Cultural Dialog and Religious Tolerance: A Truism Or A Fantasy? The Holy Sites and the Clash Of Politics in the Middle East

*[1]M. Obeidat, [2]Shadi S. Neimneh, [3]Nazmi T. al-Shalabi, & Amneh K. Abussamen
[1]Hashemite University Zarqa-Jordan
obeidat@hu.edu.jo
[2]Hashemite University, Jordan
[3]Hashemite University, Jordan
Received date: 2017-07-21 Accepted date: 2017-10-30

Abstract

This article looks into the relationship between Islam and the West, focusing on the political barriers to a true dialog between Muslims and Arabs on the one hand and the West on the other one and locating this troubled relation in its historical context. In the Middle East, it is assumed, religious tension and political turmoil are intertwined. However, the present debacle in Western–Islamic relations is, we argue, first and foremost political rather than religious. The foreign policy of the U.S. in the Middle East is foremost among the issues that aggravate, and constantly exacerbate Western–Islamic relations. It is our contention that a true, mutual cultural understanding would significantly contribute to sociopolitical and religious tolerance between Muslim Arabs and the West and thus mitigate the threat of terrorism. By contrast, it is the absence of this authentic cultural dialog that is not allowing for familiarizing each party with the thought of the other and thus paving the way for more terrorism and prejudice. The recent turmoil in Jerusalem over the religious sites in al-Quds (in the summer of 2017) is but one instance of such political and cultural gaps hindering real communication and bringing about more violence. The conclusion draws attention to the nature of dialog between Israelis and Palestinians regarding the current conflict, whose roots are historical, suggesting that a political compromise would allow for a peaceful coexistence among the different religions in the region.

Keywords: Cultural Dialog; Middle East; West; Islam; al-Aqsa Mosque; Israelis; Palestinians; U.S. Foreign Policy

INTRODUCTİON: ISLAM AND THE WEST

The relationship between Islam and the West was first troubled by biblical texts pejorative of the Arabs, and the rise of Islam in the seventh century aggravated this negative view of Arabs and Muslims (Obeidat, 1998, p. 9). Although the magnificent Muslim civilization in Spain mitigated this negative image, Western fears of Europe's Latin Christianity being caught by the pincer of Muslim Spain in the West and Levantine Islam from the East gave rise to the Crusades that sought to drive a wedge between the two flanks of Islam by seizing the Holy land and, thereby, neutralizing the Islamic threat. The Crusades, virulent religious wars spanning two centuries, gave rise to reviling images of Islam and its prophet that persisted for two more centuries only to be aggravated still further by the dreaded Turkish threat. A respite came with growing trade links between Europe and the Levantine provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Wealth accruing from sound, effective trade agreements with the alien Ottoman power facilitated a more open–minded outlook. Mutual material benefits led to a more respectful understanding of the dreaded Muslim adversary and a growing interest in its heritage. Thus, mutual material interest, based on equity, forms a sound basis for Western–Islamic understanding (Hitti, 1962, p.52).

Momentary, localized disruptive factors should not be allowed to ruffle a would–be strategic, long–term understanding between the two sides, or cancel present, past or future improvements in relations. The Crusades arose, we are told, because of Christian pilgrims falling victim to local bandits who infested the Holy Land due to a local breakdown in government (Kedar, 1984, p.45). American reiterations of Medieval European polemics against Islam arose from feelings running high due to the Barbary Wars. Piracy, festering due to weak governmental control and administration in the Barbary States (of North Africa), and in the Persian Gulf, also reflected adversely on Islam.

*Sorumlu Yazar: M. Obeidat, Professor of American literature at the Hashemite University, Jordan, obeidat@hu.edu.jo, P.O. Box 13115, Tel: 0962797002049

Both the Crusades and the Barbary Wars show that Western–Islamic relations are endemically brittle, fragile, and liable to be shattered by pebbles of lawlessness against Western individuals, property, or interest (Rejeb, 1981, pp. 47-75). This is as true today as it ever was. What is direly needed today if other Crusades, or Barbary Wars, or indeed our contemporary onslaughts on Islamic "terrorism" are to be avoided, is the establishment of an international Western–Islamic body with its own active mechanisms that deal with any serious infringements of Western–Islamic relations.

