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**The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict –  
Fueling Roles with Securitized Religion**

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## 1.) Introduction

*“One main response to insecurity is to seek reaffirmation of one’s identity by drawing closer to any collective that is perceived as being able to reduce insecurity and existential anxiety. The combination of religion and nationalism is a particularly powerful response (‘identity-signifier’) in times of rapid change and uncertain futures, and is therefore more likely than other identity constructions to arise during crises of ontological insecurity” (Kinnvall 2004: 741-767).*

Unlike the Cold War era, in which realist perceptions about the global world order were prevalent, the explanation of roots of conflicts has since then increasingly shifted towards questions of culture and ethnicity. According to Samuel Huntington (1993, 1996), who introduced the notion of a *clash of civilization*, civilizations are fundamentally characterized by their respective religions. In concrete terms, it became a widely shared assumption that classical (realist) conflicts caused by economic, territorial or power-related motives were outdated. This thesis aims to build its argumentation on this “revitalization of religion” while aiming to assess the two opposing roles of Israelis and Palestinians as securitizing actors, which consistently invoke religion in their securitizing policies (Laustsen/Waever 2000: 705). These are fueled by myths and opposing identities that create an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ phenomenon. The human need for identity and its social construction is thus key for the further analysis. Taking a starting point from Lucke’s and McLarren’s (2017) work, the question is raised whether and how religion should be included within the securitizing framework. This work is based on the idea that religion is easily securitized by actors who base their entire argumentation on an existential threat posed by the ‘enemy’ against them.

The thesis confronts the fact that the role of the transcendental as key attribute of positions such as the Israeli and Palestinian ones has rarely been examined thoroughly in the field of International Relations (IR) theory. Nevertheless, I argue that religion represents a powerful asset of unrivaled validity. More specifically, it mobilizes an audience, which in the course of a securitization process evolves into the major supporter for certain policies. To include the divine in order to convince the other always contains a moral correctness of a higher sphere that makes it difficult to oppose the cause. This is also to be observed in the Israeli case where it is “the state itself”, which becomes legitimized by religion (Fox/Sandler 2004: 43). What is more, disagreements based on religious grounds can also lead to fatal outcomes, such as the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin in 1995 by an opponent of the Oslo Peace Process. While “power and pragmatism” are still perceived as the dominating forces in

international relations, identity has become an influential factor and religion, as one of the most crucial normative concerns as I will argue, is a significant component of identity (Fox/Sandler 2004: 45).

On the one hand, the story of Abraham and his descendants as the founding fathers and prophets of the religion primarily influence Judaism. The Old Testament “tells of the years in slavery in Egypt and God’s miraculous efforts to free the Jews followed by the giving of the law and wandering in the Sinai desert, which helped to forge the Jews into a nation” (Fox/Sandler 2004: 51). These are the biblical images, on which religious Zionism and mobilization have been able to flourish. They have nurtured the necessity to keep the ‘Jewish land’ in preparation of the coming of the messiah. On the other hand, the Palestinians’ claim concerning the same land is also religiously motivated. This is especially true for Jerusalem, which as holy city for the Muslim believers should remain in Islamic hands. Religious ideologies have thus contributed to the dispute between Israelis and Palestinians, which, especially since the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948, has attained international relevance. Between 610 and 1945, there are many references, which can be used as testimony for a peaceful coexistence of both Muslims and Jews. This is reflected in the cultural and ethnic similarities between both religious groups concerning holidays or when considering the Jewish-Muslim *convivencia*<sup>1</sup> in Castilian Spain. Both groups are closely intertwined as the origin of Ramadan in Yom Kippur shows, or the fact that the counterpart of Suleiman, son of the Prophet Dawud in the Qu’ran is King Solomon, son of King David in the Bible.

While secular forces have influenced the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a religious impact cannot be denied. A concrete example is the visit of Israeli politician Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount in 2000, which resulted in serious troubles as the place is of holy importance to Jews and Muslims. Religious legitimacy plays a role on many secular Israelis; it offers ground for the Palestinian argumentation against the Israeli settlements of the land and provides a messianic justification for Zionist aspirations (Fox/Sandler 2004: 61). With this work, I will argue that policies towards Israel have never been seen fully separate from the disputes over religion throughout the history of the Jewish state. Concrete examples are the holy sites whose values are part of the spiritual character of the state. There is a huge burden on any political leader. An Israeli or Palestinian leader who would have given up the Temple Mount in a peace settlement would have been likely removed from office; there is constraint and little

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<sup>1</sup> The *convivencia* describes an era of tolerant and peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Jews and Christians in Castilian Spain from the early eighth century until the expulsion of the Jews in 1492.

room for compromise, given the domestic and international pressure on the issue. My main research question I want to analyze shall therefore be the following: To which extent does religion, as important yet underestimated factor in the field of international relations theory, fuel the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians?

The following explorative chapters aim to examine the role of religion in securitization processes that enabled the maintenance of the Israeli and Palestinian identities, which characterize themselves in opposition to the other. Therefore, this work is structured as follows: first, a section on the theoretical frameworks is presented. This examines the role of religion in IR, followed by a section on the fundamentals of Securitization theory and subsequently the question, whether the establishment of a separate religious sector, which exclusively looks at *sacred referent objects*, is a legitimate claim. The methodology on which the empirical part will mainly be based upon is discourse analysis with a strong emphasis on historical representations. Both approaches can be found in “Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide” (2008) by Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash. To conduct the study, first the construction of Israeli and Palestinian security discourses is analyzed, followed by a section on the religious attributes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict history. This is crucial, as diverging historical perspectives offer the valid ground on which biblical references can become persuasive for the respective audience. In order to show the religious impact, speech acts by David Ben-Gurion, Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu are analyzed. The cases are chosen to display a spectrum of religious securitization through speech acts. While this work does not aim to show that every speech act delivered by an Israeli or Palestinian political leader is constructed around a transcendental justification, I intend to demonstrate that religious securitization can be found in the analyzed speeches, which were held at different historical times. The conclusion then summarizes and reflects the findings of the study by putting them into context and formulating possible policy advices and notions on how to amend IR’s approach towards religion since theoretical amendments can become a fruitful ground for the right assessment of real world conflicts characterized by religious frictions.

## **2.) Theoretical Frameworks**

### **2.1) Religion in International Relations**

Discussing religion as a factor in political science - and more specifically in IR - represents a particularly difficult challenge which stems from the fact that it has constantly been framed as

“subcategory” of more important political elements, such as society, civilizations or institutions (Fox/Sandler 2004: 9). The authors further argue that this tendency is even more prevalent in the field of International Relations than in other social sciences. The question remains: Why does IR theory not include religion? Realism, as possibly the most famous paradigm amongst IR approaches, focuses on the balance of power and on the nation state as static *black box*, which consistently aims to increase its (military) capabilities in a global order characterized by insecurity. Such an image, characterized by material attributes, correlates with the quantitatively intangible impact that religion can offer. As Bassiouney (2009) argues, the difficulty of measuring a religious influence also lies in the fact that it “does not stand in isolation but is connected to other categories” (Bassiouney 2001: 104). Critics of religion could argue that the impossibility of using quantitative research methods whilst dealing with religion makes it an inappropriate element for studying world politics. Nonetheless, in the Arab world specifically, religion is also closely intertwined with the political system of each country and is therefore of global political importance (ibid.). Thus, I argue that not fully including religion in the field of IR in the near future will put the theory’s authenticity and applicability at stake.

