

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Is Israeli-Arab Peace Possible So Long as the Christian Zionist Narrative is Upholding the Peace Talks?

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Abstract

Efforts of conflict resolution and peace agreements in Israel-Palestine populate the agenda of foreign policy initiatives globally. The Middle East has historically been an area of constant turmoil, and, in spite of the efforts, peace still seems unattainable. This paper examines one potential reason for the failed attempts. Christian Zionism, a niche branch of Christianity with religious ties to Judaism and Israelites more specifically, ignores the rights-based approach to religion. This group is largely responsible for the pro-Israel narrative that dominates US foreign policy. The Christian Zionist narrative perpetuates one-sided religious myths in the region, and these myths prevent all sides from seeing the reality and adapting to it. Due to the stronghold of Christian Zionism on United States politics, the peace efforts in the Middle East have been unsuccessful in finding compromise.

1 What is Christian Zionism?

Christian Zionism is a branch of Christianity that diverges from the social justice and ancient orthodoxy roots of traditional Christianity. It instead comes from a 19th century interpretation that believes moving Jews to Palestine will hasten the “end” where Armageddon ensues, and a subsequent post-apocalyptic world will take place in which individuals are judged by their faithfulness (Getman). Support for this belief is largely based on the dispensationalist theology that claims that Modern Era is set in the Book of Revelation in the Bible. As humans near the end-of-time, Israeli occupation of Palestine is one of the final actions that must occur for the return of the Messiah (Haija). This theology is rooted in violence. The very doctrine of the religion focuses on the hope of a period of time in which violence will ensue, but holy Christians will be saved from the bloodshed (Hummel 2). Former Zionist, Dr. Don Wagner, offers another definition of the theology as “a movement within Protestant, now Catholic, fundamentalism that understands the modern state of Israel as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy and thus deserving of political, financial and religious support” (Getman). While Christian Zionism is not synonymous with evangelism, there is some overlap between the two. Extreme, deeply held beliefs motivate both groups, and many prominent evangelical leaders also self-identify as Christian Zionists (Hummel 2). The seemingly incompatible doctrines of evangelical Christianity and Judaism are overlooked by the Christian Zionist movement. The movement is defined as an “organized political and religious effort by conservative Protestants to support the state of Israel” (Hummel 1). The dichotomies of the religions are mostly ignored, and a more practical approach is taken. To understand how this occurred, one could look at, as Hummel writes, “the cultural and institutional engagements that subvert deeply rooted collective differences as well as the forces that have reinforced them” (3). Post-World War II, evangelical leaders attempted to reconcile Judaism and Christianity by adopting a pro-Israel political agenda and making this a pillar of evangelism (3). Following Genesis 12:3, modern Christian Zionist actors such as lobbying groups and individual activists adopted a pro-Israel stance. In this verse, God tells Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Hummel 3). God’s written word can be interpreted differently, but for Christian Zionists, God’s physical blessing is given to Abraham’s descendants: the Israelites. This belief in a covenant drives Christian

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Zionism's actions "from informing the names of organizations, to the language of inter-religious dialogue, to the substance of political arguments (5). Evangelical Christians, who believe in God's covenant, believe that they are brothers in faith with Israeli Jews, and as such, the movement of Christian Zionism is a joint project (5). Due to the stronghold that Christian Zionism has held on United States politics, the Christian Zionist narrative has upheld peace talks in Israel-Palestine and disrupted the process.