The most potent factor bolstering sounder Western–Islamic relations is that of internal change in both sides making for a more constructive confluence between the two. The Romantic Movement in Europe, politically and socially as well as artistically speaking, was in the nature of a revolution against classicism's reactionary patterns of thought and attitude. Age–old polemical views against Islam incubated within such reactionary patterns (Hitti, 1962, p.17). This is reminiscent of Said's Orientalism (1978), which is a term that explores the long-overlooked connections between the Western imperial endeavor and the Western culture that both reflected and reinforced it, and examines the West's patronizing representations of "The East" and the societies and peoples who inhabit the places of the Middle East, Asia and North Africa. According to Said (1978), Orientalism (the Western scholarship about the Muslim World) is inextricably intertwined with the Western powers that produced it.

The anti-Muslim stance became greater in the media in the post 9/11 era, and negative stereotypes and prejudiced reporting were frequently found within the mainstream of the Western media. Academics with genuine knowledge of Islam and the Muslims were increasingly underrepresented on television and radio broadcasts. Islamophobic language and symbolism witnessed a massive increase in use.

The Romantic revolution went against all that reactionary establishmentarianism upheld, including anti–Islamic polemicism. On the other, the Islamic, side of the divide, the "liberal age" in the Arab world was contemporaneous with European Romanticism. The Arab liberal age is generally held to have begun with Napoleon's campaign in Egypt, which, however, should not be viewed in an entirely negative light. The aftermath of Napoleon's invasion saw the introduction of European scientific, medical, educational, archaeological, and technical innovations into the Arab Muslim world, such as the Arabic printing press, which Napoleon brought with him to Egypt. Internal reform of thought and attitude and/or change in outlook contemporaneous with one another in both the Western and the Islamic worlds similar to European Romanticism and Arab liberalism, make far more constructive Western–Islamic relations (Obeidat, 1998, pp. 20-26).

In the absence of such conveniently simultaneous changes in both sides that would lead to better relations between them, sustained and effective public relations campaigns are currently required to acquaint all parties with patterns of political and social thought of each other. The Western world needs to know how the Arab and Islamic street is thinking and what its grievances against the West are. Such grievances have been provoked to such horrendous extents as to lead to the present outbreaks of terrorism. The Arab/Islamic Street is also in dire need to be acquainted with Western political and social institutions and their patterns of thought. Adequate cultural exchange is the first step toward a sociopolitical settlement and religious tolerance in the Middle East.

In fact, the religious factor, per se, should be relegated to a second place of priority: The present debacle in Western–Islamic relations is, first and foremost, political rather than religious. Decades of political failures and lack of a real solution to the Palestinian issue have been responsible for religious fanaticism, extremism, and terrorism. But it is vital to hold Islamic-Judaic-Christian conferences, seminars and forums to discuss differences between the three faiths and ways and means of finding common ground. Nevertheless, the danger here is that such meetings may wander into mazes of abstruse and esoteric theological disputation, which would remain largely exercises in academic theology. The crucial issue that cries out to be addressed is the political one: The foreign policy of the U.S. in the Middle East is foremost among the issues that aggravate, and constantly exacerbate Western–Islamic relations (Obeidat, 1998, p. 133).

According to UNESCO, intercultural dialog is the "equitable exchange and dialog among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based on mutual understanding and respect and the equal dignity of all cultures is the essential prerequisite for constructing social cohesion, reconciliation among peoples and peace among nations" ("Intercultural Dialog", par.1). Additionally, this cultural dialog "encompasses interreligious dialog" with a special focus…on a series of good practices to encourage cultural pluralism at the local, regional and national level as well as regional and sub-regional initiatives aimed at discouraging all expressions of extremism and fanaticism and highlighting values and

principles that bring people together. (“Intercultural Dialog”, par.2).

The context of dialog between the East and the West is a case, and between Palestinians and Israelis is another completely different one. Occupation is what makes dialog unpractical and absurd. In Nasser et al book (2011) titled Education, Media, and Dialog under Occupation: The Case of Palestine and Israel, the authors see that “despite terrible loss and very different positions, dialog becomes possible” (p.187). However, the authors continue, as if contradicting their previous thought, that “yet, each time the violence escalates, one wonders how individuals on either side of these terrible lines can possibly (re) engage” in the dialog (p.190). The problem in Palestine is far more complicated due to the Islamic sites of Jerusalem, particularly al-Aqsa Mosque, which the Israelis claim to be their Temple Mount. A political solution to the question of Palestine and Israel would definitely allow for more religious tolerance whereby all religions can be freely practiced in the region. In other words, "political" compromise would essentially aid in effecting religious harmony in the region. The case of Palestine is just one instance of the troubled intersection between religion and politics in the Middle East.

