

The Clash Between Christian and Islamic Religion – The State of Israel

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Abstract

This study aims to present the clash between evangelical love and the Ja'afaritan hatred in Israel. The article analyzes: stages of the Israeli-Palestinian clash – the genesis of confrontation changes depending on internal political, demographic, ethno-confessional, social and economic factors; Iran and the US – the clash of Islam and Christianity – tensions that can be interpreted by the immanent collision between separate components of two unorthodox denominations of Christian and Islamic religion. It is apparent that visions of two minority antagonist-minded denominations collide with the assessment of the existence of the State of Israel. The first, the Evangelical, is a strong supporter of the Jewish state, and the second is the Ja'afarita, which strongly denies its existence. This type of confrontational and mutually-disruptive energy, transformed into the foreign policy of two countries with enormous potential, heralds a long and devastating fight.

Keywords: Christian religion, Islamic religion, Israel, Iran, USA.

1. Introduction

The State of Israel is being created in 1948 by a decision of the UN General Assembly. This is an unprecedented act, as a simple state formation is formed as a result of an act of the Security Council of the Universal International Organization. However, the UN General Assembly has decided to create two countries, one for the Jews and the other for the Arabs. This dichotomous form predetermines the extremely complex genesis of future confrontations between the two warring camps. Over time, ethno-political division as a motive for mutual frustration has given way to the religious one. Politics and ideology have been replaced by religion, which explains the inability to find a reliable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Among the many theoretical studies of radicalization and its terrorist entities, only those with a religious foundation cannot be overcome by the well-known peaceful political and diplomatic instruments used by the state institutions.

2. Stages of the Israeli-Palestinian clash

The Israeli-Palestinian clash went through several stages. The genesis of confrontation changes depending on internal political, demographic, ethno-confessional, social and economic

factors. In the 1970s, religion took the ultimate lead over ethnicity and secular nationalism. This happened after the establishment of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1969, and most notably after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. The state formations created by Arab nationalism failed. Thus, in the 1990s, the Oslo Accords came to an end, in which two opposing nationalist entities – the Israeli and Arab ones – represented by the Palestinian Liberation Organization, led by Yasser Arafat – found an intersection. Palestinian statehood emerged in the form of autonomy with the capital Ramallah. The weakened Palestinian secularist nationalist view had to recede.

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The secular nature of the Palestinian Authority also predetermined the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The radical Sunni Hamas movement, which has ruled the Gaza Strip since 2005, is defined as a plague by the Jewish state. At the same time, it is an opposition to the internationally recognized authority of the Fatah faction in the West Bank. The increasing popularity of Sunni radicals among Palestinian society is one of the reasons why the Middle East conflict is moving forward. Hamas' policy of rapprochement with Iran and the acceptance of separate components of its foreign policy towards Israel have become an additional impetus for the theocraticisation of the conflict. There was a peculiar ecumenism between radical Sunniism and radical Shi'ism. In the particular case of the newly emerged confessional mix, the Shi'ite component is leading, and the Sunni one is situationally subordinate. The reason for this is that Iran is a country with claims of regional leadership. At the same time, Hamas is a radical ethno-religious entity that, in this type of long-term confrontational process, can only accept the status of a proxy, a tool for the exercise of foreign, external influence.

The past two decades have finally shaped the internally-confessional profile of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The OIC, which is composed mainly of Sunni states, has failed to master the management of the confrontation with the Jewish state. The "Islamic United Nations", as the OIC is called, is too cumbersome an international organization to take the flag of confessional opposition in its own hands. The Shiite segment of the vast Islamic community has prevailed in mobilization and constant confrontation with the state of Israel. Even the most powerful Sunni terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, did not organize attacks on Jewish statehood, despite numerous propaganda threats.

3. Iran and the US – The clash of Islam and Christianity

The extreme tensions created in 2019 between Iran and the United States can be interpreted by the immanent collision between the separate components of two unorthodox denominations of the Christian and Islamic religions. It has antagonistic character and mutually exclusive postulates in the philosophy of currently ruling Republicans, led by President Donald Trump, and the Islamic Republic of Iran's statistic-religious tendency.