Fox and Sandler (2004) assessed religion as overlooked dimension in IR and came to the conclusion that the most prominent reason for its absence can be found in the theory’s Western-centrism. Western social and political scientists substituted religion as least rational element with ideals of the European age of Enlightenment. The assumption that religion is of outdated character and should be replaced with the Enlightenment’s image of the modern state has its roots in Western culture and socialization. As noted by Robert Wuthnow, social theories that support modernism have rather contributed to banishing religion as an area of influence than questioning its social impact (Thomas 2005: 50). Nonetheless, the West’s expectation that ‘the rest’ of the world needs to absorb the secular ideas and assimilate *modernity* has failed as religious backlashes against Western indoctrination have been widespread.

Often dismissed as a myth and rejected as a theory, spirituality and religion frequently represent the only capable forces to create an image of the modern world based on humans’ emotional aspirations and is thus more than just reactionary. When looking closely at different religious groups, Buddhism or Hinduism are rapidly linked with peace and anti-violence mechanisms. Nevertheless, forms of religious intolerance and violence also occur in countries in which these religions prevail, which leads to the hypothesis that religion combines both the

potential for conflict reduction and for its deterioration and that political actors and the international system are subsequently affected by it. This is what R. Scott Appleby has called the “ambivalence of the sacred” (Thomas 2005: 121). Therefore, religion has the potential not only to further peace, but also to fuel tensions in conflicts of international importance. The religious aspect can also increase features of *ethnocentrism*, which is based on a superior sentiment of one group, which sees ‘the other’ threatening own interests and even existence. The other’s role fuels own feelings of insecurity, and must therefore be taken into account in the formation of a collective, confirming identity which rejects ‘the enemy’ in a next step. This enemy is portrayed in dehumanizing ways as barbaric or as vermin (Thomas 2005: 130). Such a representation has its origin in the uncertainty around a political system or in a territorial insecurity as it is the case in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This insecurity impedes a natural intercourse with the own identity which in return is portrayed as necessary to be defended. This idea is based on the narrative of a socially constructed entity, which is to be viewed ethnically, culturally, or as in the Israeli-Palestinian case, as I will argue primarily religiously connoted. Religious traditions and ways of thinking function here as catalysts for the claim to implement the own social reality. The conflict parties stress the differences between them and represent their specific religious interpretation as solely valid. At this point, a “chain reaction of reciprocal violence” is initiated (Thomas 2005: 137). According to Rene Girard, the main factors considered in this context are “[a] scapegoat, sacrificial mechanism, the sacrificial crisis, apocalyptic violence and contagious violence” (Thomas 2005: 132). It is interesting to note that, based on these factors, those who feel threatened redefine themselves and the other on the basis of a cultural, ethnic or religious line, depending on the degree of perceived existential danger (Thomas 2005: 135). Supporters of these assumptions conclude that

“[t]he *political crisis* observed by political scientists is about how people respond, and the *cultural or religious crisis* is about why they respond the way they do – by seeking out scapegoats – and not in some other way, a way arguably more deeply consistent with their religious traditions” (Thomas 2005: 136).

Unless there is sufficient contact between the involved actors and thus dialogue potential, due to the differences, the resulting uncertainty will lead to possible violence, which receives its support from religious reasoning. While defining the impact of religion, particularly in the field of IR, will continue to pose a challenge, crucial preconditions need to be taken into consideration. First, the field of International Relations is dominated by Western scholars, who apply their assumptions about international relations to the West and non-West according

to their Western experiences. Second, the discipline, which aims to address global politics, has yet to achieve a postcolonial balance. Third, as long as Westerners widely dominate the discipline, a shift towards a religious-friendly IR appears unlikely to occur. Nonetheless, the events of the September 11, 2001 attack of the World Trade Center made it difficult to overlook religion that can influence the international status quo as essential part of international relations (Fox/Sandler 2004). “It also destroyed the West’s ruling myth – the belief that modernity, that is, Western modernity, is a single global condition, the global home for all of us“ (Thomas 2005: 52). Simultaneously, major elements within IR like many forms of nationalism are based upon religious identities, whose contents cannot be explained by secular ideologies, since religious identities are based on the notion of faith and thus guided by a godly voice.

To sum up, religion has been largely marginalized in International Relations theory.

“Adopting what is variously called traditional religion, religious extremism, or fundamentalism is considered to be like other forms of ‘irrationalism’, ideological extremism, or reactionary politics – fascism or Nazism” (Thomas 2005: 48).

Western IR scholars reveal a crucial lack in approaching the actual content of religion as they focus solely on how religion is structured and do not follow the question of what the belief itself is actually constituted (Thomas 2005: 53). It is falsely portrayed as measure to guarantee security that

“[r]eligion must be disciplined by the state – privatized, marginalized, and nationalized as a form of global order and social cohesion, or religion must be overcome by a global or cosmopolitan ethic as the basis of international order” (Thomas 2005: 54).

## **2.2) Fundamentals of Securitization**

The approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict shall be embedded in the so-called *securitization theory*. According to the Copenhagen School, which had a significant impact on the theory’s terminology, the basis of securitization consists in responding to the question who can securitize what and under which conditions. McDonald (2008) answers this question in the following:

“Securitization can be defined as the positioning through speech acts (usually by a political leader) of a particular issue as a threat to survival, which in turn (with the consent of the relevant constituency) enables emergency measures and the suspension of ‘normal politics’ in dealing with that issue” (McDonald 2008: 567).

Therefore, the first step is to answer how security is understood at all. Buzan et al. assume that “security is about survival“, which comes into play when a designated referent object is

confronted with a subjectively perceived existential threat as outcome of interactions among units (states, collective identities, religions, etc.) (Buzan et al. 1998: 21). Simultaneously, the terminology stands for an authorized move to take politics beyond the normally binding rules and situate an issue “as a special kind of politics [...] above politics” requiring and justifying emergency measures (Buzan et al. 1998: 23). The precondition of securitization being socially constructed needs to be understood as predisposition as well as the fact that it does not apply to rational universalism. In other words, security is not approached objectively and the threat created represents the outcome of an intersubjective process.

This thesis will follow Buzan et al.’s assumption that “[i]nternational security is mostly about how human collectivities relate to each other in terms of threat and vulnerabilities” (Buzan et al. 1998: 10). Opposing the traditionalists’ understanding of security issues who mainly equate security with military issues and thus the use of force, Buzan et al. (1998) present and discuss four more *sectors* besides the military: the environmental, economic, societal and political sector. While securitization always deals with an existential threat directed at a particular referent object, threats differ in their nature and are thus rooted in particular sectors. Subsequently, sectors help to identify which specific characteristics of threats and referent objects are dealt with in the various areas.