Al-Aqsa or the Temple Mount? Detectors and Turnstiles at al-Aqsa Compound

The clash over “the holy sites in Jerusalem” has been raised “on the eve of the British invasion of Palestine in 1917” (Omar, 2017, p.69). Things became more complicated over al-Aqsa mosque because “it was the first time a non-Muslim power would control the holy sites since the end of the crusades” (p.69). For all Muslims, Palestine has a special place in their collective conscience due to the highly respected position of al-Aqsa. According to the “Islamic Concern for Palestine,” it has been venerated throughout the Muslim world as the third holiest site of Islam. It was to this [al-Aqsa] that the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him, made his Night Journey from the Masjid al - Haram in Makkah. It was from this site that he, peace and blessings be upon him, ascended on the Miraj, his journey through the heavens to his Lord. (2000, p.3)

Specifically, “al-Aqsa Mosque is located in the southeast corner of the Old City of Jerusalem, covering one-sixth of its area” and is “also referred to as al-Haram Ash-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary)” which comprises the entire area within the compound walls (a total area of144,000 m2) - including all the mosques, prayer rooms, buildings, platforms and open courtyards located above or under the grounds - and exceeds 200 historical monuments pertaining to various Islamic eras” (Abdul-Hadi, 2013, p.4).

Fortunately, UNESCO has “adopted the Jordanian definition of al-Aqsa Mosque…passed in October 2016” which is the same as Abdul-Hadi’s definition above (Omar, 2017, p.72). In Islam, “all these buildings and courtyards enjoy the same degree of sacredness since they are built on Al-Aqsa’s holy grounds” which are “not exclusive to the physical structures allocated for prayer” (Abdul-Hadi, 2013, p.4). Consequently, Muslims believe that they receive “the same reward for praying anywhere within the Mosque including the open courtyards” (p.4).

The most recent violation of human rights by Israel occurred on “Sunday, July 16, 2017” when “Muslims were surprised by Israeli vehicles offloading metal gates and Israeli personnel setting-up metal detectors…in front of three main gates of al-Aqsa Mosque, namely: al-Asbat, al-Nazir and al-Silsilah, while other gates remained closed” (Omar, 2017, p.75). It is the miserable reality that the Muslim inhabitants of the occupied Holy City of al-Quds (Jerusalem) have been denied a centuries-old religious right to enter al-Aqsa Mosque, to perform prayers as all the Muslims worldwide do! Closing Al-Aqsa was crucial because “it was the first time ever that al-Aqsa Mosque itself entered the circle of military action” (Omar, 2017, p.74). Even worse, the call to prayers (al-Athan) was prevented from being executed by an Israeli law along with banning “Friday prayer for the first time since the occupation” (Omar, 2017, p.74).

Lately, Palestinians, in turn, prepared for demonstrations over new security measures at the holy site in occupied Jerusalem, a week after a deadly shooting at the holy compound that triggered upheavals. "Entry to the Old City and Temple Mount will be limited to men aged 50 and over. Women of all ages will be permitted," a police statement articulated. Border police units have been positioned in the area and police hovered into Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods in and around the walled Old City where the holy site is located. And Israel's security cabinet stipulated that Israeli police would decide when to remove metal detectors and turnstiles installed at the compound last week-- a saddening situation to Palestinians who view such measures as collective punishment and a violation of “the status quo” that means “literarily accepting Israel as a complete sovereign

over the holy sites in Jerusalem" (Omar, 2017, p.75).