Although apparently a clash between the two large families – Christian and Islamic, in reality, only some of them come to complete, irreconcilable mutual denial. The many attempts to

organize the so-called Dialogue of Religions outlined the profile of inter-tolerance and negation between the different denominations that make up Christianity and Islam. The policy underpinned by large and sustainable countries directs and guides this type of contacts. We saw him in 2019 during a visit by Pope Francis to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. A visit of the Saudi King Abdullah to the Vatican in 2007 could be defined as a similar programmatic visit. The clash within and outside the two major religious families is the fiercest among the minority denominations that are radicalized to rally and attract new followers. Confrontation with the self-similar (minority radical current) in the other large religious community is a tool for survival, turning frustration into a lever for “pumping” consensus-based, mainstream, dominant currents. Evangelical communities, especially American, fall into this category with regard to Catholics, Orthodox, and non-evangelical Protestant movements. In the mirror position is the Itnaashī’iriya, the denomination of the 12, the Ja’afarites, in relation to the Sunnis and other currents in the Shiites and Haridhita.

The special treatment of Jews and Israel is rooted in early Christian Millennialism. It crystallized through the Reformation, whose elite adopted two ideas regarding Jews. The first is that the return of the Jews to the “Promised Land” is a prerequisite for the Rise of Christ. The second is that Jews should be encouraged to embrace Christianity. Thus, they will imitate the behavior of Jesus Christ himself, who was Jewish. In this way, they will complete the cycle of transforming the Jewish people into Christian ones. By the same logic, they will cause Christ to return to earth and create the state of bliss, as biblical prophecy dictates (see Sharif, 1983).

Once set foot in Judea, the Jews will accept Christ as their savior and build the temple of God. According to American researcher Shannon Ashley, only Jews are able to reproduce true Christianity. A Jew converted to Christianity is the authentic follower of Jesus Christ (see Ashley, 2016).

These were extremely popular with English-speaking Puritans during the Middle Ages. In the seventeenth century, the English Protestant theologian John Owen remarked: “It is also given that there will be a time and a season, during the continuation of the kingdom of the Messiah in this world, in which the community of the Jewish people, throughout the world, will be called and effectively brought to the knowledge of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, with his mercy, they will also receive release from captivity, restoration of their land with a blessed, prosperous and happy state” (Owen, 2000: 560).

English Protestants John Gill, Samuel Rutherford, Charles Wesley and others have similar views. Their ideological counterparts John Cotton, Jonathan Edwards and others convey the idea to settlers in America. It was not until the XIX century that this religious postulate gained political nuance.

According to French researcher Thierry Mason, the state genesis of the United States and Israel are genetically linked not only through religious thread. The two state formations are British colonies. This was done through the statistician engineering implemented at the beginning of the XVII century by Lord Protector of England Oliver Cromwell (1653-1658). According to the author, Israel is a British colony in which the Jewish diaspora in the British Empire plays a major role. The United States is also a British colony in which Cromwell sends pirate and egalitarian social strata. In both cases, it is a matter of creating a religious criterion, selected by the ruling Christian Anglican denomination in London (see Meyssan 2014).

The American theologian John Nelson Darby is considered the creator of the so-called. American Christian Zionism. His public lectures in the first half of the nineteenth century, published in English, French and Flemish, created a strong philosophical trend among Protestant circles in America and Europe. Authorities such as Charles Spurgeon, Harati Bonar, Robert N’Chayen and others have openly advocated the return of the Jews to the “Promised Land.” Among the propagandists are organizations such as the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.

In 1818, President John Adam stated that he really wanted the Jews to establish an independent state in Israel, and he believed that they would gradually become “unitary Christians” (Kark, 1994: 23).

In 1844, a professor of Hebrew at the University of New York, George W. Bush, a distant relative of both President George H. W. Bush and President George W. Bush, published a book. It is entitled “The Vision Valley or the Dry Bones of Israel have come to life”. In it, the author criticizes “slavery that has long been imposed on Jews.” He called for the restoration of the authority of the Jews over the land of Israel. According to George Bush, “once back there, most of them will embrace Christianity” (Bush, 1844: 16).

