A GREAT DEBATE OF AMERICAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES ON THE PALESTINE: ZIONISM OR ARAB-AWAKENING[*]

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Abstract

Since the early 19th century, American missionary activities worldwide have driven significant social, political, and economic changes. The effects of these transformations in different dimensions have influenced the relations between the US and the governments in the target regions as well as the vision of the US foreign policy. This article explores the intricate relationship between American evangelical missionary activities and US foreign policy towards Ottoman Palestine during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It examines how missionaries, driven by theological motivations and the millennialist ideology, significantly influenced the region's US diplomatic and political strategies. This study examines the tension between Political Zionism and the Arab Awakening, exploring how American missionary objectives intersected with evolving US foreign policy. This research examines American missionaries' dual impact on Jewish and Arab populations, highlighting the US's nuanced approach toward the Ottoman Empire's diverse ethnic and religious groups. The paper also explores the broader implications of missionary diplomacy, shedding light on the missionaries' ability to shape public opinion and governmental policies through their extensive networks and lobbying efforts. This study highlights the lasting impact of American evangelicalism on US-Middle East relations, offering insights into historical contexts shaping contemporary geopolitics.

Keywords: US, Palestine, Missionary, Political Zionism, Arab Awakening.

FİLİSTİN'DE AMERİKAN MİSYONERLİK FAALİYETLERİNİN BÜYÜK TARTIŞMASI: SİYONİZM YA DA ARAP UYANIŞI[1]

Öz

Bu makale, 19. yüzyılın sonları ve 20. yüzyılın başlarında Amerikan Evanjelik misyonerlik faaliyetleri ile ABD'nin Osmanlı Filistin'ine yönelik dış politikası arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Teolojik motivasyonlar ve binyılcı ideoloji tarafından yönlendirilen misyonerlerin ABD'nin bölgedeki diplomatik ve siyasi stratejilerini nasıl önemli ölçüde etkilediğini incelemektedir. Çalışma,

Amerikan misyonerlik hedefleri ile ABD'nin gelişen dış politika duruşu arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi analiz ederek, Siyasi Siyonizm'i desteklemek ile Arap Uyanışı arasındaki ikilemi incelemektedir. Amerikalı misyonerlerin rollerine ve tepkilerine odaklanan bu araştırma, misyonerlerin hem Yahudi hem de Arap nüfusu üzerindeki ikili etkisini vurgulayarak ABD'nin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun farklı etnik ve dini gruplarına yönelik nüanslı yaklaşımını ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma aynı zamanda misyoner diplomasisinin daha geniş etkilerini araştırmakta, misyonerlerin geniş ağları ve lobi faaliyetleri aracılığıyla kamuoyunu ve hükümet politikalarını şekillendirme becerilerine ışık tutmaktadır. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, Amerikan Evanjelizm' inin kökenlerinin Orta Doğu'daki ABD dış ilişkilerini şekillendirmedeki kalıcı mirasının altını çizmekte ve günümüz jeopolitik dinamiklerini etkileyen tarihsel bağlamın kapsamlı bir şekilde anlaşılmasını sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *ABD, Filistin, Misyonerlik, Siyasi Siyonizm, Arap Uyanışı.*

Introduction

Missionaries played a significant role in US diplomacy. As Edward Mead Earle observed, *'No US-based activity received as much political and financial support as Christian missionary work in the Middle East* (Earle, 1929, p. 398).*''* Even this example shows the extent to which missionaries could impose their theological aims on politics through their networks. Although US foreign policy in the Middle East was influenced by missionaries, it did not involve direct military intervention or significant political pressure. Generally, actions aligned with US public opinion, and soft power elements were prominent in these actions. This was largely due to the US's diplomatic experience in various global regions. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, missionaries exercised influence on the US governments and demanded active threatening of the Ottoman Empire by the US Navy, called the "Gunboat Policy." However, the US foreign affairs did not rely on the opinions of missionaries for such harsh interventions because the US did not want to trigger anger in the region against the US; this can be expressed as a justified reluctance. The Boxer Rebellion, which started against the social transformation made by the missionaries operating in China and reached a dangerous point, created the most painful experience in this regard (Earle, 1929, p. 417). However, despite this cautious attitude, the foundations of the Turkish and Ottoman image in the US were laid in the shadow of the American missionaries' subjective observations and theological motivations (Earle, 1929, p. 417).

To reveal the strong relationship between American missionary activities and US foreign policy, which is the primary purpose of this study, it is one of the most appropriate case studies to examine the attitude of American missionaries within the scope of the Palestine Question. Considering that American missionaries started their activities in the Ottoman Empire for Jewish restoration, how did reforms transform the missionary activities, and were the missionary interests in the US foreign policy prioritized? What

attitudes did the American missionaries adopt, particularly Political Zionism and Arab Nationalism, which emerged as the essential problems of the late 19th century?

The main argument of this study, to convey beyond a narrative of the missionary activities of Protestant churches in the US on the expansionism of the Christian religion, has been tried to be proven within the scope of this research through the question of whether US foreign policy has a more supportive attitude towards the Arab Awakening or Political Zionism. This study also, shows that despite the Jewish Restoration motivation, the main reason American missionary activities were directed towards the Holy Land, field realities had a high missionary impact on Arab society. At this point, it has also been discussed which local elements the US foreign policy supported in the lands of the Ottoman Empire, where Arabs lived densely, against the aim of political Zionism to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, and which position it took in the international public opinion during and after the First World War.