In turn, in a TV interview, Palestinian member of the Knesset Mohammad Barakeh told Palestinian leaders in Jerusalem that the Israeli security cabinet's decision is a "political game… in order to liberate Prime Minister Netanyahu from any responsibilities by implying that this is not a political, but a security concern, and the truth is that this is a political decision."Israel's calculations were "that the reaction of the Palestinians would be to accept the new facts, or at least to enter the mosque and then start a diplomatic battle at the UNESCO or the UN" (Omar, 2017, p.75). Nevertheless, "the Palestinian reaction was more surprising. Members of the Waqf and the public refused to enter al-Aqsa Mosque under these new procedures, and declared a sit-in in front of al-Asbat Gate" (Omar, p.75). They refused Israel's measures and promised to continue to hold prayers outside the compound until the barriers are removed. It was "the first time since the occupation, and for two weeks" that "Israel was the party trying to convince people to enter the mosque" (Omar, p.75). Israel has not learnt yet that "disturbing the situation of al-Aqsa Mosque could lead to very serious consequences" (Omar, p.70). Muslims' determination against Israel's violations "exposed Israel as an illegal occupying force that denies the basic right of Muslims to enter their holy site freely" and "put Israel in a position where it looked like a sole unjustifiably dominating power, instead of being a partner in administrating the mosque" (Omar, p.76).

Similar to other barriers, the ones at al-Aqsa Mosque Compound are not expected to beget any goodness. Rather, they are meant to impose more restrictions on the native Palestinians to stop them from praying there, conducting debates over Islam, the Prophet (Peace Be upon Him) and the Holy Qur'an. Thus, they undoubtedly increase the levels of extremism and fundamentalism that are the fruit of the pressure put on Palestinians to impact their control of this holy place. Certainly, "The issue of the holy sites in Jerusalem … showed that, no matter how long this issue lies dormant, it remains one of, if not the most, crucially controversial issues in the Middle East" (Omar, 2017, p.80).

As regards control, these barriers are also meant to shift the control from the Palestinians to the Israelis, which creates something new on the ground and is certain to escalate the situation that is becoming worse and worse. It is not in the interest of the Israelis to escalate this situation whose consequences are unpredictable. Just as the Israelis have supporters, so do Palestinians and Arabs. Al-Aqsa is also honored by Christians who have joined hands with the Muslims and have been steadfast to keep it protected against the settlers. Therefore, the Israelis' troubles may spark a fierce religious war whose results are unexpected. They need to learn that "these 144,000 m2 could be a key to destabilizing the whole region" and "that confronting al-Aqsa Mosque has a very high price" which "Israel simply cannot pay"
(Omar, 2017, p.80).

To evade such a fierce war, the Israelis should understand the Arabs and Palestinians' cultures. This knowledge of cultures is probably more important than knowing languages that facilitate communication. This type of knowledge helps the Israelis with making the right choices that are not conducive to creating troubles either for themselves or for the Arabs who are their neighbors. Such right choices may ease tension and make it easy for the Israelis to make peace with the Palestinians, and, thus, put an end to this ceaseless conflict which has been impacting not only the Israelis and Palestinians but also the Arabs, Muslims, and many world countries. A choice of this sort can be made only when the Israelis know well the Arabs and Palestinians' cultures that hold al-Aqsa to be their top priority.

Emphasizing the sanctity of this site, these cultures hold its protection to be the duty of each Muslim. This protection may necessitate that Muslim side and if it does , all Muslims will be pleased to die for it. This keenness of Muslims on sacrificing their lives for al-Aqsa parallels the Israelis' anxiety to survive. The Israelis' learning about this situation is certain to make them reconsider their choices that have been giving rise to so many unnecessary deaths. However, Israelis' intransigence, chauvinism, and selfishness had taken many innocent lives.

As far as selfishness and intransigence are concerned, Israelis have been living luxuriously in territories that are occupied and not theirs, but land owners, Palestinians, have been living miserably. It is ironic that the Israelis are living their lives to the full, but land owners have been denied everything, namely life, freedom, water, healthy food, and security.

It is equally ironic that world countries have been condoning all that the Israelis do as if they were doing the Palestinians justice. These countries' attitudes render them as selfish and their peoples limit themselves to staring at the enormities perpetrated by the Israelis against Palestinians rather than trying to denounce them. Most countries are blind to what the Palestinians need (i.e.

freedom). Despite this misbehavior, they contradict themselves by glorifying human rights and yet denying Palestinian rights. They are like the Israelis who are anxious to help their compatriots enjoy their rights, but when dealing with Palestinians they fabricate new ways of divesting them of their rights depending on the support offered by the USA and other allies. The USA with its Western allies stops the world community from condemning Israel. Never has the USA so far allowed any resolution by the Security Council against Israel to pass. This situation has been responsible for the Israelis' expanding and building thousands of settlements, imprisoning thousands, detaining thousands for no reason, depleting the natural resources of the occupied territories, and trampling on the unalienable right of survivors to live. This situation has been also underlying the Israelis' being intransigent, determined not to reckon with the resolutions of the UN and the International Security Council, and insistent on not accepting any peace initiative with Palestinians.