As my analysis focuses on the recurring topic of religion as part of *securitizing moves* in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, my interest is focused on two crucial features that are part of the securitizing process: the *audience* and the respective *speech act*. The predisposition for a successful security act is a general acceptance and openness of an audience such as the civil society, which in the Israeli-Palestinian case must be willing to understand religion as a relevant issue for the survival of their respective nation. “The security act is negotiated between securitizer and audience” while the final decision on a successful securitization rests with the audience (Buzan et al. 1998: 26). The success of a speech act therefore depends on the resonance of the audience in combination with a certain usage of language by a political authority, which aims to create a “plot that includes [an] existential threat, [a] point of no return, and a possible way out” (Buzan et al. 1998: 33). By referring to socially and, in this case, religiously important objects, an existential threat is created. Despite the rather positively perceived connotations of the term “security”, this work agrees with Buzan et al.’s (1998) assumption that “security should not be thought of too easily as always good” (Buzan et al. 1998: 4). The overarching aim should therefore be to achieve *de-securitization*. In concrete terms, issues that were projected into the emergency mode should be tried to move

back “into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere” (Buzan et al. 1998: 4). Only if this is given, a shift within the political culture, which is of utmost relevance for the possibility of a sustainable peace process, will succeed.

### **2.3) Sacred Referent Objects: Approaching an Independent Religious Sector**

As already discussed in the previous chapter, something only turns into a security act when it becomes labeled as such. The next step in this study is to examine the extent to which religiously connoted securitization happens, and if so, whether its extent does require a separate sector of investigation. While agreeing with Laustsen and Waever (2000), I argue that religion cannot be reflected to a sufficient degree within the societal sector since it would consider religion amongst “regional identification, clans, extended family” instead of exclusively elaborating on it based on its influential interconnection with the divine (Laustsen/Waever 2000: 709). Yet the necessity to deal with religion separately is established due to the fact that when we talk about religion as securitizing object we start dealing with “true faith” (Laustsen/Waever 2000: 709). The dilemma that arises with positioning religion in the societal sector is that religion needs to be covered as an own sphere and should not be fully absorbed within the field of *community* or *identity*. Otherwise, religion is impoverished and its claim to bridge the earthly and the transcendental which makes it so powerful and unpredictable as a separate sector becomes obsolete.

As elaborated previously, discussing religion within the field of IR represents a particularly difficult challenge as the peace of Westphalia, the founding principle of many IR thoughts, is perceived as the end of an era, which tolerated religion as part of the theory. Nonetheless, “religion is [still] present at all levels of analysis which the field of IR examines – it is mentioned in international declarations; it plays a role in inter-state conflicts; religion is included in foreign policy debates; and it is found in the lives of individual statesmen” (Lucke/McLarren 2017: 2). It should be of particular interest that fields of security practice, which are often described as “only political” can imply securitized religion which is not mentioned as such but which has wide implications for the study of securitization (Laustsen/Waever 2000: 706). A new urgency of survival comes into play that is linked to a higher sphere and has thus the potential of extraordinary legitimization through political leaders who make use of it. In other words, religion becomes easily securitized as it already implies the question of existence itself and the interconnection with the divine.

If we take a starting point from the argument of *true faith*, the predisposition must imply the understanding that the phenomenon of religion can only be fully comprehended by “those confronting and practicing it” (Laustsen/Waever 2000: 710). In the attempt of trying to equate religion with social forces, scholars would fail in doing justice to the former. Religion cannot be approached “through the work of reason” (Laustsen/Waever 2000: 712). It rather creates a discourse in which the main character is God and thus a divine entity that does not owe justification to human beings. The transcendental has its own definitions and cannot be simply adjusted to the normality of an earthly social life. If faith is the referent object of a securitizing process, the interconnection between the immanent and transcendental realm becomes key to sacralize “objects, persons, and practices” which subsequently become “endowed with divine power” (Laustsen/Waever 2000: 719). Applied to a conflict in which the sacred endowment becomes endangered by the opponent, sacred objects turn rapidly into existential threats demanding extraordinary policy measures and thus *securitization*. Subsequently, the existential threat becomes equated with the question of *survival*, which mobilizes the respective audience. As long as faith is perceived as threatened by an opposed religious discourse, faith becomes an unpredictable securitization catalyst.

In “The Religious Challenge to Securitization Theory” (2014), Mona Sheikh takes a different approach than Laustsen and Waever by focusing on religion’s *cross-sector relevance*. She suggests to re-widen the scope of analysis of a securitization theory that addresses the sole faith as referent object. This however is contrary to the narrowing process by Laustsen and Waever, who argue in favor of a separate religious sector. While this thesis builds on their conclusion, it agrees with Sheikh that religious discourses not only defend faith, “but also holy places (lands, temples, mosques etc.) or holy law” (Sheikh 2014: 260). In her response to Laustsen and Waever, Sheikh also emphasizes this work’s initial assumption that Western-centric notions to treat religion as apolitical consequently prevent a de-securitization of religious conflicts.

The purpose of this chapter was to elucidate why religion needs its own sector within the theory of securitization. I agree with Laustsen and Waever (2000) that it is of fundamental importance to assimilate an additional religious sector, which subsequently could legitimize arguments related to faith. Only if religion is accepted as religion, an in-depth analysis of primarily religious conflicts can become fruitful. On the basis of the aforementioned arguments, the extraordinary potential of an overlapping religious and security discourse cannot be denied. To formulate something as political action does not make a conflict as the

Israeli-Palestinian one, in which ideologies are fueled with securitized religion based on existential threats, less of a religious encounter. In the Israeli-Palestinian case, the existing insecurity on both sides must be of central importance for the further analysis as well as the question whether the need of a divine entity “barring the subject” is remarkably high in the Israeli-Palestinian case (Laustsen/Waever 2000: 728). In order to understand religious securitization, it is crucial for IR scholars to examine the transcendental entity as main referent actor, which in return diminishes the scope of human justifications of political events. In concrete terms, an areligious IR might imply the greatest obstacle for the understanding of conflicts whose nature constitutes of religious attributes. Religion seems to be easily securitized due to the nature of its discourse since, as in this case, it implies the question of an existence defended by a godly justification. Its securitization is always linked to a perceived threat by one conflict party and is thus not arbitrary. Assessing religion within the frameworks provided by IR, which is known for its secularist aspirations, nevertheless stays difficult since religious discourses imply a specific complexity due to the limitation of human knowledge and the omniscience of a God, which are crucial characteristics that need to be accepted before an analysis of a religious conflict can take place successfully.

### **3.) The construction of Israeli and Palestinian Security discourses**

The subsequent analysis is built on Thierry Balzacq’s assumption in “The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience and context” (2005), where he addresses the importance of certain circumstances being favorably configured in order for securitization to be successful. A sole speech act is only able to achieve its desired effect on the audience by aligning with an external context. It can be argued that by focusing exclusively on the constitution of a speech act, historical dynamics are wrongly excluded and thus an important perspective on world politics not considered. Therefore, the religious positions strengthened by crucial historical events as important external contexts in the Israeli-Palestinian case shall be the center of attention in the following elaboration, which serves to show the impact of non-linguistic variables and their interdependence with the actual speech acts. In short, I argue that religious attributes in the Israeli and Palestinian attitudes embedded in historical contexts represent Balzacq’s *facilitating conditions* for a successful securitization.