American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire actively engaged in diplomatic efforts concerning the communities they served. It can be said that US foreign policy followed complex and non-integrated trends in the distinction between Arabs and Jews in the early 20th century. Thus, this study attempts to explain how the policies followed by the White House, Congress, and the US State Department regarding Palestine were directed within the framework of the differences of opinion of American missionaries by giving compelling examples.

This study employs a qualitative historical analysis approach to examine the relationship between American evangelical missionary activities and US foreign policy in Ottoman Palestine during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The research is structured around a critical evaluation of primary and secondary sources, including missionary correspondence, official U.S. diplomatic documents, contemporary newspaper articles, and scholarly works on American Protestant missions and their geopolitical implications.

To assess the influence of missionaries on U.S. foreign policy, the study integrates discourse analysis and historical contextualization. Missionary reports, theological writings, and political communications are analyzed to understand how religious ideologies, particularly millennialist and Zionist thought, shaped American diplomatic attitudes toward the Palestine Question. Furthermore, archival materials from institutions such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) and the Evangelical Alliance are examined to trace missionary lobbying efforts within U.S. governmental structures.

Comparative case analysis is also applied to highlight the intersection of missionary work with both Political Zionism and the Arab Awakening. This includes an evaluation of American missionary engagements with Jewish and Arab populations in Ottoman Palestine, assessing how their activities

influenced, and were influenced by, shifting US policy positions. The research also considers the role of key American figures, including diplomats, missionaries, and policymakers, in shaping the discourse surrounding Palestine during and after the First World War.

1. MILLENIALISM AND PALESTINE

At the beginning of the 20th century, Protestantism in the US symbolized a framework, allowing the establishment of various groups within the many theological and worldly debates. The population of the US was approximately 76 million in 1900; on the other hand, the number of people belonging to any Protestant congregation was 16 million. While the number of members varied between half a million and 6 million, the largest Protestant congregations in terms of membership during this period were Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalian, Congregationalism, and Calvinism (Reformed Church) (Handy, 2007, p. 225). Evangelical Protestants believed that the Bible was infallible and that the first meaning that came to mind when read was the actual Bible. In contrast, Protestant modernists were opposed to word-for-word interpretation. Although within every Protestant congregation, some groups tended to such mainstream understanding and interpretation, the most significant conflict in this fundamental distinction was between the Baptist and Presbyterian congregations (Marsden, 2006, p. 104).

The traditionalist-modernist division, which started with the interpretation of the Bible and was common among the American Protestant community, was influenced by religious and sociological developments and placed the steps that the American nation and state would or should take in domestic and foreign policy into the focus of a theological discussion. For example, in the process of the Social Gospel reform through the First World War and in the continuation of this process, a debate arose between modernists and conservative evangelists over the relationship between the role of the US in the world and the expansion of the role of Protestants active in the US, as the role of the US expanded. Protestants in the US argued that Protestants would be active in the new order that the US would implement in the world; conservative Protestants aimed to achieve this within theological principles, and liberal Protestants with education and technical progress (Szasz, 1982, p. 92). The progressive and conservative Protestant understanding, which advocated the active involvement of the US in world politics, was influenced by the Balfour Declaration in the First World War; as a result, a theological propaganda field was formed in line with the shaping of US foreign policy in parallel with Britain, emphasizing the possibility of realizing the "millennialist" thought in real life (Szasz, 1982, p. 92).

After the First World War, the tendency of some Protestants in the US to Zionist thought created an excellent opportunity for Jewish Zionists. Accordingly, William E. Blackstone convened the Jewish-Christian

Conference in Chicago in 1890. In the First World War, Louis Brandeis and Stephen Wise, together with important figures of American Zionism, created pressure on Wilson's Government to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine (Weiss, 1994, p. 56). After US President Warren G. Harding encouraged the American Congress to sign a joint declaration on the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine in 1922, the American Palestine Committee, an institution where Jewish and Protestant Zionists worked together, was established in 1925 with the support of the US government of the time (Weiss, 1994, p. 67).

The establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was a subject of great debate among American Protestants, especially in the period before 1948. This debate between pro-Zionist politically progressive religiously conservative Protestants (Ariel, 1975, p. 30) and politically stabilized religiously liberal Protestants centered on whether to support Arabs with whom American missionaries interacted highly in the Middle East or Jews whom they could not effectively influence (Ariel, Eschatology, Evangelism, and Dialogue: The Presbyterian Mission to the Jews 1920—1960, 1975, p. 30).

So, how did Zionist ideology gain influence in Protestant theology? The examples and historical background that can be given for this require a narrative that needs hundreds of pages. Still, it is helpful to explain it simply without diving into the theological background of the issue. The Restoration of Jews movement, led by Britain at the beginning of the 19th century, was Europe's effort to rebuild Jerusalem and the Holy Land, which goes back to Napoleon himself. Napoleon's call to the Jews of Asia and Africa to join him during his campaigns in North Africa and the Middle East (Laqueur, 1972, p. 42) became an alternative way for Europe, especially Britain, to transform the Jewish problem (Ariel, 1975, p. 30). In addition, according to the millennial understanding, which strongly influenced Protestantism, it is believed that 144,000 Jews will accept Protestantism a few days before the return of Jesus to the world. This issue is the main reason why Protestantism primarily targeted Jews at the time (Carenen, 2012, p. 8).