The influence of this Israeli behavior has been far-reaching. To take an example, the USA is thousands of miles away from Palestine. In spite of that, it has been impacted by its supporting Israel. Remarking about that, Paul Findley holds, in "Reflecting on Our Relationship with Israel," that "[n]ine-eleven would not have occurred if the US government had refused to help Israel humiliate and destroy Palestinian society" (2002, par.1). He adds that "the catastrophe could have been prevented if any US president during the past 35 years had had the courage and wisdom to suspend all US aid until Israel withdrew from the Arab land seized in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War"(par.1). Findley makes it clear that America's support for Israel that has been humiliating Palestinians and destroying their society has led to the calamity of nine-eleven, the destruction of the twin towers in New York. He also lays the blame on American presidents whose hesitation has forbidden them to suspend the aid extended to Israel until it has drawn from the territories seized. This argument is true of American presidents whose fear of the US lobby for Israel has been contributing to the Israelis' occupying Palestine and perpetrating violent assaults against Palestinians under the pretext of fighting against terrorism. It has become quite clear that Israel uses this made up excuse to justify its occupation of Palestine. Unfortunately, the USA presidents have so far been confused as to how to deal with Israel that has been pampered by their predecessors despite its "violations of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the precepts of all major religious faiths" (Findley, 2002, par.5).

Up to now, there has been no political will in Washington. When there is a will, there will be a way out. The best thing for American presidents to do is to be open and daring. They should address Americans and tell them frankly about the role of the US in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This role has been concealed from the public and so has been the American government's massive support for Israel. This concealment has doe the USA harm. Arguing in support of this view, Findley maintains, "Once beloved worldwide, the US government finds itself reviled in most countries" (par.5). He goes on to say, the "worldwide anger against American policy [has reached] the boiling point" (par.10). This policy, he adds, is "made in Israel, not Washington" (par.14). Such a policy that is not home- made does not do Americans good. Made outside of the US, this policy meets the needs of the Israelis, not Americans. It does not liberate Americans, Findley claims, "from long years of bondage to Israel's misdeeds" (par.14). On the contrary, it keeps America and Americans blameworthy for the Israelis' atrocities. While these barriers do Palestinians harm, they certainly do the Jewish settlers well. They have brought this harm to themselves when they, in the first place, had decided to live in a land that is not theirs under armed protection. Apparently, a more positive and equally assertive American policy in the region would benefit all parties in the region, reduce political tension, and ultimately improve the image of the US as a world superpower guarding international peace and amity.

So far, Israeli-Palestinian relations have been characterized by apathy and lack of a real desire to effect a long-lasting peace. Many incidents of criminal actions and violations of human rights have been committed by Israeli military forces. For example, "the Israeli assault on Gaza in July-August 2014, in which 2,205 Palestinians (including 521 children) were killed," is "only the most recent example of Israel's indiscriminate act of violence against the Palestinian people" (Wearing & Ammar, 2015, p.1).Furthermore, the establishment of "Israeli settlement…in the West bank, including east Jerusalem" is "illegal under international law" ("Israeli settlements", 2016, p.16). Most importantly, Israeli occupation of Palestine is a "system of apartheid" ("Equal Rights", par.1), preventing "more than 5 million Palestinians…equal rights…under … a deliberate policy of racial or ethnic segregation" (par.1). Although former U.S.A. president Jimmy Carter "was the first prominent figure…to apply the term apartheid to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories—East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank", he apparently did nothing to change the situation or stop the US relations with Israel

("Equal Rights", par.4). Apartheid system "also affects Palestinian Arabs who make up 20 percent of the population within Israel itself" ("Equal Rights", par.4).

Consequently and fortunately, some movements were raised to confront Israel's occupation of Palestine. For example, "an international solidarity movement has formed around the world and is heeding the call of Palestinian civil society to boycott, divest, and sanction (BDS) Israel for its flagrant violations of human rights" ("Equal Rights: Conclusion", par.1). Interestingly, "as in South Africa and the American South where whites joined with blacks to fight segregation and white supremacy" one hears of "many Israeli Jews" who are "repudiating their government's policies" ("Equal Rights", conclusion; par.1). Moreover, they "joined with Palestinians to fight apartheid. In weekly protests in villages like Budrus and Bilin and in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem, Palestinians, Israeli Jews, and international solidarity activists demonstrate nonviolently against home demolitions and the Separation Wall" (par.1). As for Americans and American Jews, many of them "oppose Israel's policies and the way the U.S. government helps prop up the apartheid system by giving Israel $3 billion in annual military aid" (par.2).