2 Christian Zionism in the United States

Christian Zionism is influential both in the private and public realms of United States society. Ideologically, evangelical Christians have adopted a pro-Israel stance, and the moral beliefs have also seeped into the political sphere. During the 20th century, evangelical Christians, largely influenced by the dispensationalist theology, were encouraged to enter the political sphere to promote their beliefs. Today, Christian Zionism, although not widely accepted nominally, influences less extreme religious views. Zionist views are dispersed through novels such as "Left Behind." One reviewer of the series explains them as "giving millions of people an interpretive paradigm in which extreme views seem sensible" (Haija). The fictitious account does include actual aspects of the dispensationalist doctrine, so when it is spread, the ideas are spread also. These subtle influences of Christian Zionism in turn can affect political stances (Haija). True Zionists and those religiously influenced by Zionism represent a powerful Trump constituency. Vice President Mike Pence himself is a Zionist. This belief seems to be more widely held than it actually is because of its media presence. They broadcast a view where Palestine is seen as an enemy to the fulfillment of their religious prophecy. This demonization is dangerous because it dehumanizes the Palestinian situation and serves as justification for harmful actions against them (Getman). The Christian Zionist movement manifested itself in United States politics in the form of lobbying groups and political activism. In addition to prominent individuals advocating for pro-Israel policy, lobbying groups and committees promote the Christian Zionist agenda in politics. Christians United for Israel, a lobby organization of 4 million members, is a Zionist organization (Hummel 2016). The political manifestation of the religious group is a significant part of the Trump constituency. Some of his actions in office aim to please them, even going so far as to ignore political advisors. One such example is his decision to relocate the American embassy to Jerusalem. When Trump announced this decision, Christian Zionist, Mike Pence, stood by his side, and afterwards, other pro-Israel activists announced their support for the movement. Other pro-Israel Christian stances have been taken by politicians, particularly within the Republican party. Former Presidential candidates Ted Cruz and Sarah Palin both announced their religious support for Israel. Different political leaders, political activists, and lobbying groups in the United States are influenced by Christian Zionism which continues to stress a pro-Israel agenda within US foreign policy (Belin).

3 How Religion Can Be Influential in Politics

Religion influences ideological beliefs that are carried out in politics. Although the United States is not itself a religious state, religion is deeply woven into society and politics. According to a study conducted by Pew Research Center, the percentage of Americans religiously unaffiliated is growing rapidly. As of 2019, 26% of the population falls in this category compared to just 17% in 2009 (Pew Research Center). This decline of formal religion, though, does not necessarily mean society is less religious. The traditions that come with religion are long lasting, and they shape public discourse. A public theology exists in which the very nature of good and evil is decided for society. Religion can provide individuals with a certain value system and moral identity. As seen with Christian Zionism, this identity can carry into political stances. Individuals related to politics often use religion as support for their movements. Such is the case with Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement. His influence in a political movement was strengthened and justified through religion. Some issues, as Terrence Johnson explains in "On the Limits of Rights and Representation," cannot be simplified to pure reason as John Rawls suggests in his political liberalism. Where John Rawls suggests issues should be deliberated through public reason which forms the public discourse, Johnson argues that it only deals with questions of basic justice.

Johnson argues that “without an ethical commitment to attend to cultural inheritance and to the moral problem of blackness, public reason and its language of rights cannot allay the cultural conditions that too often lead to violence against gays, African Americans, women, Latino/as, and Muslims” (Johnson 705). A rights-based approach to politics is inadequate because it fails to address the moral root of the problem. This is the case with the rights of minority groups in America because it is often preexisting, cultural beliefs of individuals that lead to persecution (Johnson). While this argument specifically targets the American system, it could apply elsewhere.