In this light, and for purely sentimental-religious reasons, in 1838 Britain established its first diplomatic mission in Palestine. It is based in Jerusalem. The Consulate is the result of the efforts of the Conservative Party MP, Lord Shaftesbury, who is a staunch Anglican evangelist (Lewis, 2014: 380).

According to English researcher Paul Merkley, the founder of modern Zionist Christianity is Pastor William Hechtler, who works as a priest at the British Embassy in Vienna. There he met and became a very close friend of Theodore Herzl, the creator of modern political Zionism and regarded as the father of the State of Israel (Merkley, 1988: 240).

For the first time, the term “Judeo-Christianity” was used in 1821 by the Irish Hebraist and Jewish missionary, Alexander McCool. It refers to Jews converted to Christianity. In 1829, the German Christian Jewish missionary, Joseph Wolf, converted to Christianity, bringing a new nuance to the meaning of the word. He believes that Judeo-Christianity must be understood as preserving some of the Jewish ritual in Christianity, in order to make it easier for Jews to join the new religion. This key term can also be found in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and George Orwell. The latter speaks rather in moral and ethical terms rather than in religious terms. The word used by Orwell in 1939 is a “Judeo-Christian” morality scheme (see Connely, 2016).

Judeo-Christianity is deeply rooted in American Protestant circles. The trend became active in the early XX century, becoming one of the force majeure factors to support the creation of the State of Israel. During World War II, Judeo-Christians in the United States created two non-Jewish organizations that openly supported Zionism. It is the American-Palestinian Committee and the Christian Council for Palestine (CCP). The latter, formed mainly of Evangelical Protestants, is becoming the main Israel lobby in the United States. The CCP became the leading mouthpiece of opposition to the UN decision in 1948 to divide the city of Jerusalem into Israeli and Arab parts.

The missionary work continues and the Judeo-Christian symbiosis is permanently established as a stumbling block to American evangelical behavior. They are a serious electoral reserve and a significant player in the US elections. According to research by the famous Pew Research Center, Protestants in the United States are over 46.5% of the population. The trend is downward, but not at the expense of other religions. Evangelicals, for their part, are 25.4%, making them the largest religious denomination in American society (America’s Changing Religious Landscape, Pew Research Center, Religion & Public Life. 12 May 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape>).

According to a study conducted by the center already cited, 82% of white evangelicals believe that God gave Israel to the Jewish people. Fewer than half of Judaism and Catholic Americans agree with this statement. According to another poll commissioned by Bloomberg TV, nearly 60% of evangelicals say the US should support Israel, even if their interests conflict with those of US citizens (see Connely, 2016).

Evangelicals in the United States are an immanent part of the Republican Party electorate. Very often, with their full mobilization, her candidate wins at the expense of the

Democratic Party. Evidence from evangelical mobilization in recent successful Republican presidents shows this. For example, behind George W. Bush – a son 74% of them stand behind him. The largest mobilization of evangelical voters occurred in 2016. Then, about 85% of this electoral contingent supports Donald Trump. During the November 2018 partial elections, the inseparable link between the current US head of state and the more radical Protestants, once more, was reaffirmed. Evangelicals are fundamentalists. He personally participated in the campaign of the Republican candidates closest to the evangelical circles, candidates for senators, congressmen, and governors. They were able to win at the expense of closer to non-evangelical circles in this political formation.

In this light, the principles, tenets, and ideas of evangelicals, including Judeo-Christian millionaire, directly reflect the foreign policy of the current US administration in the Middle East. The move of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in April 2018 is as political as it is a religious act. That was one of Trump's election promises during his election campaign in 2016. More than 60% of US evangelicals support this political act (see Illing, 2018). "Supporting Israel is not a political issue ... it is a biblical issue," said Pastor John Hayy, founder and national chairman of Christians at the United Kingdom Evangelical Organization for Israel (see Illing, 2018).