Coda: Imaginary? Israeli-Palestinian Cultural Dialog

When it comes to dialog as a political solution, many believe that cultural dialog between Jews and Palestinians is the way to peace or at least a steady status quo. The literature on German and Jewish-Israeli dialog proves the opposite. According to Chaitin (2008), one incident of "dialog takes place in the context of deep feelings of victimhood, distrust, heightened sensitivity to any communication that could be taken as a sign of anti-Semitism and fear felt by the Jewish Israelis" (p.51). Additionally, the generations of "children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors often adopt an identity that connects them to the roots of the Holocaust past" (p.51). On the other hand, "in the case of dialog between Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians, the challenges are more complex" (p.52). It is because "the two peoples remain embroiled in an acute conflict… both sides have deep existential fears" which "makes it technically very difficult to arrange joint meetings, designing and facilitating dialog between willing participants needs to be handled with extreme sensitivity and flexibility" (p.52). Although Chaitin still thinks that such meetings may be possible and fruitful, Israeli apartheid system and human rights violations, including settlements and racial discrimination make dialog sound illogical and absurd. Only a true cultural and political dialog can improve things in the Middle East. What is needed is not simply propaganda and superficial public relations but a serious will to achieve peace for our future generations and open hearts to accept religious coexistence.

According to Mollove & Lavie (1999), there is a possibility for a dialog to succeed between Palestinians and Israelis. They declare that the inter-religious dialog in the Israeli-Palestinian contact has the potential for strengthening the "constructive" stalemate as an initial basis for transforming the conflict, as "people-to-people" efforts are carried out between the two populations, aimed at generating the active relationship building so necessary for community building (pp.8-9).

Furthermore, Scham (2006) believes that "the Zionist dream, including peace, cannot be fulfilled unless a full Palestinian state is established" (p.74). Simultaneously, the Palestinian dream of "statehood and independence cannot, under any foreseeable circumstances, be established and maintained until full, not nominal, recognition of Israel is part of the package, and the Palestinian state is both willing and able to control its rejectionists by whatever means are necessary (p.74). Nevertheless, the international community should expect from the Israelis what it urges Palestinians to do. A strong, lasting peace based on mutual benefits is the responsibility of all.

Mollov & Lavie (1999) and Scham (2006) believe in the applicability of cultural dialog under the circumstances of racial discriminatory military forces. While Bar-Siman-Tov more recently has been practical enough to declare that "under the present circumstances, it seems to be easier to describe or explain the barriers to peace than to answer the question of how can they be overcome" (2010, p.363). As in Nasser et al (2011) who declare that "each time the violence escalates, one wonders how individuals on either side of these terrible lines can possibly (re) engage" in the dialog (p.190).

Thus, any possibility of a common cultural dialog in the future becomes awkward and unachievable (if not nonexistent), so to speak! More paradoxically, religious tolerance among the followers of the three Abrahamic monotheistic religions will inordinately turn out to be a deception hoax, more or less! If this hyperbolic situation persists, any attempt towards religious tolerance and cultural dialog in the entire globe proves to be futile, ineffectual and one-track sided. The levels of

extremism and fundamentalism will, therefore, without doubt, increase and negatively develop beyond words, so much so that they will certainly become grueling to control, eventually to build walls instead of bridges among nations and the followers of the word of God.

Taking into consideration the violence that had accompanied Israeli-Palestinian relations since the emergence of Israel, we can argue for the imaginary nature of a cultural dialog between the two of them. Cultural Dialog requires respect and peaceful relations which are lacked in this case. In fact, it is not a matter of coping with or accepting the language or traditions of the other. Rather, it is a matter of not denying the existence of the other at first place. Unjustified Israeli actions on usurped Palestinian land bring out the worst violent reactions among the owners of the land. Occupation is internationally a violation of simple human rights. The clash over al-Aqsa Mosque is not only a battle over the 144,000m2 that Muslims believe are theirs, while Israelis believe that it is the place of their promised Temple. Identity, religion and politics overlap to complicate the situation in al-Aqsa with no foreseeable solutions hanging in the atmosphere. What is required if we are to achieve real cultural understanding and religious tolerance in the Middle East is a political solution to the question of Palestine. Religious tolerance will come as a result of settled politics. It is a political compromise between the West and the Middle East that would necessarily improve the image of Islam in the West and allow for a peaceful coexistence among the different religions in the region.