4 The History of the Palestinian Conflict

The history of Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a combination of disputed territory, a struggle for statehood, and conflicting ideologies. The emergence of the three major religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam occurred in similar territory in the Middle East, and each established their own Holy Lands. Since they overlapped, the contested sites provided a physical dispute between these religions. While typically, the conflicts between religions were doctrine-based, the territory conflict proved problematic. Today, the physical manifestation of religious arguments is particularly present in the territory contested between Israel and Palestine, and the inability for the region to find peace has become a global problem. The Israeli movement for a Jewish State is called Zionism. This movement is a quest for territory and nationhood during which a Jewish Renaissance will occur, and Jews are reborn in strength under a common nation. Throughout Europe, Jews were struggling to assimilate into their home countries, so a new proposal for a Jewish state came to be seen as the only hope for Jewish security. Theodor Herzl promoted this belief, and in 1897 he created the World Zionist Organization to promote his cause (Ross 16). Like Christian Zionism which predated Jewish Zionism by 50 years, Herzl relied upon scripture to validate his territorial claims to Palestinian land controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Christian Zionists, particularly those in Britain, encouraged Herzl and a Jewish diaspora (Getman). With Britain’s promise of support, Israelis gained hope. New immigration of Jews from around Europe began to take place, joining the existing Jewish community in Palestine, the Yishuv. The building of an Israeli state, though, did not occur quickly. From the beginning, divisions arose between the new Jewish community in Palestine, the Yishuv, and Zionist leaders outside of Palestine over the structure of the state. Overwhelmingly, though, “the predisposition was ... to make Palestine as Jewish as France was French and Britain was British” (Ross 17). After the Holocaust, global support for a Jewish state emerged as the world was looking to make amends. Popular support was for the creation of the state in the historical homeland that was, at the time, British-ruled Palestine (Smith, Patricia). This support, though, did not take into consideration that the region was populated by another group. Deadly riots in 1920 and 1921 occurred as a manifestation of Arab resistance to the increasing population of Jewish immigrants. At this point, though, neither Israelis nor Palestinians had a state of their own. The territory claimed by both was actually under British control, and it was not until 1947 that Britain ceded the territory to the two nations—giving the UN the responsibility to create a partition plan (Ross). The struggle for statehood would continue. In 1947, a UN vote divided the territory between Arabs and Jews, yet this only increased tensions. The Partition Plan excluded Jerusalem, the holy center, from either. When Israel declared its independence in 1948, they were attacked, and this attack led to the division of Jerusalem between Israel and Jordan (Smith, Patricia). This Partition Plan left very few completely satisfied. Israeli Revisionists were unhappy because they were unwilling to surrender part of the Promised Land to Palestinians. In their particular historical narrative, modern day Palestine, and more, belonged to the Jews as a gift from God. This narrative of the entire region being controlled by Israel is an example of a perpetuated myth that Getman explains. The unrealistic nature of this belief is clouded by their desire to fulfill a supposed prophecy. It was not just the Israelis upset by the compromise, though. Palestinians and Arabs were not content because they were unwilling to recognize the legitimacy of any Jewish state. Historically, the Palestinians actually had more support because of the strength of Arab nationalism. This nationalism was rooted in a common language, culture, and history in the Middle East. The union of the neighboring nations gave strength to Palestine in the beginning of the conflict, but it left Israel feeling even more insecure. Israeli fear stemming from a lack of protection furthered the Israeli sentiment that they could only rely on themselves, and a state of their own was the only way they could protect themselves (Ross 28). Both nations