As mentioned, the various sources were related to the histography of American missionaries in the Ottoman Middle East and missionary institutions' works among the native population; in the first years when American missionaries carried out their missionary activities in Palestine and Syria, their aim was the Jewish Restoration. Still, in the following years, they directed these goals towards other ethnic and religious minorities. The main elements of this change of direction are the sharing of mission areas among missionaries of different nationalities, the fact that the Jewish population in Palestine was less than expected, and the majority of the Jews in the region did not want to be converted into Protestantism because they were religious Jews. However, at the end of the 19th century, apart from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the Presbyterian Church, American missionary organizations that came to Palestine for the first time and Evangelical interest groups that began to be influential in US politics,

made various attempts to restart missionary activities in Palestine. At the same time that these attempts emerged, the emergence of political Zionism as a movement of thought and the immigration of Jews fleeing the Russian Pogroms to Ottoman lands, and especially to Palestine, led to the revival of the idea of "Jewish Restoration" among American Protestant missionaries (Burton, 1964, pp. 203-204).

As a fact, the foreign missionary work carried out in this period had a significant impact on the newly immigrating Jewish population during the late 1800s. The incoming population was not a wealthy community, and the Jews readily accepted the missionaries' educational activities and aid activities (Kark, 1983, s. 50).

While the sympathy of the American Protestant missionaries for Political Zionism within the framework of the Jewish Restoration is apparent, the steps taken in practice due to a balanced policy were more cautious. It is a fact that Christian Zionists in America have always wanted the Jews to establish a state. However, the time when their voices were loudest was the period after 1946, when the Arab-Jewish conflicts intensified. This support evolved into a new stage after establishing the state of Israel. After this period, many Christian congregations and clergy tried to direct the US public opinion with newspapers, magazines, and meetings (Burton, 1964, p. 204). The United Presbyterian Church (the merging of the Liberal and Conservative Presbyterian Churches) showed its side by vigorously supporting the Jews (Burton, 1964, p. 206) during the founding phase of the state of Israel.

To better evaluate the American missionaries operating in Palestine in the 19th and early 20th centuries, examining other countries' missionary organizations and their influence could be beneficial. The Americans were less effective in fieldwork than the British and German missionaries (in and around Jerusalem). This passive policy can also be evaluated as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions' choice not to break the influence of the British missionaries who had been working in Palestine for a long time and its choice to prefer a region with a more expansive spiritual hinterland such as Lebanon. The active missions of the American Board in Palestine between 1821 and 1945 were almost completely closed due to the active effort of the united Anglo-German Bishopric, which was established in 1841 (Richter, 1910, pp. 243-258). However, traveling missionaries and small-scale "Sunday Schools" affiliated with the Beirut-based Syrian mission continued their activities. The United Anglo-German Bishopric continued its activities from its establishment in 1841 until 1886. After 1887, the British missionaries were organized separately under the Anglican Bishopric, and the German missionaries under the umbrella of the Lutheran Bishopric (Richter, 1910, pp. 243-258). The British missionaries, who increased their converting efforts in Jerusalem in the 1840s, focused on the Jews. The first Bishop, Solomon Alexander, was a Jewish convert. A bookstore, an industrial (craft) house, a small hospital, and a primary school were established during this period (Frantzman, Glueckstadt, & Kark, 2011, pp. 103-109). Unsuccessful

attempts to convert the Jews were abandoned when Samuel Gabot became bishop of the united Protestant church in 1848. Instead of the London Jewish Society, the Church Mission Society (CMS) focused on the local "nominal" Christians. In many parts of Palestine, missionary activities were carried out against Christians from other sects, and many churches were opened. The CMS and the Anglo-Prussian Church worked as a united Evangelical Church until the term of Bishop Francis Popham Blyth; however, at that time, the "Jerusalem and East Mission" was established by the British missionaries and missionary activities began to be directed directly from the local church. Christ Church was located opposite the Jaffa Gate of the Old City. Its construction started in 1842 and was completed in 1849 (Frantzman, Glueckstadt, & Kark, 2011, pp. 103-109). As the center of the Bishopric and the first Protestant church in the Holy Land, it emerged as a reflection of the solidaristic attitude of different Protestant societies.

2. MISSIONARY DIPLOMACY, ARAB AWAKENING, AND POLITICAL ZIONISM

To understand whether the missionary work served imperialism or not, the publications of the executives of the missionary institutions in the US and the clergy working in these institutions, as well as the field studies of the missionaries, need to be examined. It can be enlightening to give an example from Josiah Strong and his famous work, "Our Country Possible Future and Its Present Crises." Strong was the director of the American Home Mission Society, a local partner of American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM), and secretary-general of the Evangelical Alliance for the United States. As a missionary with an American nationalist vision, Strong argued that the cooperation between missionary work and the US foreign policy would provide unlimited financial opportunities for the United States (Reed, 1972, p. 232).

The importance of Strong at this point was that he had established an upper umbrella organization (Evangelical Alliance for the United States) so that ABCFM, Presbyterian Church, and other missionary organizations could vigorously defend their interests in the American public and politics (Jordan, 1971, p. 236) (Reed, 1972, p. 230).

It would not be wrong to say that the American missionaries tried to direct the US foreign policy in line with their higher interests and often succeeded. For example, the Evangelical Alliance, which was established in 1894 as a result of the arrest of American missionaries in 1893 on the grounds of supporting separatist movements in the Ottoman Empire and the closing of schools in some parts of the Ottoman Empire, actively reacted against the Government when the Armenian revolts broke out again in 1895 (Reed, 1972, pp. 230-232). Nevertheless, the US missionaries who were charged with being involved in the Armenian uprising in 1895 were detained, and many missionary schools were closed or damaged in armed conflicts. Thereupon,

ABCFM demanded compensation of USD 100,000 from the Ottoman Government, and when this was not accepted, it increased its anti-Ottoman propaganda to the American public (Jordan, 1971, p. 236). Missionaries of ABCFM opposed the Ottoman administrative authorities, who recommended that the American Government cut off its activities with the Armenians in Anatolia. In December 1895, using the Missionary Lobby, they even consulted with the minister of foreign affairs at the time, Richard Olney, about a possible US military operation plan for Anatolia (Jordan, 1971, p. 236).

