

ISRAEL: a country we should be proud of ?

Daniel Dangoor 13R

Throughout its 61 years of existence, Israel has achieved more than most countries that have existed for hundreds of years. Its achievements range from its incredible cultural dynamics to more concrete, groundbreaking technological discoveries.

Israel has developed substantially in the fields of technology, agriculture and medicine. For example, Israeli scientists were the first to develop a fully computerized non-radioactive diagnostic test for breast cancer. As far as technology is concerned, the mobile phone was developed in Israel by Motorola, which still has its largest development plant there. Such developments are probably fuelled by the fact that Israel has the most scientists and engineers per capita in the world.

Geographically, Israel boasts an captivating range of natural beauty, from the green north with its Sea of Galilee and many waterfalls, through the Sharon area –Tel Aviv, "the city that never sleeps" – to the relatively untouched Negev, where agricultural techniques have been pushed to their limits. Ben Gurion's dream of bringing life to the Negev has been realized slowly since the creation of the state, and there is no lack of testaments to this, the Kibbutzim alone being enough.

The genuine cultural diversity in this young state creates a level of originality which is unrivalled by any other. Out of its 7 million population, Israel hosts not only Jews from all over the world and indigenous populations but other groups fleeing persecution, most recently, Sudanese refugees. These starkly different cultures resulting from the infinite waves of immigration come together to form a very rich and diverse society with plenty of different tastes and opportunities.

Israel has done remarkably from an economic perspective, only recently being described as "the only country in the world to have skipped the recession" by its treasury chiefs. Its economy has grown incredibly and is still growing at an annual rate of over 4%, with half the exports being technological. Agriculture has always been a greatly important export, with Israel exporting masses of oranges, and the Diamond Exchange in Ramat Gan is the largest in the world.

Throughout its existence, Israel's involvement in humanitarian missions has been pronounced, such as the aftermath of Typhoon Parma, where Israeli medics provided humanitarian aid in the Philippines

Israel has diversified and enriched itself greatly in the fields of art and architecture. Tel Aviv, known as the "White City" is a UNESCO world heritage site as a result of its massive collection of houses built in the Bauhaus style. This is a great contrast with cities such as Jerusalem or Zefat where the old cities built exclusively of local Jerusalem stone have been conserved meticulously.

Music and the arts are a fundamental component of daily life for many, following on from the traditions of many of the Jewish pioneers of the state. The Israeli Philharmonic, established by German and Russian immigrants in 1936 is most accomplished and performs worldwide with a vast amount of recordings and very famous members such as Isaac Stern and Itzhak Perlman.

Jerusalem is the most beautiful embodiment of all these things in one city. Perched on hilltops in the Judean desert, it has been home to the world's 3 patriarchic religions for the past 1400 years. They merge to provide an absolutely enchanting city with hundreds of inviting alleyways which have been walked for thousands of years. Jerusalem is home to very holy religious sites such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of the Rock and the Western Wall. On the other hand, it is a city full of bars and restaurants, as well as a plethora of cultural centres – yet another example of variety and contrast.

Despite occasional clashes and ethnic tensions which are unavoidably present in any society, Israel has achieved an incredible status for itself over the past few decades, even through wars and difficulties, and it is very moving to see what it has become today.