were driven by a desire for statehood and had reason to support their own cause, while negating the other. These historical narratives, while conflicting, are similar in nature. Both Israelis and Palestinians are seeking a return to glory. They believe that history did not fall in their favor, and overtime, they became weak. For Israelis, “exile and dispersal had made Jews weak,” and for Arabs, “sectarian, tribal, and clannish differences” led to internal conflict (Ross 29). In spite of their fall from power, both hold a common hope that they can return to fame. Both turn towards specific religious ideals to find both inspiration and purpose. This phenomenon can be compared to a sentiment in American society. Individuals draw upon the jeremiad “to explain violence endured and sometimes to justify violence inflicted” (Murphy and Hanson, ch. 1). The jeremiad is a belief that the nation exists in a particular covenant with God and are His chosen people. Furthermore, certain claims come with the belief in the jeremiad. One of which is “the ethical-theological component [that] presumes that God’s purposes encompass the use of violence in the pursuit of religious and divinely ordained political ends” (Murphy and Hanson, ch. 1). Here is the case in which three nations claim that God has chosen a certain greatness for them. According to the narratives of Israelis, Arabs, and Americans, God has made each the same promise. This belief is a central component of the epistemic foundation of individuals in the nations, and the epistemes are conflicting. Therefore, the issue cannot be purely political when the most basic beliefs of individuals are in conflict, even prior to the creation of a state. This demonstrates the role of the conflicting ideologies in the conflict between Israel-Palestine. It also reveals that the United States has a similar belief system that further ties the country to the Middle East conflict. The concept of a conflict that exists beyond the state itself is believed by citizens in both Israel and Palestine. A Hamas leader described the situation when he said, “There are no civilians in Israel because every citizen is required to serve in the army” (Stern 40). The Hamas are the Islamic Resistance Movement, and although they represent only one religious, militant group within Palestine; this description represents the nature of the conflict. Another belief held by Palestinians according to an Islamic extremist, Abu Shanab, is that “it is a duty for Muslims to struggle against occupation. It is our duty to defend the land for the sake of God. For Jews, the issue is the ‘Promised Land.’ For us, it is not a question of something promised—it is our land. We believe it is a natural law that power deters power” (Stern 39). These extremist views populate public discourse. For Israelis, a similar, steadfast belief exists. One Jewish extremist said, “Until all the land of Israel belongs to the people of Israel according to what has been promised in the Bible, there will be no peace” (Stern 104). Neither Palestinian nor Israeli extremists are willing to compromise their claims, yet in reality, it is impossible that both are fulfilled. From an extremist perspective, the only peace that can happen is when one nation is dissolved. Even if this were to occur, though, members of the losing group would continue to fight underground. As for a measure of the lack of peace, one author says, “On a per capita basis, Israelis and Palestinians have suffered multiple September 11-scale attacks” (Stern 32). There is clearly a need for peace to end the violence, but the journey has proven difficult. Myths hold impossible expectations, are encouraged by religious fervor, and lead to conflict. The issues between the two states are both political and moral. Ideological differences, conflicting struggles for statehood, and disputed territory account for the internal struggle. It is not merely a state desiring more power, but rather it is two groups of people with historic claims to a homeland to which they desire to return. Instead of being able to settle, as numerous failed peace attempts show, the two groups desire the land as their own. Political compromise is necessary, yet it is impossible so long as the religious components of the conflict dominate the peace talks.

5 Christian Zionism and its Relation to Israel-Palestine

The conflict in Palestine is not seen as an internal issue, but rather other nations and groups, such as Christian Zionism, are connected. Christian Zionism is invested both morally and politically in the Middle East which explains the US interest in Israel. The pro-Israel foreign policy agenda is supported on an ideological level by Christian Zionists in the United States (Mamdani. 240). As for the political support, lobbying groups and other political organizations are driven by the Christian Zionist agenda. One such group is the Israeli lobby which through financial contributions have gained a foothold in Washington politics. The support for a pro-Israel agenda is also reinforced by a larger public influenced by Christian Zionism. According to a survey conducted

