presented.

There is no reason for analysing Israeli claims first and Hamas claims subsequently. However, it is to be mentioned that Israel's decision to codify in a law the unity and completeness of Jerusalem as Israel's capital generated many media reports even though Israeli and Palestinian stances on this matter were known. The analysis of selected videos' popularity is not conclusive, as it might be influenced by the popularity of the publishing platform and size of its audience. Background events at the time of interviews or declarations may also affect the popularity of media reports on claims related to Jerusalem as capital of one or the other party engaged in the conflict.

The language utilized by both Israeli and Palestinian leaders is specific to a conflictual situation. The stances rarely present systematic approaches to one of the longest and most complex modern conflicts, they generally encompass a sum of arguments, be they related or not, pieces of frameworks, reports, treaties, always meant to underline the central idea selected. Furthermore, transitions between factual representations, myths, wishes, spiritual or moral values, description of perceptions, maximal demand formulations and other types of argumentations are very often. Many claims can eventually be characterized as well-known, broadly accepted but the claims that can be categorized as universal/absolute, in the sense defined in this research, are very few. *A notable aspect is the imprecise use of notions like presence in Historical Palestine and exertion of political power over the territory.*

Jerusalem as Israel's capital is a concept that may be associated to what Prime Minister Netanyahu calls a shift in policy: *instead of facing the Palestinians (V09), one could go around them and reach to other Arab nations in the region.* This led allegedly to the success of Abraham Accords, among others, and whether it will deliver success or not it remains to be seen. *Palestinians' claims related to Jerusalem are part of their stance in the conflict, but do not resort to historical claims in the same way Israeli do, they focus more on the past century.* In all cases, *despite Israeli and Palestinian claims, Jerusalem is not united, has not been for the last two millennia, but in terms of eternity, it can hope to survive this conflict in a way or another.*

Israel prides itself of being the fastest growing technological power in the world, and this is extended also to economic throughout. However, despite employment of latest technologies and weapons, Israel also increased the punishment for stone-throwing up to 20 years back in 2015. Many terms can have different meanings depending on the context. Public opinions are generally based on both personal experiences and information sources and our 21st century reality may continue to challenge our understanding of concepts new and old at the same time.

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