This chapter aims to show how the historical past of Israelis and Palestinians contributes to the construction of security discourses related to faith, which are held by Israeli and Palestinian political leaders when addressing their respective societies or the international

community. According to Bezen Balamir Coskun, “rival visions of the past” characterize the interaction between both protagonists (Coskun 2010: 281). Historians have become combatants as they stress their respective work, which is fueled by national myths and religious justifications that undermine the other’s history writing. The aftermath of the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars became the ground on which Israeli and Palestinian security discourses, based on the instrumentalization of historical narratives were able to flourish. The respective power elite has further continually phrased the religious explanation and position of the other as existential threat.

This thesis argues that securitization within a religious sector occurs in maintaining the own identity while opposing the other’s. In a securitization process - as it is the case in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - it seems that “all sorts of means [are] employed to back the official security discourse regarding the other” (Coskun 2010: 285). Therefore, the writing and teaching of particular history obtains a crucial role within the securitization process. This is the case since different accounts of the same history have been produced, in which obtaining religious legitimization is key for each group’s survival. Religious claims have determined historical interpretations on both the Israeli and Palestinian side and have characterized official historiographies that are mentioned in discourses of policy makers, who aim to securitize the opponent in their respective speech acts. Thus, the overlapping historical and religious roots of the problem cannot be denied as it has been a question of responsibility and definition of certain political events from the beginning.

On the one hand, Israeli security discourses and their link to history are built on “the competing struggles for statehood”, which are starting and key point for any argumentation (ibid.). Both Israelis and Palestinians declare their national memory as outcome of the battle for legitimate nation-building. According to Israeli leaders, Israel sought to establish “peace but met only rejection and hatred from the Arabs” both in 1948 and 1967 (ibid.). They argue that based on the Arab hostilities experienced, Israel was forced to include the issue of political security. Furthermore, the Zionist narrative stresses that Israel had no active role in the massive Palestinian refugee problem during the 1948 war. On top, the Israelis have defended the narrative that it was solely the Arabs’ responsibility, who launched the war and encouraged Arabs to leave. “[A]ny counter-narrative was considered taboo” (Coskun 2010: 288).

Within this context, Ronnie Olesker's analysis (2014) focuses on discriminatory legislation between 2000 and 2012 by the Israeli Knesset and at the political perception of the Israeli public before and after the second intifada. In this context, it is demonstrated how Israeli discriminatory laws fuel a continuous securitization of the Palestinian minorities while the question, whether securitization or de-securitization prevails is still reserved exclusively for the political elites to answer. As the laws are passed, Israel's political elite seeks to demonstrate how threats to the hegemony of Jewish identity are simultaneously existential dangers to national security. This approach shows even more, why a de-securitization of the Palestinian minority is unlikely to occur. Securitization, as a process negotiated between *enunciator* and *audience*, seems easily implemented here as the Israeli Jewish public has accepted the discriminatory laws and has perceived them as justified in response to the Palestinian uprisings during the Second Intifada or the October riots in 2000. Securitization theory seems particularly applicable, as it has become a question about securing the Jewish homeland to guarantee the continued existence and survival of Jews, which has provided the ground for securitizing moves by the Israeli political elite. Symptomatic of this is the fact that Israel has declared its state as one of emergency, a status, "which has existed in Israel since independence" (Olesker 2014: 376). The failure of the Oslo peace process, the assassination of Rabin in 1995, who aimed to improve the status of the Palestinian minority and the following intifada, provided the policy window for Israeli legislators to implement securitization moves through legal means. These include amongst others the *Illegal Resident Assistant Prohibition Law* from 2005, which punishes employers "who provide aid or shelter to illegal Palestinian workers" (ibid.).

On the other hand, Palestinian history writing has declared Israeli psychological and armed warfare as cause for the Palestinian flight from their land. Despite also identifying themselves with a greater Arab nation, Palestinians explicitly stress their "belonging to a land they called Filastuna (Palestine)" (Said 1980: 118). They hold Israel responsible for the Palestinian refugee problem and encourage a security discourse, which denies Israeli claims on Palestine. As Coskun (2010) elaborates, the Israeli occupation had a strengthening impact on Palestinian nationalism and on the claims of a greater Muslim nation, which sees an opportunity in the 1967 defeat to portray the State of Israel as existential threat in their securitization discourses, in which Israel's control over the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip is severely criticized. Within this context, Yasser Arafat represents a powerful figure, who contributed rhetorically to equate the Palestinian struggle with the worldwide fight against "Zionism,

colonialism and international imperialism” (Coskun 2010: 290). In this sense, he underlined the necessity to keep resisting Israeli ‘colonialism’ in order to liberate the Palestinian fatherland. Moreover, the defeat of the Arab states in the war with Israel in 1967 can be seen “as a bankruptcy of secular Arab nationalist movements and of state authorities” since it paved the way for radical religious movements and their own visions of state affairs (Eickelmann 1998: 306). While there is no concrete chronological parallelism to the emergence of radical Judaism on the other side, after 1973 and after at that time Egyptian president Anwar el-Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem to seek a permanent peace settlement with Israel, a greater disposition to the ideas of radical Judaism could be observed (ibid.).

First, Israelis and Palestinians have identified each other exclusively in a negative sense, which has resulted in “a vicious cycle of securitization” of the other (ibid.). Second, such an approach characterized by disunity and hatred have made them ignore shared knowledge, insecurities and each other’s needs and has thus decreased the potential for reconciliation. Nonetheless, a generation of historians who portray both sides also as neighbors and future partners could contribute to a normalization and therefore de-securitization of the conflict. Within this context, the Copenhagen School introduces three options to achieve the latter:

“not to talk about issues in terms of security in the first place; once an issue is securitized, to try not to generate security dilemmas and vicious circles; and to move security issues back into normal politics” (Waever 2000: 253).

As the first two options cannot be fulfilled anymore, the last one that deals with moving security policies back into the normal realm of politics seems the most realizable. Nevertheless, the most difficult part is to achieve a precondition in which ubiquitous acceptance regarding the coexistence of both identities prevails. There must be tolerance regarding the differences and towards their possible incompatibility (Coskun 2010: 292). As both identities claim the other to pose an existential threat against the own identity, at least in the near future, the success of a reconciliatory process seems still unlikely to occur.