Institutions operating in the Ottoman Empire and communicating with the Evangelical Alliance organized local churches to protect American interests. Thus, the motto "missionaries for America" was put forward both to influence domestic politics and to establish further protection of the missionaries by the US foreign affairs. The Republicans were supported, claiming that previous governments failed to protect the interests of the missionaries adequately; thus, McKinley won the US presidential election with the great support and lobbying of the Evangelical Alliance after President Cleveland, who could not please the missionaries in the events of 1895 (Jordan, 1971, p. 238). Under the influence of the Second Great Awakening, American Protestant beliefs about the end of the world were reshaped from a millennial perspective, and as a reflection of this in politics, missionaries became an influential driving force in the foreign policy approaches of the Republican Party at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (Beam, 1976, p. 183).

In his letter to James Barton, a senior missionary at ABCFM, Strong urged the missionaries to take an active stance against the Ottoman Empire and clearly stated that the US government would act as the police in this direction (Strong, 1897): *"It will be to compel the Turk to live up to his treaty obligations and pay his bills. If I preach the Gospel and a drunken man comes into the congregation and calls a policeman, it is not to compel that man to accept the Gospel but to compel that man to keep quiet, not to prevent other peoples' accepting the Gospel."*

As in Strong's words and many other examples, the capacity of American missionaries to direct the general opinion of US politics and public opinion was quite strong. Missionaries in different countries/regions, such as China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and the Middle East, were the source of world knowledge for the US beyond their activities in American historiography, trade, and US diplomacy. In the 19th century and later, missionaries had an essential share in transferring intellectual and political information about many parts of the world to the United States (Grabill J. L., 1972, p. 95).

In other words, US foreign policy was not manipulated to achieve Evangelical goals in the Middle East. Theological efforts were used to support or instrumentalize American expansionism in many different geographies. Grabill contributes to this geographical diversity by citing missionary views,

with an example from the Philippines (Grabill J. L., 1972, p. 99): *"President John Quincy Adams as stating that the US has conquered Hawaii, not with victory over the military forces but over the mind and heart by the celestial panoply of the gospel of peace and love."*

Another method used by American missionaries both to spread Protestantism and to expand their sphere of influence globally was the use of a local figure recruited in one region to serve on behalf of missionaries in a different part of the world. An excellent example in this context is Ahmet Fehmi. The famous Egyptian convert Ahmet Fehmi and his life were used as a propaganda tool for missionaries. He was a local missionary and one of the names who knew best the methods of missionary activities in the Middle East and Far Asia. After becoming a Christian with the support of Presbyterians, Ahmet Fehmi could only stay in Egypt for one year, moved to England, and then went to China to work in the missionary activities of the British London Missionary Society in China (Zhangzhou, South Fukien) (Sharkey, 2009, p. 313).

In summary, "Evangelical Modernity" can be used as a unique concept to describe American missionaries' activities, directions, and manipulations in the context of US foreign policy. Evangelical Modernity can be used to describe the work of missionaries, especially in the last quarter of the 19th century and in the early 20th century. This was an effort to take an active position in the international politics of America, which rose as a rival to European dominance with the developing technology (Makdisi, 1997, p. 681). Makdisi said, *"It is difficult to say that the American missionaries in the Middle East had a direct action for colonial purposes, unlike the missionary institutions operating in China and India.* (Makdisi, Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity, 1997, p. 693)*"* It is a fact that the existing international power balance of the period did not allow for active political interventions of the US despite the driving force of the missionaries. However, the US foreign policy, which took an active stance within the scope of the Paris Peace Conference, and Wilson's interventionism in international politics, gave the signals that the US would take a more active stance in the global politics of the 20th century. The general premise put forward by the American missionaries regarding the transformation of the world during this period was to transform the unenlightened world by combining modern science and secular technology with the Protestant ethic. In this context, technology was also instrumentalized for religious salvation (Makdisi, 1997, p. 683).

In this context, opening a separate parenthesis on American missionary activities and the First World War would be helpful. The Ottoman Empire's decision to join the Central Powers in October 1914 immediately affected American missionaries in Palestine. As the empire became embroiled in the conflict, it began to view foreign missionaries, including Americans, with increasing suspicion. Ottoman authorities were concerned that

missionaries might collaborate with enemy powers, such as Britain, France, or Russia, or engage in activities undermining Ottoman rule. As a result, missionaries faced greater scrutiny and restrictions on their activities, which hampered their ability to carry out their work effectively (Makdisi, 2007, p. 242). One of the significant challenges faced by American missionaries in Palestine during the First World War was the imposition of travel restrictions by the Ottoman authorities. These restrictions were implemented to control the movement of people and information within the empire, which was necessary to maintain security and prevent espionage. For missionaries, these restrictions made it difficult to move between mission stations or to visit remote areas where they provided services to local communities (Makdisi, 1996, p. 243). Additionally, communication restrictions were imposed, making it challenging for missionaries to maintain contact with their sponsoring organizations in the United States or to receive financial support and instructions (Tibi, 1998, p. 122). The censorship of mail and the monitoring of telegraph communications further hindered the ability of missionaries to communicate freely, isolating them from their colleagues and the outside world.