The Islamic Republic of Iran is dominated by the Shiite denomination school of the 12 imams. The Ja'afarites, as they are called, build a religious-political management paradigm, constructed on an entirely inverse form, with that of the Evangelicals. If some associate the resurrection of Christ, the messiah with the Jews, and Israel, then the other, on the contrary, bind the coming of their messiah, I have Mohammed al-Mahdi, with the destruction of the Jewish state. The Ja'afarites extend the scheme of confrontation with imaginary enemies. Among them, they place all their dogmatic opponents, both Sunnis, Christians and Jews. Still, Big Satan is the United States, and Little is Israel. The difference, however, is that the Ja'afarites are seeking the destruction of the elites, i.e. countries created by opponents, not followers themselves. It is no coincidence that under the current Iranian constitution, quotas have been set for minorities in the legislature, some of which are Jewish.

For example, the IRIB government website details the return of the messiah in great detail (see Lappin, 2006).

He will appear as a young, handsome man in Mecca who will rise up there. The Messiah will conquer the entire Arabian Peninsula, staying in Mecca for some time, and then going to Medina. Later, he will conquer Syria and Iraq and eventually settle in the Iraqi city of Kufa, which is sacred to the Shiites. The Messiah will fight the Sophians¹. In the messianic narrative of the state-run Iranian media, elements of the so-called asyah, the biography of the Prophet Muhammad and the birth of Shia in the person of its creator Ali bin Abi Talib are felt (654-661). It is noteworthy that rewriting the history of Islam, such as the Ja'afarite messiahship, is part of the aspirations of a confessional Shiite minority to become a majority in the battle with Sunni opponents. The war is against the so-called. The "mischievous elements" that the messiah will strike. One of the major battles will be the conquest of Jerusalem. The interesting thing about this case is that "Mahdi would send 10,000 people (both east and west) to kill the Safians who were in Beit al-Makdas, Jerusalem, which was currently occupied by the Zionists" (see Lappin, 2006).

¹ Maui bin Abbi Safian is the founder of the Omayyad Dynasty (661-750), whose capital is Damascus. He embodies the Sunni dominance in the battle against the rebel Shiites. The culmination of this is the defeat that his son, Yazid bin Maui (680-683), inflicted in 680 on the successor of the first Imam and the fourth Righteous Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib (654-661). The battle is taking place in one of the Shi'ite holy cities of Karbala. For more information, see: Tabari, M., *Tarikh umam wa muluk, History of Nations and Kings, Gift of Al Nahda Al Arabia*, Beirut, Vol. 5, p. 325)

A detailed scientific research of Imam Mahdi is made by an Iranian cleric, Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini. He is a member of the Council of Experts and is considered one of the main contenders for the post of spiritual leader of the Islamic Republic after the current holder, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He was born in 1925 in Najafabad, Iran (For more biographical information, see Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini's official website, <http://www.ibrahimamini.com/ar>). It is often seen as more moderate among the upper class of theologian lawyers in Shi'ite Iran. In 2015, he wrote the theoretical work, "Imam Mahdi. The true ruler of humanity" (see Amini, 2015).

The book details the idea of the Messiah and the state that he will create for the Clerics of Ja'afarit. The Iranian fakih (jurist-theologian) does a very deep dissection of the genesis of Messianic thought in Muslims, distinguishing it between Sunnis and Shiites. Quite purposefully, he quotes hadith authors who refer the origins of the Messiah to Fatima Zahra, the daughter and wife of the fourth righteous Caliph, the founder of the Shiite denomination Ali bin Abi Talib. Moreover, in the fourth paragraph of "The Invisible World and the Imam of Time," Ayatollah Amini states that Mahdi is among the heirs of the third imam, Hussein bin Ali (Amini, 2015: 62).