This chapter intended to demonstrate how influential certain historic narratives in combination with diverging religious perspectives for the formation of the public opinion are, especially when they become targets of influential political leaders aiming to demonstrate the incompatibility of both identities while implying the fear of one identity being at stake. Despite a rather unpredictable forecast for a reconciliatory process in the future, it is important to state that there have been important changes in mentality and narrative that have become visible when analyzing the reproduction of historical events in history textbooks. For

example, there was a revolutionary shift in moving away from the view “that the Palestinians left their lands as a result of Arab orders to leave” (Coskun 2010: 294). In a documentary called “Revival” and released by the Israeli Ministry of Communication in 1998, it was revealed that Jewish forces had the “operational upper hand” when passing orders for the Palestinians to leave (ibid.). Furthermore, the question of massacres by Jewish forces was part of the discussion. Nonetheless and with the conflict being currently fueled again by different political leaders as well as with the continuation of the Jewish settlements, a development towards mutual understanding, tolerance and eventual peace seems even more unlikely these days.

#### **4.) The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

##### **4.1) Religion in the Middle East**

As Haynes (2007) elaborates, the Middle East represents the region in which the impact of various religious traditions such as Judaism in Israel, Shia Islam in Iran and Sunni Islam in Saudi Arabia can be examined. It further epitomizes the birthplace of the three main world religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Korany 2005: 72). Moreover, it shows how religious actors or governments themselves influence policies via religious soft power, often combined with hard power such as military means or economic sanctions. As Fox and Sandler have noted, religion has “significant influence on domestic policies [and] is a motivating force that guides many policy makers” (Fox/Sandler 2004: 168). The Middle East seems explicitly prominent for its interaction of politics and religion. This becomes evident when regarding the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 as a homeland for the Jews. Since then, Israel’s sense of identity has constantly been characterized by its *Jewishness*. In contrast to Haynes’ idea that over the past decades the issue evolved from a secular security issue to a political battle of religious dimensions, I aim to show how the conflict has been a question of securitized religion starting with the creation of the State of Israel. This approach becomes clear once the first speech by David Ben-Gurion from 1946 will be analyzed.

Many research works regarding religion in the region have been devoted to examining militant transnational Muslim movements, such as al-Qaeda (Haynes 2007: 339). It has been of less relevance to show how political leaders subliminally mobilize their audience through religious rhetoric. In this context, Israel represents a powerful example. It is the only country in the world where the majority of citizens follow the Jewish belief and since 1948, the successive governments made sure that this feature of Israel’s character has been continually

stressed and safeguarded (Sandler 2006). “The nature of Jewish identity has long been understood as an overlapping combination of both religion and nation” (Haynes 2007: 342). Another point that shows why religion will continue to play a significant role within Israeli policy-making can be found in the creation of the state. Both the creation and the Jewish nationality are intertwined with a sense of religious identity, making it an explicitly vulnerable topic for religious Jews, “some of whom are also political extremists” (Haynes 2007: 344). The number of these religious Jews has been growing since the 1970s and will continue to do so as many of the *haredi* (ultra-orthodox) population have large numbers of children (ibid.).

#### **4.2) Religious features within the Palestinian Role conception**

As Fox and Sandler (2004) elaborate, the name *Al-Aqsa intifada* given by the Palestinians to the outburst of violence at the end of September 2000 demonstrates the religious exuberance of the topic since Al-Aqsa is the name of the mosque situated at the Temple Mount, a place holy to both Jews and Muslims. The Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon at that time visited the Temple Mount on September 28, 2000, which was perceived by the Palestinians as a provocation causing the second intifada. This incident strongly indicates how religion as crucial component of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship has constantly been of ubiquitous character.

The time of Mandatory Palestine from 1917 until 1948 represented the ground on which religion as intervening variable in the conflict could develop its full impact. In this period, the 1920s were characterized by anti-Jewish themes in the Palestinian rhetoric. Moreover, the fundament on which the negative sentiments of the parties against each other were able to flourish can be seen rooted in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which the British government promised the Jewish people a national home in Palestine while convincing the Arab community that the Zionist aspirations would not put their national home at stake (Sykes 1967: 11). It was in 1928 when an outbreak of violence was generated by the Palestinian side during the *Ninth of Av*, a Jewish mourning day in remembrance of the destruction of the Temples in ancient times. Rumors had been spread that the Jews were altering the Temple Mount, which led to the outburst that started during Yom-Kippur Day of Atonement, the holiest Jewish holiday of the year. In this context, Fox and Sandler have argued that violence at the sites of worship or on religiously significant days continuously strengthened the religious character of the conflict.

If we start analyzing the religious factors in the Palestinian attitude, we will come across the doctrine of *dar al-Islam* (the home of Islam), which declares land occupied by Islam as part of a greater Muslim nation. But contemporary Islamists designated Palestine as *waqf*, a religious endowment. By this definition, the land receives its status as religious trust for all Muslims and is even promoted above regular lands that were once occupied by Islamic rulers as during the Ottoman Empire (Shepard 2009). Furthermore, “it was toward Jerusalem that the Muslims in the beginning directed their prayers” (Fox/Sandler 2004: 139). Jerusalem’s religious character has been obvious to many Islamic scholars mainly due to the two mosques, Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa, built on Temple Mount. This is also the spot from where the prophet Muhammad is said to have ascended to heaven based on one phrase in the Qur’an. This has created an even stronger link between Islam and the city of Jerusalem. Nonetheless, it was the Zionist aspiration in Jerusalem and thus the threat of an occupation by a competing religion, which increased the status of the city for the Palestinian party.

### **4.3) Religious features within the Israeli Role conception**

Despite the fact that there is no universally accepted map of the theological boundaries of the Land of Israel (Book of Numbers 34: 7-9; Book of Ezekiel 47: 15-21), its religious core cannot be denied. The central mountains area, specifically Judea and Samaria, represent “the heart of the ancient Israelite and Judean kingdoms” (Fox/Sandler 2004: 150). No city has greater religious significance for the Jewish people than Jerusalem. It was the national capital where the kingdoms of David and Solomon resided and where until these days the religious component outweighs the historic and political elements due to the following reasons. To *Zion*<sup>2</sup>, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, Jews have prayed for millennia. It is the place where the Jewish Temple had been built and destroyed twice. Furthermore, it is the city in which “the Jewish presence has never ceased to exist and where since the mid-nineteenth century the Jews have constituted the largest religious community in the city” (ibid.).

The radicalization of religion seems to have been going hand in hand with the deterioration of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. A concrete example of this development has been the Jewish settlement drive. It was in this context, where religious extremists, who simultaneously

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<sup>2</sup> *Zion* serves as synonym for the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It was the seat of the First and Second Temple and is often described as the most holy place for the Jewish believers from where they pray for the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, the coming of the Messiah and the redemption of the world. It further represents the direction in which prayers from all over the world are directed.

represented the settlers even aspired to remove the Dome of the Rock to restore the Jewish predominance. Most of the hard core settlers on the Jewish side are religious while on the Palestinian side, the protagonists of both intifadas were Islamist organizations that strictly opposed a peace process. While the fear of a national identity being at stake has been ubiquitous, the religious component of the conflict has determined the intensity of the conflict. For Islamic fundamentalists, a non-Islamic state on holy Islamic territory has become a critical issue throughout the world. To sum up, the religious factor of the conflict can be described as catalyst for negative sentiments against each other, which in the Israeli-Palestinian case have also been influenced by extremist parties. They have invoked religion in their approaches to legitimize their ‘superior cause’, such as the settlements on the Jewish side and the promotion of the concept of *dar-al Islam* on the Palestinian side.