After the 1860s, American dispensationalism found wide coverage among many Protestant congregations, such as Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptists, and Congregationalists, and formed the foundation of interventionism in the US foreign policy theologically. The theological legitimacy of national superiority also coincides with the aftermath of the American Civil War (Ariel & Kark, 1996, p. 645). Thus, ignoring the influence of Protestant theology and missionaries while evaluating the US foreign policy steps in the late 19th and early 20th centuries would be a great mistake.

It can be seen that an unshakable foundation was formed in the early 1900s in American institutions operating in the Middle East, which was the most crucial target of American missionaries. When the First World War started, 166 missionaries, 146 churches, and 16,000 church members were under the ABCFM administration in Anatolia. In comparison, 36 missionaries, 35 churches, and nearly 3,000 church members were under the Presbyterian Church administration in Iran. The presence of 31 missionaries, 34 churches, and almost 3000 church members in the Syrian Missions, also under the Presbyterian Church administration, shows us that significant investments connected to the American missionary network had a strong organizational chart (Barrett, 2013, p. 35).

Although the primary goal of American missionaries was converting Jews to Christianity, neither Jews nor Muslims tended to Protestantism in the first three decades of the 1800s. The missionaries who hit the ice realities of the field after they set out from the US aimed for the Eastern churches and tried to convert them to "true" Christianity. ABCFM general secretary Rufus Anderson's advocacy that for the success of the missionaries, the so-called

Christians must first be rehabilitated and that people of different religions would see the right path from them became the main idea of ABCFM and continued throughout the 19th century (Anderson, 1872, pp. 1-2): *"We may not hope for the conversion of the Mohammedans unless true Christianity be exemplified before them by the Oriental Churches. To them, the native Christians represent the Christian religion, and they see that these are no better than themselves. They think them worse, and therefore, the Moslem believes the Koran to be more excellent than the Bible."*

Missionaries' intervention in international politics can be divided into direct and indirect. It is possible to categorize their direct interventions as political lobbying and public propaganda activities and their indirect interventions as the political consequences of their activities in their operation regions.

It is a fact that American Protestants, who had powerful lobbying activities in terms of US foreign politics, perceived the activities of Protestant missionaries as a priority. Although the methods and purposes differed occasionally among the Protestant missionaries, the Protestant lobby defended its missionary interests. The Middle East was one of the regions where the Protestant missionaries could direct US foreign policy to a large extent. However, they had many investments in China, India, and Central America (Barrett, 2013, p. 48). Concentrating on minorities such as Armenian, Arab, Jewish, Bulgarian, Kurdish, and Assyrian, American missionaries achieved great success in building the US foreign policy around the interests of these minorities.

In 1842, the US Secretary of State, Daniel Webster, ordered the US ambassador in İstanbul that missionaries must seize every opportunity to increase their success (Oren, 2007, p. 121). Theodore Roosevelt sent the Mediterranean navy of the US to the front of İskenderun after the Armenian events following the year 1905 (Oren, 2007, p. 311). It can be said that the role of the political and cultural ties formed by the missionary educational institutions with indirect influence in the region's transformation was huge. It was the political choice of the American missionaries to support the Armenian rebellions and the establishment of an independent Armenia, as well as to support the rebels with sympathy during the Bulgarian rebellion (Tyrrell, 2010, p. 104). Moreover, American missionaries were appointed as consultants to many post-war research committees during the First World War.

The American missionaries had tense relations with the Ottoman state over the Arab population of the Ottoman Empire and many other ethnicities. Propaganda on Arab nationalism and self-determination was carried out at American universities in Beirut and Cairo. One of the most prominent examples in this regard would be Howard S. Bliss, the second principal of the Syrian Protestant College. Although Howard S. Bliss participated in the post-

war Paris Peace Conference within the US delegation, he acted to prepare an environment suitable for Arab self-determination (Brand, 2014):

As a result of the pressure of the American missionaries in the Paris Conference, the efforts to establish an independent research commission and to investigate public opinion in the Middle East were handed over to the missionaries. All members of the Kings-Crane Commission had close ties to Protestant missionary organizations. In the post-First World War situation, the US missionaries' political attitudes supported Arab nationalism. The Kings-Crane Commission even had a recommendation against Jews acquiring a homeland in Palestine (Ariel, 2017, p. 3). *"Jewish immigration should be limited, and the project for making Palestine distinctly a Jewish commonwealth should be given up."*

Until the establishment of Israel in 1948, many important US missionaries working in the field did not support the idea of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine (Grabill J. L., 1971, pp. 79-80). The first two principals of the Syrian Protestant College, Daniel Bliss and Howard Bliss, were deeply pro-Arab. Moreover, essential missionaries in the Middle East published a letter in the New York Times in 1947 against the UN's decision to divide Palestine and mentioned in this protest letter that the Arabs, who had no prejudice against the Jews, would wage a just war to defend their lands (Bliss, 1947). Famous missionaries of the period, such as Harold B. Hoskins, Allen O. Whipple, and Albert W. Staub, jointly signed this letter. Bayard Dodge, the third principal of SPC, expressed the injustice of the sharing plan as follows (Dodge, 1948):

"It is the hills and mountains, generally speaking, that go to the Arabs and the fertile plains to the Jews. Palestine 's only safe wintertime port— Haifa—will be in the Jewish State. The principal cash export of Palestine is citrus fruits. The citrus groves are owned approximately half and half by Arabs and Jews. Virtually all of them will be in the Jewish State. The Jewish State gets an overwhelming proportion of all the other economic values in Palestine... what is proposed is an Arab State which would start off as an international mendicant."