by Pew Research Center, Americans are more likely to hold favorable views of Israeli people and government than Palestinian (Smith, Gregory). Over time, Christian Zionism has shaped American public discourse in its views on Israelis and Palestinians. Arabs are seen as evil, while Israelis are good. A study conducted by Pew Research Center supports this stance. The survey polled individuals, categorized by religious beliefs, on their views of both Palestinian and Israeli's people and government. In each category, a larger percentage held a favorable view of Israel than Palestine. The religious groups, though, had a higher percentage of support. 69% of Christians viewed Israeli people favorable compared to only 41% that viewed Palestinian people favorable. 49% of Christians held an unfavorable view of Palestinian people. By asking specifically for an opinion on people the study reflects American disposition to favor Israelis. The issue, for the American public, is not simply a political one, but rather one that affects society (Smith, Gregory). Out of the polled group, most have likely never met an Israeli or Palestinian person, yet they still hold these views. Religion, and particularly Christian Zionism, has influenced American societal beliefs. The classification of Palestinians as evil dehumanizes the situation. People are more willing to accept and justify acts of terrorism in the region because of this. Not only are Palestinians the enemy of the Israelis, but they are also traditionally Islamic which further propels their demonization. Currently, the Gaza Strip is known to be one of the most overcrowded places on earth. In only 147 square miles, 1.2 million Palestinians find a home, yet of this population, many live in camps. Meanwhile, 42% of the land belongs to Israel in which only 0.5% of the Gazan population lives. Additionally, terrorism in the region is rampant. Viewing the number of attacks on a per-capita basis reveals that the region has seen multiple attacks on a 9/11 scale. The trauma from years of fighting can be seen on both sides (Stern). The human suffering, though, is not what reaches the American public. This terrorism is essential normalized—so long as it is the Palestinians harmed. The formation of two states was a political decision by the UN, and subsequent changes in territory occurred due to wars. Christian Zionism and its influence in United States foreign policy have drawn upon the religious nature of the conflict, though. It was not until 1977 that a strong alliance began to form between the United States and Israel. This date is the year in which the more secular Labor Party fostered a relationship with Christian Zionists under the leadership of Prime Minister Menachem Begin. He saw the Zionists as an opportunity to gain power. In the late-1970s, Israel had a negative image internationally. Begin was looking to boost Israeli interests by finding a political ally. Around the same time, Evangelical Christians, under the leadership of Reverend Jerry Falwell, were in the process of mobilizing the Church politically to become more involved in moral and social issues. Begin saw the group of Christian Zionists looking to become more politically involved as a potential ally—particularly to boost Israeli interests in the US government. Reverend Jerry Falwell formed a relationship with Begin and used his influence in the American public to push an Israel-first agenda (Haija). This tied even the most secular part of Israel to religion, and Christian Zionism continued to shape the discussion. Additionally, due to fear of losing the political backing of the United States, Israelis have adapted the religious extremist mentality (Getman). Following Begin and Falwell's relationship, the Israel-first ideology grew to be widely accepted in American politics. Franklin Littell was a Protestant Christian looking to foster a relationship with Jews. It was he who first adopted the Israel-first belief. Prior to the United States, France was Israel's strongest ally. France's interests were strictly political in terms of the Suez Canal in Egypt. Littell, as a proponent of Christian-Jewish relations, believed in the importance of a religiously based, unconditional alliance for the protection of Israel. On his own, he formed pro-Israel lobbyist groups that eventually partnered with Christian Zionist groups. One of the first significant pro-Israel movements by the United States government occurred as a result of Christian Zionists. In the late 1970s, the United Nations passed Resolution 3379. This Resolution was aimed at combatting racism and discrimination across member countries. While most of the Resolution was general, the last section specifically targeted the Zionist movement in Israel. It states, "Determines that Zionism is a form of racism and discrimination on the part of UN member nations" ("Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination," emphasis mine). The UN intended to fight back against the violence committed in the name of religion. The Zionist movement specifically targeted Palestinians and Arabs as being outsiders and not belonging in the Israeli state. This was an attempt to reprimand the violence in Palestine and stifle the Zionist movement. Had it been accepted, Israel potentially could have become more open to new peace

discussions with more achievable aims. Christian Zionists, though, cited the Resolution as both anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic (Haija). Christian Zionists and their lobbying groups pushed for its repeal. Eventually, in 1990, Congressional representatives proposed House Resolution 457 which was a resolution to repeal UN Resolution 3379. The House Resolution which was presented to the House Council on Foreign Affairs stated the support for Israel and their national movement (Haija). It stated, "Zionism is a national movement of the Jewish people for self-determination, a legitimate and moral aspiration characteristic of many national groups in the modern world. Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379 has had as its overt purpose the delegitimizing of the State of Israel" (Rep. Green). This proposal, which was supported by President George H.W. Bush, eventually passed. This is a clear example detailing US support for Israel, even over the United Nations. The passing of this Resolution demonstrates the influence of Christian Zionists in politics. The UN also eventually did repeal Resolution 3379 as a consequence of the United States' Resolution (Haija). In the coming decade, particularly post September-11, the United States and Israel further bonded on a religious level by crafting a mutual enemy: Muslims. Arabs were not just enemies of the state, but rather enemies of the people (Getman).