## 5.) Speech Acts

### 5.1) David Ben-Gurion – “We will not abandon Zion”

David Ben-Gurion is considered by many as the founding father of Israel, a title, which he earned when announcing the birth of Israel on May 14, 1948. He became the Prime Minister of the new Jewish state after working for years towards establishing a Jewish homeland. According to Howard M. Sachar (1996), he dedicated all his adult life to achieve sovereignty for a Jewish state. His efforts to accomplish this goal are witnessed in his speech from January of 1946 in which he addressed the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, which comprised six British and six American members who heard proposals from Jews and Arabs on how to solve the Jewish immigration question to Palestine. This analysis does not aim to show that securitization of religion was Ben-Gurion’s sole leitmotif. Nonetheless, it shall demonstrate the significant impact of faith as explained by Laustsen and Waeber. Ben-Gurion addresses Zion as spiritual place and underlines the Jewish people’s claim to have a right of ownership of the land based on their love of Zion. According to him, this right can be dated back thousands of years ago. It is to keep in mind, that the Committee of Inquiry recommended a jointly controlled state and vaguely described a Jewish immigration to keep the balance of the region, which deeply frustrated Ben-Gurion.

In his speech, he stresses the aforementioned rights of the Jewish people since “[we] were here long, long before. I myself was. Many thousands preceded me, but we were here far earlier still” (Rackers 2004: 29). The anaphora of ‘we were’ that only gets its rhythm shortly interrupted by Ben-Gurion’s ‘I myself was’ has the task to support the legitimization of the

Jewish claim for an own national homeland. Ben-Gurion demonstrates forcefully through his rhetoric that it is explicitly the Jewish people who deserves an own state based on the Jewish definition of the respective territory's holiness. Ben-Gurion's speech implies crucial comparisons, which aim to make it difficult for the Committee to not ascribe him a good will in the first place. He equates the actual Palestinian state with a large building in which most of the rooms are inhabitable and half-empty. In this context, he describes the Palestinians as occupants and describes the Jewish people as former tenants, whose only wish is to go back to these inhabitable rooms and repair them.

What is the sacred referent object according to his words? Clearly, it is the Jewish people and their aspiration for a Jewish national home, which, according to him, obtains its legitimization through the unique love of Zion and thus by God. In this context, his language takes on yet a further degree of gravity.

"In Arab history there is indeed no such thing as Palestine. [...] There is, however, something more than Arab history; there is world history and Jewish history and in that history there is a country named Judea, or as we call it Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. We have called it Israel since the days of Joshua" (Rackers 2004: 35-36).

By referring to Joshua, Ben-Gurion ensures to refer to the Bible and thus to a greater history, which for him offers a valid justification for a Jewish national home in contrast to a Palestinian homeland that was not even mentioned in history. Ben-Gurion's remarks are mirrored in Ben Chorin's (1991) explanation that there was no Palestinian identity for centuries, since Palestine together with Syria formed a geopolitical unit. The Palestinians therefore viewed themselves as Arabs. At the same time, the country was always subject to foreign powers and empires, so that no explicit state was ever proclaimed and internalized. This fuels the interpretation that the Palestinian seek for an own state evolved as response to the Zionist movement.

In order to underline the claim to 'their land', the Palestinians have presented their own understanding of themselves as the legal successors of the Canaanites and Philistines as the origin of their identity. In this context, they further have recalled the military victories of the Arabs under Muhammad against Jewish armies around 628 AD. During the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an Arab nationalism, which collided with the synchronously evolving Zionism, was expressed for the first time. Nonetheless, the hopes of the Palestinians for independence and self-determination as a result of the Ottoman Empire's collapse were ruined by the mandate's policies of Great Britain and France. However, by

assuring independence to the Palestinians, the framework for Palestinian nationalism was decisively fueled by the British (Jaeger/Tophoven 2010: 37-38).

As elaborated in the beginning of this work, while implying religion to justify the own role, it becomes difficult for those in the opposition to counterattack (rhetorically) as the divine and thereby a higher sphere of knowledge is involved. It becomes even more difficult as Ben-Gurion declares that “the Land, the Book and the People, are for us forever one” and in his words, “an indissoluble bond”, which cannot be destroyed by any material power since the “Book” and its message was even taken with the Jewish people into exile (Rackers 2004: 36). Subsequently, he asks rhetorically, “Where in the world will you find people loving their country as the Jews love Zion?” (Rackers 2004: 37). In this regard, it is important to note that Ben-Gurion strictly rejected the notion that Zionism could obtain its same validity without immigration to Israel (Sachar 1996: 718).

In light of the aforementioned description, the Palestinian aspiration for an own national home seems to be the ultimate existential threat on which Ben-Gurion bases his argumentation. The urgency and the insecurity of the Jewish question makes him feel the need to assign religion such significance in his remarks. This sentiment is explicitly striking when he refers to the long nights in which he worked in a small village in Palestine and while watching the sky, he got reminded of “the Book of Solomon” and finally understood why “heavens tell the glory of God” (Rackers 2004: 38). Furthermore, in his final phrase he underlines that any Jew will give up his life “for Jewish independence and for Zion” (Rackers 2004: 39). In short, Ben-Gurion, in this period leading up to the creation of the Israeli state, clearly identified a sacred referent object, while trying to convince the Committee that a Jewish national home needs to be implemented based on the ruling from a divine entity.

## **5.2) Yasser Arafat – “Palestine offers Peace or Armed Resistance”**

Yasser Arafat was the central figure in the struggle for Palestinian autonomy since the 1950s and was elected Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1969. His speech from 1974 was directed toward the United Nations General Assembly and was mainly constructed around the urgency of Palestinian self-determination. It can be described as landmark speech in view of the fact that it was one of the first times Palestinian authorities were granted the world stage to speak for themselves. Arafat’s remarks contrasted those of Israeli diplomats who asserted previously that the land they were awarded by the Partition

Plan from 1948 consisted of 75 percent “uninhabited desert” (Rackers 2004: 40). Arafat calls this description a “myth” and articulates the history from a Palestinian perspective (ibid.). The Partition Resolution was passed in November 1947 and was shortly followed by Britain’s announcement to withdraw all its troops from Palestine by August 1948 (Morris 1999). At the end of 1946, there were living around 1.33 million Arabs, of which 1.18 million were Muslims and 603,000 Jews, on Palestinian territory (Krämer 2005: 357). The Partition Plan assigned 56 percent of Palestine to a prospective Jewish state while the Palestinians were awarded 43 percent of the territory. The proposed Arab State was to include western Galilee, the highlands of Samaria and Judea, an enclave at Jaffa, and the southern coast starting from today’s Ashdod. It should also encompass what is now known as the Gaza Strip with a section of desert along the Egyptian border. The proposed Jewish State would comprise eastern Galilee, the coastal plain from Haifa to Rehovot and most of the Negev desert to facilitate Jewish settlement. The resolution passed the General Assembly, but without a comfortable lead. While the Zionists accepted the resolution immediately, the Palestinians declared the resolution’s invalidity. Nonetheless, Ben-Gurion acknowledged the voting as the greatest achievement by the Jews “since it became a people” (Morris 1999: 186).