"Can we really contend that the Arabs have a duty to be more hospitable to refugees than we are?"

In addition to these views, it would be helpful to consider Robert Kaplan's comment stating the support of the American missionaries in the field to the Arab uprising in the 19th century (Kaplan, 1993, p. 62): *"The Arab Revolt, which (T.E.) Lawrence wound up leading, was merely the military corollary to the American missionary-led Arab Awakening that took place in the cities of Syria in the nineteenth century…"*

The issue of whether to support Political Zionism or the Arab Separatist Movement on the scales where politicians supported by American Protestants, missionaries in the mainland and overseas, and Protestant interest groups could not act in line with a definite opinion was also affected by the attitudes

of the diplomats sent by the US to Palestine. While the duties of many consuls in the Mediterranean in the 19th and 20th centuries were to deal with ports and trade, the agencies in Jerusalem were interested in the religious and social structure of the city. Thus, many US diplomats assigned to Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were from Protestant clergy. Between 1844 and 1917, 18 US consuls were appointed to Jerusalem (Goldman, 1997, p. 157). The years when Saleh Merrill (1837-1909) was serving as the US consulate in Jerusalem coincided with the period when the first Jewish immigration to Palestine (Aliyah I) took place (1882-1907). During this period, he was against both the establishment of Evangelical colonies (the Spafford family were American settlers from the Chicago Baptist Church) and the exodus of Eastern European Jews who immigrated to Palestine from their agricultural plantations (Goldman, 1997, p. 154).

Another name among American Protestant missionaries who tried to manipulate the US government's position between Zionism and the Arab separatist movement was Cleveland Dodge. This man, who had had a connection with W. Wilson from his academic career at Princeton University, tried to influence the US president and foreign policy in an attitude that prioritized the missionary activities of his family among the Arabs. Dodge, who had investments in the Arab-dominated regions of the Ottoman Empire and supported the education, aid, and health activities led by the missionaries in these regions, was one of the people who somewhat reduced the influence of Zionism in the US foreign policy (Zachs, 2005, p. 249). Sir William E. Dodge, the grandfather of Cleveland Dodge and a devoted Protestant, contributed to the construction of the Syrian Protestant College. His father, William Dodge Jr., was a member of the College's board of trustees, and his uncle, Stuart Dodge, was the chairman of the SPC's board of trustees from 1907 to 1921. Two of Cleveland Dodge's four children, Elizabeth and Stuart, worked in Ottoman lands as educational missionaries. Elizabeth Dodge married George H. Huntington, who served as vice president of Robert College and a professor at the school. In contrast, Bayard Dodge married the daughter of Howard S. Bliss, the second principal of the SPC. Furthermore, Bayard Dodge became the new principal of the Syrian Protestant College in 1923, and Cleveland Dodge served as the chairman of the Robert College's board of trustees (Zachs, 2005, pp. 250-255).

Although Dodge did not take any official duties, he always kept close relations with the White House. The appointment of the famous American Jew Louis D. Brandeis to the US Supreme Court as attorney general and the sending of YMCA president John R. Mott as ambassador to China were again the result of Dodge's lobbying activities and his close friendship with President Wilson (Zachs, 2005, pp. 250-255).

Dodge and James L. Barton found an excellent opportunity for propaganda toward US public opinion through the ACASR, established during the First World War. Dodge and Barton intended to realize the virtue-

signaling that the British tried to do for the Jews on behalf of the Armenians in Anatolia and the Arabs in Syria. Dodge's close relations with the Government made it easier for missionaries to access foreign affairs documents and data, and this data was provided to the press by missionaries in the United States (Zachs, 2005, pp. 255-259).

It would not be wrong to say that the basis of the Arab Awakening-supported views of the representatives of the American missionaries on the ground was the effects of their close relations with the Arab population in the region for many years.

The Arab Awakening, a term coined by the British Orientalist George Antonius, refers to the rise of Arab nationalism and the quest for independence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries within the Ottoman Empire (Antonius, 1938). This period witnessed a cultural, social, and political resurgence among the Arab peoples, eventually forming modern nation-states in the Middle East. A less explored aspect of this phenomenon is the role of American missionaries in the region, who contributed significantly to transforming the Arab world by introducing modern education, healthcare, and technology.

American missionaries began arriving in the Ottoman Middle East in the early 19th century to spread Christianity among the local population. However, they soon realized the difficulties in converting the predominantly Muslim population and shifted their focus towards establishing schools, colleges, and medical facilities (Makdisi, 2007, p. 57). These institutions significantly promoted modern ideas and values in the region, including secularism, nationalism, and democracy. The educational institutions established by the American missionaries, such as the Syrian Protestant College (American University of Beirut - AUB) and Robert College in Istanbul, played a crucial role in shaping the intellectual landscape of the Arab Awakening. These schools provided a modern, Western-style education to their students and acted as a hub for the exchange of ideas and the development of new ideologies. Many of the key figures in the Arab Awakening, including politicians, writers, and journalists, were educated in these institutions, which significantly influenced their thinking and contributed to the emergence of Arab nationalism. The legacy of American missionaries in the Ottoman Middle East can still be felt today, with many of the educational and medical institutions they established continuing to play a significant role in the region (Makdisi, 2007, p. 71). Institutions such as the American University of Beirut and the American University in Cairo are now considered among the most prestigious universities in the Arab world, attracting students from across the region and beyond. The impact of the American missionaries' educational institutions on the intellectual landscape of the Arab Awakening cannot be overstated. These schools not only provided students with a modern education but also served as hubs for exchanging ideas and developing new ideologies. By fostering an environment that encouraged debate and the exploration of new ideas, these institutions facilitated the

growth of intellectual movements that would later form the foundation of the Arab nationalist movement. Prominent Arab intellectuals, writers, and journalists educated in these institutions played a crucial role in disseminating the ideas and values they had learned. Through their writings and speeches, they introduced their fellow Arabs to concepts such as democracy, secularism, and nationalism, challenging the prevailing norms and traditions of the Ottoman Empire (Makdisi, 2007, p. 65). As a result, these institutions became breeding grounds for Arab nationalist thought and played an essential role in shaping the Arab Awakening.