6 Peace talks in Palestine and the Influence of and Disruption by Christian Zionism

The journey towards peace began as soon as Israel and Palestine were created. Neither was completely satisfied with the Partition Plan of 1947 proposed by the UN. In the following years, wars led to the further exchange of territory, yet still neither nation liked outcome. Israel lacked the security and peace they desired, and Palestinians continued to lose territory. The most popular peace effort after the Six Day War of 1967 was referred to as "land for peace". Israel gained the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights territories by defeating Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. At this point, Israel did not have much foreign aid. While some Israelis sought to settle this land, the majority opinion was to use this territory to bargain for peace (Ross 17). After the Six Day War, Egyptian President came to Israel in an attempt to reach a settlement. This action acknowledged the legitimacy of Israel as a state, and the Israeli government was willing to make concessions. Ross explains this by describing the Israeli ethos as having "a readiness to make serious, far-reaching concessions when it is clear they have a real partner—one that is prepared to acknowledge Israeli concerns directly, run demonstrable risks for peace, and reach out to the Israeli public" (Ross 28). Israelis desired a peace that was not merely an acknowledgement of their existence as a state, but rather a commitment to stability and a true acceptance of them by the Arab world. For peace, they were willing to give up land, but they wanted true peace. For Arabs, peace was sufficiently just an absence of conflict. Israelis, though, focused on the concrete, and they did not care for the abstract promise of peace. They desired security and to feel this, the Arab attitude would need to adapt to Israeli presence (Ross 44). Under both the Bush and Clinton administrations, Dennis Ross served as the principle informant in the Israeli-Arab conflicts. His role was to work towards peace efforts in the region. For the United States, politically, peace was of interest because as Ross explained, "peace and stabilization in a region laden with weapons and petrochemicals was important" (8). For Ross in his position, he claimed his reasoning for seeking peace was political and beneficial to all. His case being that Israeli's primary desire was security, and the Arab world sought freedom and hope for Palestinians. If these motivators are truly the deepest wish of the nations, peace is the only possible way to achieve them. The issue, though, is not that simple because as previously established, the conflict is not merely political neither in the Middle East nor in the United States. Intrinsic beliefs cloud judgement and disable the majority of individuals from looking at the conflict completely objectively. For peace to arise "historic myths would have to give way to political necessity and reality on each side..." (Ross 4). Israel and Palestine need to be able to recognize the legitimacy of the other. Neither would return to their "Jeremiad," but at least citizens could leave in stability. The United States, throughout history, has been quick to condemn the actions of Palestinian terrorist groups. Christian Zionists in the past have supported Israeli intervention into neighboring Arab countries in order to combat the PLO, who is largely seen as a religious enemy (Hummel 172). After the suicide bombs in Israel, the United States responded in trying to gather international support quickly for an anti-terrorist