Arafat begins his remarks by referring to ‘other post-colonial states’ and equates the suffering from colonialism with the effects of Zionism by stating: “Our resolve to build a new world is fortified - a world free of colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and racism in all its forms, including Zionism” (Rackers 2004: 41). A further degree of gravity is achieved when he adds that

“[j]ust as colonialism [...] dignified [...] their plunder [...], so too did waves of Zionist immigrants disguise their purposes as they conquered Palestine. [...] Just as colonialism used religion [...], so too were these methods employed as Palestine was usurped and its people hounded from their national homeland” (Rackers 2004: 44).

The repetitive beginning of both sentences creates an even more dramatic atmosphere, in which the Israeli side obtains its characterization as scapegoat. This ‘scapegoat phenomenon’ can be described as leitmotif of both speeches as only through the de-valorization of the other’s position, the own position gets the chance to become of legitimate character and convince other states and institutions of the global importance of their particular truth.

The sacred referent object here is the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, which are given their explicit religious connotation when Arafat refers to the rejection of the Partition Plan. In this context, he equates Palestine with “the real mother who refused to

permit [King] Solomon to cut her child in two when the other woman claimed the child as hers” and thus implies the voice of morality from the Old Testament and with it a divine righteousness (Rackers 2004: 45). Significantly, he takes his lead from the Bible and not the Qur’an to make his point. Arafat continues by stating that “[our] people cannot but maintain the heritage of their ancestors in resisting the invaders [...] and in safeguarding the cradle of the monotheistic religions” since “as a son of Jerusalem, I treasure [...] vivid images of the religious brotherhood that was the hallmark of our Holy City before it succumbed to catastrophe” (Rackers 2004: 46). He further urges the General Assembly to enable the Palestinian people to obtain “their national entity in their own land”, since only then, and this is important, will the Palestinian people be able to contribute to uphold Jerusalem as “shrine of all religions, free from all terrorism and coercion”, which it was “for so many centuries” (Rackers 2004: 50). Arafat closes his remarks with the sentence: “Today, I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom-fighter’s gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand” (Rackers 2004: 50). While invoking the olive branch and therefore a symbol of peace, Arafat threatens those who will not support a Palestinian right to self-determination and to their sacred homeland. To sum up, both speeches make use of crucial figurative language to underline their respective claims. This approach furthers the impression that to outweigh the other’s argumentation has been of greater importance than real efforts to implement a constructive dialogue.

### **5.3) Benjamin Netanyahu – Speech at the UN General Assembly**

Benjamin Netanyahu is the current Israeli Prime Minister and Chairman of the Likud Party. According to Gerlach and Meier (2012), he had a main impact on moving the Israeli society further to the right. In 1996, he won the elections to become Prime Minister against Shimon Peres while his electoral campaign was marked by the slogan of the ‘Three No’s’: No to an independent Palestinian state. No to a return of the Golan Heights to Syria. No to discussions regarding the status of Jerusalem. His campaign could be interpreted as an echo of the three No’s of Khartoum, where eight political leaders from Arab countries released a resolution after the defeat in the Six-Day War against Israel on September 1, 1967. The resolution’s third paragraph constituted the ‘Three No’s’ to peace, recognition and negotiations with Israel. Netanyahu is further known for his sharp criticism of Yitzhak Rabin for his willingness to discuss the possibility of an autonomous Palestinian state during the Oslo Peace Process.

In his speech on September 22, 2016, in front of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, early in his remarks, he points at the “war against Israel at the UN” and asks if, “Given its history and hostility towards Israel, does anyone really believe that Israel will let the UN determine our security and our vital interests?” (Netanyahu 2016). By mentioning security, he underlines how this factor is of essential importance to Israeli policies in general. A profound criticism of the United Nations’ (UN) approach towards Israel could hardly have made sharper and been strengthened more as Netanyahu continues with condemning the UN for spending so much time with criticizing “the only liberal democracy in the Middle East” instead of addressing problems of real global scope which are “war, disease, poverty [and] climate change” (Netanyahu 2016). He goes on by demanding whether the half million slaughtered Syrians helped the UN in condemning Israel and thereby reveals the aforementioned scapegoat phenomenon.

While one first gets the impression that Netanyahu’s speech is constructed around current and particularly secular world problems, religious references become prevalent in the course of his explanations. They obtain a key role as he attacks the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for having criticized the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and for preparing a lawsuit against Britain in this regard. In order to demonstrate how absurd this approach is in his eyes, he alludes to Abraham in the next paragraph and rhetorically questions why the Palestinians not also pursue to sue “Abraham for buying that plot of land in Hebron where the fathers and mothers of the Jewish people were buried 4,000 years ago” (Netanyahu 2016). As Benny Morris has elaborated, the Balfour Declaration became the “crucial international warrant for Zionism” at that time (Morris 1999: 73). While the declaration initially represented Britain’s intend to counter the French claims to Palestine successfully, it had extensive implications since it made Britain “the protector of Jewish self-determination” (ibid.). At this point, the Palestinians’ tragedy was initiated as they were viewed as the “insignificant natives” in contrast to the Jews, who were seen “as Europeans and as the rightful owners” of Palestine (ibid.). Moreover, remarks concerning religion also played a role in the Balfour Declaration, in which it was formulated “that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the [...] religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” (Morris 1999: 75).

It is particularly significant for the securitization of the Palestinian counterparty that Netanyahu continues his speech with historical references, such as the Partition Resolution of 1947 and in this context underlines the approval of the UN of “our moral rights in our homeland and to our homeland” at that time (Netanyahu 2016). Subsequently, the scapegoat

phenomenon is used again when he explains that “[if] the Palestinians [had] said yes to a Jewish state in 1947, there would have been no war, no refugees and no conflict” (Netanyahu 2016). The profound criticism of the Palestinian position is particularly significant for a successful securitization process, which has the task to foster Israel’s standpoint on a world stage.

On March 3, 2015, Benjamin Netanyahu held a speech at a joint Congress meeting in the United States. In it, Netanyahu’s severe criticism of the Iranian quest for nuclear weapons, which “threaten the survival of my country and the future of my people”, is, as basis for religious securitization, essential to regard (Netanyahu 2015). Netanyahu formulates an existential threat, which serves as initial point of the process. The threat obtains its religious connotation as Netanyahu, a secular Jew, which is striking in this regard, continues:

“We’re an ancient people. In our nearly 4,000 years of history, many have tried repeatedly to destroy the Jewish people. Tomorrow night, on the Jewish holiday of Purim, we’ll read the Book of Esther. We’ll read of a powerful Persian viceroy named Haman, who plotted to destroy the Jewish people some 2,500 years ago. But a courageous Jewish woman, Queen Esther, exposed the plot and gave for the Jewish people the right to defend themselves against their enemies.[...] Today the Jewish people face another attempt by yet another Persian potentate to destroy us. Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei...”(Netanyahu 2015).

