

# Examination of historical context



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

A negotiated settlement to conflict in the Middle East has eluded diplomats for decades. Striving for a lasting peace in this region is a complicated proposition that involves many regional and global players. Forces such as nationalism and religious identity combine to make reaching a negotiated settlement to hostilities an elusive prize to win. The stumbling blocks to settlement deals are many. Reparations to Palestinians displaced by the annexation of their land, relocation of Jewish settlers and access to scarce resources are just a few of issues that make negotiations difficult. But above all these, the question of the status of Jerusalem is perhaps the most complex and intractable. Placing this modern problem in a historical context can help us to understand why this city is at the heart of any talk of Middle East peace.

The establishment of Jerusalem as the capital of a united Jewish state is a great source of nationalistic pride for secular and religious Jews alike. David the King made it his seat of power and it remained as such for nearly 1, 000 years. In addition to this national pride felt for this place, the sacred nature of Jerusalem binds the Jews to his place as well. Jerusalem was the site of the first temple built by Solomon. The remaining wall of the second, reconstructed temple still stands and is considered a sacred site for modern orthodox Jews. For reasons both nationalistic and religious, Jerusalem is a vital place for Jewish identity. This is clear from the sacred writing found in the Nev'im where it states, " Rejoice for Jerusalem and be glad for her, All you who love her! Join in her Jubilation, All you who mourned over her [for]...I will extend to her Prosperity like a stream, The wealth of nations like a wadi in flood." (Isaiah 66: 10, 12). It may be this fervor for controlling Jerusalem that led the Israelis to declare Jerusalem as the capital of their new nation in <https://assignbuster.com/examination-of-historical-context/>

1949, just two years after agreeing that it should be a divided, internationally controlled heritage city. In 1980, Israel did away with any partitioning, declaring Jerusalem a unified city.

Christians look with a religious attachment to Jerusalem because so much of the life of Jesus Christ occurred there. Sacred sites such as the hill of Golgotha and the Garden of Gethsemane have long attracted pilgrims from all over the world. The attachment to Jerusalem took a decidedly political turn for Christians after its annexation by Muslims. In 1095, at the urging of Pope Urban II, Christians took up arms to take back lands lost to Muslims. This originally began on the Iberian Peninsula but soon the ideal of crusading against Muslims spread to the Holy Land (Cantor). Jerusalem was conquered and remained Christian for nearly 100 years. Ironically, the occupation of Christian forces was disastrous for the local Jewish population. They were exiled or slaughtered as part of the conquest. The event of these crusades resonated to this day. Muslim perception of Christian aggression in the region invariably draws comparisons to the crusades of the past. Modern Christians, especially of the evangelical and fundamentalist variety hold fast to the idea that Jews or Christians should control Jerusalem due to their connection to Jesus.

A final historical context that must be added to Jerusalem is that of its sacred significance to Islam. Native Palestinians were converts to Islam, establishing sacred shrines and mosques. Muhammad is said to have descended into heaven from the Dome of the Rock, thus making Jerusalem a key part of Muslim end of times theology. In the past, Muslims, Jews and Christians worshiped side by side in Jerusalem. Each had their own places of worship and temples. But they never integrated into a united community (Hourani).

After the outrages and battles of the crusades, this delicate balance was lost and remains elusive to this very day.

#### Works Cited

Cantor, Norman F., and Norman F. Cantor. *The Civilization of the Middle Ages: a Completely Revised and Expanded Edition of Medieval History, the Life and Death of a Civilization*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993. Print.

Hourani, Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap of Harvard UP, 1991. Print.

Tanakh = [Tanakh] : *The Holy Scriptures : the New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985. Print.