agenda. President Clinton and Ross continued to build a peace proposal upon which all sides could agree. Their efforts culminated at the end of Clinton's second term in 1999. Both the Israeli and Palestinian governments agreed to attend a summit at Camp David. In attendance was Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, Palestinian President Yasir Arafat, and President Bill Clinton. They agreed that a proposal would require great concessions on both sides, but the hope was that peace would result at the end. The parameters originally outlined included a section on territory. A new Palestinian state would be drawn based on prior lines. The territorial exchange was designed to grant sovereignty to Palestinians and security to Israelis. As for refugees, Palestine would be granted international aid to rehabilitate Palestinians mainly to Palestine, but to Israel at times, so long as Israel held the right to determine who could enter. As for Jerusalem, the city was to be three cities: one practical, one holy, and one political. The responsibilities of governance and maintenance were divided. After days of deliberation, though, the peace deal was ultimately rejected and hopes of security and stability fell with it (Ross 652). After the Clinton administration, none of the subsequent presidents were as active in negotiating peace, so the United States ended with a failed attempt. Dennis Ross and the United States attempted to reach peace agreements in the Middle East by relying upon political necessity. The United States in the 1990s worked closely with Arab nations and Israel to be a mediator for peace resolutions. After the assassination of Israeli President Ben-Gurion, his successor, Peres, began to recognize the necessity of direct negotiation to find peace. The first step towards this were the Israeli Syrian negotiations at Wye River in 1996. Uri Savir represented the Israelis while Walid Muallem represented the Syrians in the negotiations. This meeting was not simply about the conflict between these two nations involving the Golan territory. It held broader goals of finding ways to build peace and security in the region. The peace process, though, was impeded by violence once again (Ross 238-243). Terrorism, even when committed by non-state actors can reflect poorly on states should they not properly condemn it. Such is the case of the violence that occurred in Israel in 1996. While peace negotiations were occurring in the United States, across the globe, Islamic extremist groups targeted Israeli citizens. In the span of 9 days, 4 suicide bombings occurred. The most heart wrenching occurred in Tel Aviv. A suicide bomber in the city killed Israeli children as they were dressed up in costume to celebrate holiday. The horrors of these attacks left the country in despair. Shortly after, the Islamic Jihad headquartered in Damascus claimed responsibility. While the Syrian government was not responsible directly for these attacks, they did not condemn them publicly. Israelis continued to lose faith in the possibility of peace. Ross explained the sentiment by questioning, "How do you expect the Israeli public to believe they have partners for peace when something as human as expressing outrage or even sadness over the killing of innocents is not possible?" (Ross 244). The death of Israeli citizens at the hands of terrorist groups was not a new occurrence, but each time it occurs, more hope for security is lost. Peace with nations seems more and more improbable if they are unable to condemn clearly atrocious acts of violence against innocent civilians. This is an example of an inability to accept or acknowledge political reality. Religious extremism clouds judgement, and governments are unwilling to submit to their circumstances. Perhaps, more Israelis and Palestinians are willing to accept compromises than the media portray. Like most religious and extremist doctrines, Christian Zionism continues to be uncompromising in its views, and they also continue to be a primary ally of Israel. Therefore, it is in the political interest of Israel to maintain the relationship (Haija). More recent studies conducted within Israel show that the majority no longer believes the strict Zionist views of complete Israeli control over Palestinian land. In fact, a study conducted by Mina Zemach in 2002 found that 63% of Israelis are actually in favor of "unilateral withdrawal" to evacuate settlements (Svirsky). This withdrawal would, in fact, align with the 'land for peace' strategy because it would cede the territories informally occupied by Israelis to the Palestinians or other Arab nations. Additionally, 60% of Israelis believe that the acknowledgement of a Palestinian state should be part of any peace agreement. The results of the polling show that, in reality, most individuals are not so extreme in their beliefs. The media, though, spreads the minority, hyper-extreme views which makes it seem as though Zionism is a common sentiment (Svirsky). Even Palestinians are just looking for peace, according to a study conducted by the Methodist Church in Great Britain. Christian Zionism, though, continues to lead the peace settlements, so no compromise has been reached. Israelis and Palestinians live in the midst of terror, so they suffer the consequences of