In the paragraph "Mahdism, Jews and Iranians", Jatollah Amini reveals why the Shiites who believe in Mahdi have a negative opinion of Jews. According to them, many Jews have embraced Islam, not for their faith alone, but for material gain and fasting. Many have achieved high status through intrigue and betrayal. The author recounts that they even deliberately entered the Islamic community to destroy it. They have caused many divisions, destruction and wars for Muslims. According to him, this is the case with the Islamic theologian Abdullah bin Saba (600-680) (Amini, 2015: 43). The latter is a former Sana'a Jew, Yemen, converted to Islamic religion (Bitar, H., Osman bin Afan, Al Ordon, Maktaba al Manar Lil Tibaa Walil Nashar, 1988: 67-89).

The Shiites' hatred of the Jews may well be the result of intra-confessional competition between two minorities. If the dominant Sunni majority is deliberately in control of the foundation of the state, including the top of the statistic pyramid – the Caliph, then minorities have always been a "democratic" scenery. They are seeking to fill the second-level positions of power. In fact, Shiites perceive converted Jews as an obstacle to getting posts in the statistic establishment. In the present case, there is virtually some kind of cummulation and acceleration of Shiite-Jewish frustration. Ethnicity is also added to the confessional principle. Shiite absorbs in itself the Persian and subsequently the Iranian component. This crystallized only in the eighteenth century, when the Sefewid dynasty, which ruled Iran during the period 1501-1722, adopted Shiite legal jurisprudence. The hatred of high-ranking Jews in the state hierarchy is conceptualized and transformed into the philosophy of Mahdism. Thus, the religious-governing ideology of the Shi'ite-Persian minority state becomes overtly anti-Semitic.

In his book, the Iranian theologian also addresses the issue of the residence of the 12th Imam. Ibrahim Amini rejects the theories of medieval Shiite fakhiyah that Imam Mahdi lives in al Jazeera al Khadra, the Green Island. These are two mythical, the Shiites, the city of Jabalka and Jabursa, which were located in the Eighth region (Ghaemmaghami, O. 92014: 140-141). He tries to be realistic and therefore claims that the Messiah lives among humen (Amini, 2015: 153).

It is no coincidence that the spiritual leader himself, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, claims that he met with Imam Mahdi in July 2010 without giving any details about the event. At the same time, as a direct consequence of this meeting, he claims to be the personal representative of the messiah. For this reason, all people should obey him (see Rosenberg, 2005).

The final paragraph, "The Marks for the Zuhur, the Emergence of Mahdi," summarizes and brings to the fore the Universalist, Islamist-centric and Shi-centric idea of Mahdism. According to the author, the center of the world is the city of Kom, the largest religious center in Iran. It will bring forth messages of victory for Islam worldwide, as this religion will become official everywhere. The messiah himself would set up a world Islamic government, members of which would be appointed governors of individual regions.

Through the prism of the utopias, the theoretical Ayatollah is trying to give the Mahdist state real economic and even urban development touches. Many of Ibrahim Amini's views are reminiscent of those of the “political urbanist” of ancient Greece, Hippodemos of Miletus, who carved out the “ideal city” in the 5th century BC.

“People’s economic condition will improve significantly. There will be plenty of rain to sink the earth into greenery. There will be all kinds of grains and fruits in abundance. The necessary improvements in agricultural production will be introduced. People will pay more attention to God’s presence than to sins. New, innovative programs will be introduced in road construction. The main thoroughfares will be sixty yards wide. There will be so much diligence in the construction of the roads that the mosques standing in the middle will be destroyed. Walkways will decorate the streets. Pedestrians will be asked to cross roads only at the designated location, while drivers will be asked to drive their vehicles only in the middle. All windows of homes facing the street will be closed. The construction of open sewers and sewers will be prohibited. The current ones will be removed. The high mosques, as well as their minarets and the bars separating the imam who leads the prayer from the worshipers, will be removed.” (Amini, 2015: 233)

The question that the author asks is: “Will the majority of the world’s population be killed?” He is seeking an answer to this complex dilemma, as Shi’a is a minority destined to rule. At the same time, he and his messiah do not want to kill the rest of the people, as this means that they will “run a cemetery”. Then they would generously offer them either to accept Islam and the Shiite version or to pay the jizya tax, as the Qur'an commands for the followers of heavenly religions (Christianity and Judaism). However, in such a situation, war was inevitable as the messiah was coming to bring about a world revolution (Amini, 2015: 235).