He further portrays the Iranian people as hijacked by “religious zealots who imposed on them immediately a dark and brutal dictatorship” (ibid.). The significance of the Jewish faith is portrayed as very core of the Israeli state, characterizing people, beliefs and existence, which are targeted through the Iranian approach. A final excerpt from Netanyahu’s closing remarks illustrates this and the extraordinary significance of the Jewish state, which is granted its position by God, an uncontestable higher evaluator who strengthens the Jewish people:

“Facing me right up there in the gallery, overlooking all of us in this (inaudible) chamber is the image of Moses. Moses led our people from slavery to the gates of the Promised Land. And before the people of Israel entered the land of Israel, Moses gave us a message that has steered our resolve for thousands of years. I leave you with his message today, (continues in Hebrew), Be strong and resolute, neither fear nor dread them” (Netanyahu 2015).

While the second speech does not mention the Palestinian counterpart, it is a crucial example of the same religious securitization, which characterizes the Israeli role when confronting the Palestinian opponent and is worth analyzing as it demonstrates the potential of spillover effects to another Muslim nation, which is perceived as existential threat.

## **6.) Conclusion**

Religion deserves an explicit role in the study of IR, and within the framework of Securitization theory. In this context, Edward Luttwak (1994) has described religion as a missing dimension, which is not adequately dealt with by the mainstream theories of IR, and which only came to the fore with the events of September 11th. One danger has been to universalize generalizations on religion's assumed "irrationality, emotion, and backwardness" (Hafez/Slyomovics 2013: 201). The difficulty of grasping religion as an essential factor often lies in its interdependence with other factors. Nonetheless, as shown, notions of religion were present in both the historical contexts as facilitating conditions for securitization and in the analyzed speeches by David Ben-Gurion, Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu. While in some statements, faith constituted the center of the argument, in other situations religious legitimization has been used up to this day mainly to spur the enmity between Muslims and Jews, of which each claims their religious identity to be deeper rooted than the one of the opposing power. Religious remarks are used as an act of self-assurance, which simultaneously are assigned the duty to de-valorize the other side's argument and to overcome insecurity by framing something as existential threat. Moreover, as initially elaborated, to include the divine always contains a moral correctness of a higher sphere that makes it particularly difficult for an addressed civil society to oppose the cause.

IR theory continuously has framed religion as subcategory of concepts, such as society or civilization. I have argued that this is the wrong approach in view of the fact that religion not only combines both the potential for conflict reduction and for its deterioration. It likewise represents the only variable in the Israeli-Palestinian case which explicitly considers the spiritual roots of the conflict, that serve as essential parts of both national identities in response to the other and which are used to defend the own truth. IR still represents a field, which is dominated by Western scholars, who apply their assumptions about international relations on the non-West according to their Western experiences without taking the whole extent of local realities into consideration. Therefore, I strongly agree with Laustsen and Waever on the necessity to further research a separate religious sector within securitization theory since it is religion itself, which in the Israeli-Palestinian case study addresses the very core of existence through the reference to a divine entity, which guarantees this existence and is thus difficult to contest from an earthly standpoint. It is therefore of fundamental importance to start opening up for religion as an important element that progressively is linked to a notion of security that exceeds the normal bargaining processes of politics and can

thus be framed easily as existential threat to the constitution of a state. This represents a development, which ultimately may affect any state. Simultaneously, postcolonial voices must be included in assumptions on non-Western conflicts, otherwise IR theory will sooner than later run the risk of losing authenticity when claiming its results to be of global importance.

The psychological level of the conflict cannot be denied (Senfft 2010: 6). Furthermore, political elites have repeatedly propagated slogans that undermine the other. They have a strong impact on whether the public opinion is characterized by peace or violence. At the same time, it remains unclear whether a suitable external moderator, which will be trusted by both sides, can be found at all. This also raises the question of moderators' possibilities for action and their limits in general and whether other states may benefit from the maintenance of the conflict. If requested, external assistance needs to start implying the understanding of diverse, in this case religiously-driven, perspectives (Mani/Weiss 2011). The constant struggle of political leaders for power makes a reconciliatory process even more difficult. On the one hand, Israeli extremists will continually try to frame acute threats targeting the survival of the Israeli state and thereby shape a central electoral campaign based on fears with the potential to prevent any efforts towards peace (List 2006: 134). On the other hand, anti-Semitism is a major pillar in the ideology of the Palestinian-national-Islamic movement Hamas, which emphasizes the Islamic cause of the Palestinian state and which builds its harsh criticism of the Jewish side on the idea of a war of religion and faith (Litvak 2005).

There has been the constant presence of unprocessed collective traumas on both sides, which have continued their impact over generations, provoking a mutual mistrust and a sense of imbalance. The question is also which narratives were redefined through a constant emphasis of certain factors from the past. Such narrative up-dating is as shown "commonly elite-driven" (Ramet 2013: 879). Memories that matter for the creation of a more peaceful collective memory therefore became assets of political leaders' intentions that could collide with societies' needs to approve a process of de-securitization. At the same time, it is not to be neglected that the securitization process is an intersubjective development and is highly dependent on the individual perception of an existential threat.

Religion must be taken into account when addressing the conflict, since all religions involved also contain vital linguistic skills to further de-securitization (Brocker et al. 2003). Additionally, "religions remain vital and meaningful through the actions of their carriers, who [...] shape them over long historical periods" (Eickelmann 1998: 241). In this context, the sacredness of holy sites, personal faith and the idea of the transcendence in diverse contexts

must be understood beforehand and not tried to be silenced by counter-arguing with modernity or secularization. The key for a further analysis must rather be to understand the close entanglement of several variables, such as religion and politics. As underlined in the previous chapters, the openness of the audience regarding the fruition of securitizing moves that invoke religion is essential for securitization to succeed. If the Jewish and Palestinian civil societies manage to underline the similarities instead of insisting on the differences and thus encourage a society's role change from *audience* to *enunciator* - a role that until now has been explicitly reserved for the political elites as elaborated in the third chapter of this work-, de-securitization is still something possible to be realized.

As response to the initial research question, it was possible to show that religion, not solely but decisively fuels the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Since the international community still seems to lack in-depth research and adequate interest in analyzing religious components of conflicts, this attitude, if not changed, can cause negative consequences not only for the theory of IR but also for a right approach towards religiously motivated encounters and their successful resolutions. In light of this work's research focus, a remarkably powerful example of de-securitization and religious references' potential for conflict resolution can be observed in the ending passage of Yitzhak Rabin's speech upon the signing of the Declaration of principles in 1993 following the Oslo peace process:

"...our inner strength, our higher moral values have been derived for thousands of years from the Book of Books, in one of which, *Koheleth* (Ecclesiastes), we read, 'To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven. [...] A time to love, and a time to hate, a time of war and a time of peace.' Ladies and gentlemen, the time of peace has come" (Rackers 2004: 171).

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