the lack of peace. Christian Zionists, though, are able to ignore the political reality because they are outsiders. They can remain focused solely on the 'scripture' as opposed to political reality. Increasingly, Jewish groups assert that their alliance with Christian Zionists is purely political, not religious. While they wish to maintain political allegiance with the United States, Israelis do not often support the religious motives (Haija). In 2007, a Texas Pastor, John Hagee, addressed a crowd of attendees at AIPAC's 2007 Policy Summit in Washington D.C. (Hummel 185). AIPAC stands for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and functions as a pro-Israel lobby (AIPAC). It was here that the Christian Zionist, Hagee, announced that the name Christians United for Israel (CUFI) would be used to refer to the Christian Zionist organization. This transformation consolidated fragmented Zionists under a single cause. As of 2018, the lobby organization had 4 million members. Their purpose, as stated by Hagee, was to "set aside both theological and political agendas" in order to "focus on a single issue—support for Israel" (Hummel 206). As with matters of political doctrine, Hagee understood that "most of the largely Jewish audience disagreed with [him] on political Issues. But on the issues of the need to support Israel and recognition of the dangerous situation in the Middle East today, [they] were in total agreement" (Hummel 185). To Jewish Americans preoccupied with the Palestinian conflict, American political support for Israel was more important than disagreements on other political matters. Even though the Christian Zionist and Jewish Zionist doctrines can be contradictory, they share the same goal which is to fulfill what was prophesized in God's scripture. Pursuant to their goals, Christian Zionists promote their own interests abroad. They are still on a quest for their Armageddon which supposedly can only occur with complete Israeli control over a Jewish state in Palestine. In order to achieve this, Christian Zionists continue to discourage the compromise part of peace efforts that may result in a split state and continue to support Israeli aggression towards Palestinians (Haija). Not only do Christian Zionists encourage anti-Palestinian deals, but also support towards neighboring Arab Countries. Under the Obama administration, an Iranian nuclear weapons deal was largely debated. CUFI and the Israeli government both were staunchly opposed to the deal, and while President Obama did pass it, President Trump later withdrew from the deal in 2018. Today, Jewish Americans are not as pro-Israel as they were in the past. Growing division within this support group leaves Israel even more reliant upon the Christian Zionists (Hummel 208). Israel's policy must now work even more diligently to appease Christian Zionist groups so as to not lose their remaining diplomatic tie. Today, President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital city and move the Israeli embassy there is a consequence of Christian Zionism. Palestinians are not likely to accept a peace treaty in which their Holy City is fully ceded to Israel. All peace attempts in the past at least attempted to divide the city, and in doing so, acknowledged both Jewish and Islamic claims (Smith, Gregory). At the opening of the US embassy, it was two Christian Zionists that spoke. They praised God for Trump's decision and embraced it as a step towards fulfilling a biblical prophecy. The United States tends to fully embrace pro-Israel stances without considering the potential faults of Israel. Historically, Israel has pushed the boundaries granted to them, and they continue to do so. Their occupation and oppression of Palestinians, though, is not reprimanded but rather encouraged by Americans. Instead of viewing this violence as an impediment to peace, Christian Zionists see it as one step closer to Armageddon.

7 Conclusion

The peace talks in Israel-Palestine exist as an attempt to resolve the violence in the Middle East, but its failure is apparent. Ideologically and politically, the Christian Zionist movement does not lend itself to compromise. As a movement, Zionism actually goes beyond the religious doctrine of Christianity to build a relationship with Judaism structured around a common political purpose. The explanation that neither Israelis nor Palestinians are able to completely see reality and adapt political stances to said reality is true, but it lacks a reason. The reason for the inability to see reality as it is can be explained by the religious myths perpetuated by Christian Zionism that are spread to the region when the United States intervenes. While the motive may be helpful in theory, in actuality, the United States' intervention has been more detrimental. The stronghold of the Christian Zionism movement on United States politics means that their narrative and agenda is pursued in the region. The Christian Zionist movement has actually upheld the peace talks because they are the population most passionate about Israel. In the future, for peace to occur,

the narrative of Christian Zionists must be overturned. Israel is not likely to break their ties with the United States, but perhaps the pro-Israeli perspective within the United States can shift. If the religious tie is broken, it is possible that the United States can maintain a relationship with the Middle East, but a more objective one—rooted in reality. Hope does exist for this to occur because while Christian Zionism is widely held, it is not deeply believed. Activists explain how it is “a less entrenched ideology than that of Jewish Zionism” and “exposure to the Palestinian reality on the ground can convince Christian Zionists to shift their thinking” (Kirk). While right now, Christian Zionism has a stronghold on politics, if their grip can loosen, that would allow for a more objective narrative to uphold the peace talks. This could potentially lead to a compromise in which two nation states, Israel and Palestine, live in a state of peace and security.

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