In the views of Iranian Ja'afarite clerics, the appearance of the messiah is directly related to the destruction of the state of Israel. Not by chance, in 1979, the first foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ibrahim Yazdi, proposed a similar foreign policy act during the commemoration of Jerusalem Day. The latter is celebrated every last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan (see Ardalan, 2013).

After Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, declared that the religious obligation of every Muslim was the liberation of Jerusalem, and subsequently every speech uttered on that day by the religious leader, added: “... there are forty days left the destruction of the State of Israel.” Moreover, the current Ja'afarite elite explains significant anti-Israeli events as a step towards the coming of the Messiah. These include the creation in 1982 of the radical Hezbollah movement in Lebanon, the war in 2006 between the Jewish state and Hezbollah, the continuing clashes between Israel and the radical Palestinian movement Hamas and others. The counter-actions, anti-Iran actions of Israel and the US have been explained by the desire of both countries to hinder and delay the appearance of the messiah. This is how the US military intervention in Iraq was interpreted in 2003 (see Ardalan, 2013).

Particularly active in promoting Mahdism as a doctrine of Iranian foreign policy is former Conservative President Mahmoud Ahmedinajad (2005-2013). He was strongly influenced by such Iranian secular and religious thinkers as Ali Shariati, Nawab Safavi, Jalal al Ahmadi, Ahmed Fardid and especially Ayatollah Mohammed Takki Mesbahi-Yazdi. In his unusual activities, for example, he wrote a letter to Mahdi, the messiah, and placed him in a well in the city of Kom with full awareness that the messiah would read it. For example, he claims that the Americans were extremely brutal in overthrowing Saddam Hussein in Iraq because they searched for “the Mahdi file but failed to find it.” Thus, in 2005, he organized the first world conference on the Mahdist doctrine, which he directly related to Iranian theocratic governing philosophy of *Wahd al-Fakih*, the dominance of religious power over secularism (Ahmadiyeh, 2008: 27-36).

The current tensions between the US and Iran, following Washington's withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal, signed in Vienna in 2015, have also given new impetus to the development of Mahdist theory. According to posters distributed near mosques in the northwestern Iranian province of Zinjan, the delay in the emergence of al-Mahdi al-montazar, the expected messiah, is due primarily to the conclusion of the Iranian nuclear program agreement. The poster depicts the spiritual leader of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a very close-up view, and much less so - US President Donald Trump. According to Iran newspaper, it is a public interpretation of a local leader of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's statements on the Iranian Nuclear Program Treaty.

The Iranian print media notes that "the person who organized the posting was Ali Mohammadi – the head of one of the bases' headquarters, the Organization for the Repression Mobilization". Extremely cruel, suppressing anti-government demonstrations, the members of this pro-government militia are usually volunteers from small towns, mostly villages, with only their leaders receiving state salaries.

In an analysis of Mohammadi's actions, the media suggested that the local Islamic activist in question had influenced and practically repeated the words of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that "the nuclear agreement would delay the emergence of Imam Mahdi" (Al Mahdi Wah al Itifaq Nahawi, Mahdi and the Nuclear Agreement, 13 July 2019, <https://eldorar.com/>).

4. Conclusion

It is apparent that visions of two minority antagonist-minded denominations clash with the assessment of the existence of the State of Israel. The first, the Evangelical, is a strong supporter of the Jewish state, and the second is the Ja'afarita, which strongly denies its existence. This type of confrontational and mutually-renouncing energy, turned into a foreign policy of two countries with enormous potential, heralds a long and devastating fight. The problem is that they are self-generating, making US-Iran relations difficult to predict. If a confrontation schedule is to be drawn, it is zigzagging. The reason is that the social strata that bring to the top of the political pyramid in the two countries the subjects who materialize the philosophies of Judaism and Mahdism are not constantly present and often give way to their national competitors.

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