KAYNAKÇA

[1] Abdul-Hadi, M. (2013). Al-Aqsa Mosque: Al-Haram Ash-Sharif. PASSIA
http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2016/INGILIZCE%20SITE%20ESERLER/TANITIM%20BRO%C5%9E%C3%9CRLER%C4%B0/PDF/Haram-Ash-sharief-Final- En 2013.pdf
[2] Bar-Siman-Tov, Y. (2010). Barriers to peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies. http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_22213-1522-2-30.pdf?110316110457
[3] Chaitin, J. (2008). Bridging the impossible? Confronting barriers to dialog between Israelis and Germans and Israelis and Palestinians. International Journal of Peace Studies,13:2, 33-58 https://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol13_2/IJPS13n2%20CHAITIN.pdf
[4] "Equal rights for Palestinians: apartheid and occupation". Seattle Mideast Awareness Campaign: http://www.seamac.org/equalrights.htm
[5] Findley, P. (2002). Reflecting on our relationship with Israel. If Americans Knew: What Every American Needs to Know about Israel/Palestine.
http://ifamericaknew.org/us_ints/p-findley.html
[6] Hitti, Ph. (1962). Islam and the West. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Islamic Concern for Palestine. (2000). The Furthest Mosque: The History of Al-Aqsa Mosque from earliest times to the present day. Mustaqim Islamic Art&Literature.
http://www.islamicparty.com/alaqsa/enter.htm
[7] "Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory including east Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan". (2016). UN General Assembly
http://www.refworld.org/docid/57e51d794.html
[8] Kedar, B. (1984). Crusade and mission: European approaches toward the Muslims. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
[9] Mollov, B & Lavie, C. (1999). Culture, Dialog and Perception Change in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Israel Paper, International Association for Conflict Management Annual Convention, Spain: San Sebastian, June 20-23. Israel: Interdisciplinary Department of Social Sciences Bar-Ilan University Ramat Gan.
http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.614.4301&rep=rep1&t ype=pdf
[10] Nasser, I, Berlin, L. & Wong, S. (2011). Education, media, and dialog under occupation: The case of Palestine and Israel. UK: Multilingual Matters.
https://books.google.jo/books?id=Ze-sZZgO3MoC&pg=PA36&lpg=PA36&dq=cultural+dialog+under+occupation&source=bl&ots=ZAMW0jfYMZ&sig=j_4Dovo_wYe-0ku--I9j3bmUPU4&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwicvZrtx_XVAhUDkRQKHcGlA3wQ6AEIKTAB#v=onepage&q=cultural%20dialog%20under%20occupation&f= false
[11] Obeidat, Marwan M. (1998). American literature and orientalism. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag.
[12]Omar, A.M. (2017). Al-Aqsa Mosque's incident in July 2017: affirming the policy of deterrence. Insight Turkey, 19:3, 69-82
http://file.insightturkey.com/Files/Pdf/10.2525399.2017193.05.pdf
[13]Rejeb, L.B. (1981). 'To the shores of Tripoli': The impact of Barbary on early American nationalism. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), Indiana University.
[14] Riley-Smith, J. (1977). What were the crusades? (3rd ed.). London: Macmillan Press.
[15] Said, Edward. (1978). Orientalism. New York: Pantheon.
[16] Scham, P.L. (2006). Narratives of Israelis and Palestinians and the peacemaking process The Historical Israel Studies Forum, 21:2, 58-84

http://www.institutobrasilisrael.org/cms/assets/uploads/ BIBLIOTECA/ PDF/o- conflito-palestino-x-israelense/7ead39faf16fcea3ecd8957431398300.pdf
[17] UNESCO. “Intercultural Dialog: Culture”. http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/dialog/intercultural-dialog/
[18]Wearing, D & Ammar, Z. (2015). Arming Apartheid: UK complicity in Israel’s crimes against the Palestinian people. London: War on Want Fighting Global Poverty
https://www.stoparmingisrael.org/wp-content/uploads/arming-apartheid.pdf