The roots of the symbolism of "chosen people" and "promised land" within the US society go back to the discovery of the new world. The new continent was a promised gift that would reshape the world for those who immigrated there (Davidson, 2007, p. 191). There is a positive correlation between missionary work and evangelical expectations. For the missionaries who struggled to ensure the thousand-year reign of Jesus, the 20th Chapter of the Book of Revelation was the primary source of inspiration (Barrett, 2013, p. 142). Many references to the Old Testament were made in the early Puritan understanding. The new world was perceived as the new Zion (Davis, 1972, p. 5). This was a compelling theme that united American Christians and Jews (Davis, 1972, p. 45). At this point, it was inevitable for American Protestants to engage in activities targeting Jews (Goldblatt, 1968, p. 456). *"The Englishmen who came to the New World brought with them a love for the Old Testament that led to a love for the Holy Land; it explains why America became "New Canaan" and why many of its cities were named after Biblical places."*

The process from the expulsion and conversion of the Native Americans to the colonization of the Philippines in 1898 influenced the vision of American Protestants and many politicians who were in some way close to them. For example, American idealism, which became more popular during Woodrow Wilson's term, predicted that the US would provide political and economic salvation, just as Protestant missionary work mediated spiritual salvation (Davidson, 2007, p. 191).

Christian-Zionism was a religious and political movement that triggered serious lobbying within Evangelical groups during the First World War and between the 1970s and 2000s (Ariel, 2017, p. 3). Although Christian Zionism was triggered initially by millennialist understanding, it became prominent in the US in the last decade of the 19th century. According to Yaakov Ariel, it is possible to say that the influence of Christian Zionism has been pushed into the background in historiography, but especially in the US public opinion, the idea of Zionism has become prominent with the joint efforts of both American Christian Zionists and American Jews (Ariel, 2017, p. 3).

In 17th-century England, Puritan interpretations of the Christian Bible began to rely on more material and objective examples. Thus, the idea of

Messianism and Millennialism, which had been voiced in the Christian world since the Middle Ages, spread among Protestants in England. A manifestation of the "Kingdom of Heaven" emerged through the revival of historical examples in the Bible. Generally speaking, the coming of Jesus required a City of David, a Jewish Kingdom, and a Homeland. The fact that the Jews were the most crucial object of millennial thought also permeated American Protestant theology from England. Throughout the 19th century, conservative American Protestants emphasized the millennial thought and the central place of the Jews in this plan. Writers such as C. I. Scofield (1845–1926) and Arno C. Gaebelein (1860–1945) were pioneers of Christian Zionism through their works (Ariel, 2017, p. 13).

The fact that Christian Zionism in America reached a broad spectrum almost coincided with the First World War. Christian-Zionist millennial Protestants were encouraged by the active propaganda of Jewish Zionists in the United States. William Blackstone, who wrote the first declaration dedicated to the US Congress for the Jews to have a homeland in 1891, wrote a second request in 1916 to President Woodrow Wilson during the First World War with the support of the Jewish Zionists (Louis Brandeis, Steven Wise, Jacob de Haas, and Nathan Straus) (Ariel, 2017, p. 13). According to Yaakov Ariel, Blackstone's efforts in 1916-17 were much more effective than in 1891. In addition, the support of the Balfour declaration by the US was related to the strength and efforts of Christian Zionism in the US (Ariel, 2017, p. 14).

After all, Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism are different from each other because they represent different cultures, societies, and hopes (Ariel, 2017, p. 21). But it should not be forgotten that the first goal of both Zionism types was to settle the Jews in Palestine and make them independent there.

One of the biggest supporters of the restoration of Israel and the return of Jews to Palestine was William Eugene Blackstone. In this regard, Blackstone (Ariel, 2012, p. 462) presented his first petition to US President Benjamin Harrison and Secretary of State James G. Blaine. The content of it included the gathering of European states with the efforts of the US to evaluate the situation of the Jews and to establish a homeland in Palestine for the Jews. 413 very famous Americans signed this petition (Davidson, 2007, p. 68). For example, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Supreme Court Chief Justice, J. P. Morgan, and John D. Rockefeller were among the signatory names (Davidson, 2007, p. 192). Ernest R. Sandeen expresses how the Protestants in the US welcomed the idea of Jewish Restoration, especially before and during the First World War (Sandeen, 1970., p. 234): *"Millenarians watched in fascination the formation of Zionism under Theodor Herzl and the meeting of the first Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, and millenarians correctly, almost instinctively, grasped the significance of Allenby's capture of Jerusalem and celebrated the event as the fulfillment of prophecy."*

In 1916, at the time of the Balfour Declaration, with the decision taken by the American Presbyterian General Assembly, important Protestant organizations of the US adopted the idea of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine (Grabill J. L., 1971, p. 178). The close contacts of British foreign secretary Balfour and US President Wilson on the Jewish question were supported by many US newspapers and Democrat and Republican senators (Goldblatt, 1968, p. 460). However, at this point, another development should be mentioned; for example, Secretary of State Robert Lansing set back the Presbyterian General Assembly's call to Wilson (1916) on the grounds that it would "trigger anti-Semitism (Sharif, 1983, p. 94)."

In June 1918, the Zionist Organization of America sought support for the Balfour Declaration with letters to Congress and the House of Representatives. 69 senators from 43 states and 231 representatives from 44 states responded to this letter with a promise of support (Goldblatt, 1968, p. 495) (Wilson, 1918):

"In the progress of the Zionist movement in the United States and the Allied countries since the Declaration by Mr. Balfour on behalf of the British Government."

"As for your representations touching Palestine, I have before this expressed my approval of the declaration of the British Government regarding the aspirations and historic claims of the Jewish people in regard to Palestine. I am, moreover, persuaded that the Allied nations, with the fullest concurrence of our Government and people, are agreed that in Palestine shall be laid the foundations of a Jewish commonwealth."

Although the missionaries in the field favored the Arabs, it can be said that Zionism found strong support in moral terms, but the actions of the US government were also ambivalent in a way. Beyond the legislative and executive branches, there were divergent views within the Department of State and the Near East Division. Wilson explicitly supported Zionism in order not to lose the support of Zionists both close to him and in the society; however, he did not take any actual responsibility, allowing Britain to pave the way for Zionism to succeed. Nevertheless, he welcomed the steps taken by Britain. Despite Wilson's wishes in good faith, no steps were taken entirely in favor of the Jews. American intelligence even prepared reports stating that a two-state solution would be more reasonable even if the Jews established a state in Palestine (Miller, 1924, pp. 263-264). The US Congress approved the "Establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine" resolution in 1922, which was similar to the Balfour Declaration (MacDonald, 2012, pp. 19-20).

In the late 1920s and 1930s, Zionism declared its victory in the US. The Zionists argued that there was a connection between them and the American settlers and that they were Western "pioneers" heading toward the Middle East. The discourse in an article published in the New York Times on June 11, 1922, is a good example of propaganda on this subject (Davidson, 2007, p. 193). *"These immigrants to Palestine are indeed the Jewish Puritans. Their*

settlements are the Jamestown and Plymouth of the new House of Israel. They are building the new Judea even as the Puritans built New England. The settlers are like the followers of Daniel Boone, who opened the West for American settlers while facing the dangers of Indian warfare. In the process, the Jews bring prosperity and happiness to Palestine."

In the years following Israel's founding, American missionaries faced numerous obstacles as they sought to maintain their presence in the region and to serve the diverse communities that now found themselves living under the jurisdiction of two separate states, Israel and Jordan (Martin, 2012, p. 178). The influx of Jewish immigrants, the exodus of Palestinian Arab refugees, and the political and social upheaval that accompanied the birth of the new nation tested the resilience and adaptability of the missionary movement, requiring a reassessment of their strategies and priorities.

Active missionary organizations in the Middle East in the 19th century experienced a transformation after the First World War. It is worth examining the secularization of new states established in the Middle East, the reduction of preaching by missionary organizations, and the failure of missionary organizations to get along with the authoritarian governments of these secularized states. During and after the First World War, many missionary institutions became humanitarian aid organizations or worked this way. However, missionary activities in other parts of the world (Japan, China, the Korean peninsula, India, and the Philippines) continued increasingly until the middle of the 20th century (Todd M. & Scoggins, 2005, pp. 8-11).

Conclusion

This study illuminates the intricate dynamics between American evangelical missionary activities, US foreign policy, Political Zionism, and the Arab Awakening during the transformative late 19th and early 20th centuries. By exploring how theological motivations intersected with geopolitical strategies, the research demonstrates that missionaries played a dual role as both catalysts and mediators in shaping the US stance towards the Middle East. The intersection of religious ideals and political pragmatism shaped a complex and occasionally contradictory US approach to the region's ethnic and religious groups.

The study highlights that while American missionaries initially envisioned Palestine as a venue for the "Jewish Restoration," their prolonged interaction with the Arab population shifted their focus and allegiances. The establishment of educational institutions such as the Syrian Protestant College and Robert College profoundly influenced Arab nationalist thought and contributed to the intellectual foundation of the Arab Awakening. This shift underscores the adaptability and complexity of missionary efforts, reflecting both theological aspirations and the realities of socio-political engagement.

The research further examines the oscillating support among American missionaries for Political Zionism and the Arab Awakening. It uncovers how missionaries' theological millennialism sometimes aligned with Zionist goals while simultaneously clashing with the lived realities of the Arab population, fostering tensions within their own networks and the US diplomatic landscape. Despite significant investments in missionary infrastructure and lobbying, the missionaries' influence often remained constrained by broader political calculations and the evolving priorities of US foreign policy.

In essence, this analysis portrays American missionaries not merely as religious emissaries but as critical players in the historical geopolitics of the Holy Land. Their activities bridged ideological, cultural, and political divides, influencing public opinion and shaping policy debates in both the U.S. and the Middle East. American evangelicalism has left a lasting imprint on US-Middle East relations, influencing cultural, educational, and political developments in the region.

Future studies could benefit from a deeper exploration of comparative missionary impacts across different regions or further analysis of the long-term implications of missionary diplomacy on contemporary US-Middle East relations. This research invites scholars to consider the complex and often underappreciated role of religious actors in the broader tapestry of international relations and historical change.

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