ETHNONATIONALISM IN THE U.S., LEBANON, AND ISRAEL: A TRANSNATIONAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper comparatively examines three different ethnonationalist movements: the alt-right in the United States; Zionists in Israel, with a focus on right-wing Zionists; and Maronite Christian ethnonationalists in Lebanon. Scholars have put forth important analyses of the alliance between the alt-right and Zionists, yet not many have grappled with the existence of similar strands of ethnonationalist ideology in Lebanon or the history of cooperation that exists between Zionists and Maronite ethnonationalists, or even the alliance between the alt-right and right-wing Lebanese Maronites in the Arab-American diaspora. This comparative analysis strives to add to existing analyses of right-wing ethnonationalist ideologies in the Middle East and United States, and to move away from the tendency to paint the alt-right and other right-wing movements worldwide with a broad brush.

Keywords: Right-Wing Movements, Ethnonationalism, Zionism, White Nationalism, Maronite Nationalism

INTRODUCTION

While progressive parties and grassroots activists watched in horror as Donald Trump prepared to take his seat in the White House at the end of 2016, right-wing ethnonationalist parties across the world seemed to rejoice. The Trump campaign had been notoriously providing a platform for right-wing ethnonationalists, popularly known as the 'alternative right,' or the alt-right, to highlight their ideas within virtual and physical right-wing spaces. However, as this paper will show, the alliance between Trump and these right-wing ethnonationalist elements is not so clear-cut, just as the alliance between the alt-right and other elements within the global right is not as simple as many believe it to be.[1]

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[1] For example, many alt-right figures turned to Trump because they believed that he might reduce the expansionism promulgated by neoconservative and neoliberal elements in the White House over the last two decades. During campaign season, Trump's foreign policy seemed murky. However, his appointment of figures such as Jeff Sessions as Attorney General and David Friedman as the United States' ambassador to Israel should have given these alt-rightists a

The alt-right framed itself as a dissident right, one that had been working quietly since the lead-up to 9/11. Its ideological and strategic mobilization began as a response to neoconservatism following the Reagan years. While neoconservatives clamored for aggressive foreign policy, military interventionism, and a close alliance with Israel in the elite ranks of the Republican Party, the dissident right – who called themselves 'paleoconservatives' – rallied against these policies. They claimed that neoconservatives were "closet Leftists" and "usurpers" (Lyons 2017, 3). In the lead-up to the election of Donald Trump, these reactionary, ethnonationalist elements used contemporary means to embolden their base and recruit new followers. By the 2016 election, the 'alt-right' catapulted to the mainstream, uniting behind Donald Trump's divisive rhetoric on marginalized communities and his promises to "drain the swamp," meaning to rid Washington of bloat and corruption. While some alt-right figures criticized aspects of Trump's proposed policies, many believed that voting him into the White House was the right way to propel paleoconservative ideals and policies to the forefront of the political establishment.

These diversions from the Trump campaign's purported stances are crucial to note. The ideological currents that unite people under the banner of 'alt-right' are not as novel as many believe them to be. They have their roots in ideals of racial supremacy and purity, hyper-nationalism, and isolationism. Such ideals are recurrent; they are not unique to the United States, or even to North America or the West in general. Indeed, Zionist and Maronite nationalisms are fundamentally Western; both emerged either directly from the West or in collaboration with Western actors. In the case of Zionism, Theodore Herzl's call to create "an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism" (1896) follows in line with [Western] settler colonial logics that existed in his day, and follows a similar model to the settlement and colonization of lands in North America, South Africa, and Oceania. Ideologues of Maronite nationalism established connections to the Phoenicians that settled in parts of the Levant centuries ago to legitimize their claim on the land as a 'refuge' for

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stark indication that his foreign policy might prove hostile. Even so, they were just as likely to throw support behind him, for reasons that will be explored later in this paper.

Christian Lebanese. Indeed, in tracing the origin of 'Phoenicianist' discourse, El Husseini finds that the 'Phoenicianist' discourse of Lebanese identity was adopted by Christian (primarily Maronite) intellectuals at the time of the creation of Greater Lebanon. The Maronites' stated goal of *establishing a Christian refuge in the Middle East* was instrumental in convincing French authorities to designate Lebanon as a separate nation-state. The origin myth adopted by the Christian advocates involved a purportedly independent cultural legacy that was said to have existed in Lebanon since ancient times (El Husseini 2012).

Thus, Zionist ideology clearly follows in the Western tradition of colonizing and settling lands beyond the metropole, for both strategic reasons ('establishing an outpost of civilization against barbarism') and religious origin myths (Palestine is the promised land of the Jewish people). In similar fashion, Maronite nationalism traces its roots back to the establishment of a cultural origin myth (the Phoenician ties to Maronite Christians). At the same time, the establishment of this origin myth came in conjunction with their alliance with the French, who ultimately carved Lebanon out of Mandate Syria and established it as its own mandate. Both these ideologies fall in line behind North American settler ideologies of the 16th and 17th century, which also used religious and strategic justifications for the settlement of the land.[2] Contemporary Zionist and Maronite movements show similar ethnonationalist elements, with current political parties with an allegiance to these ideologies professing some form of commitment to establishing and maintaining homogeneous ethnostates.

The main tenets that unite these ideologies with alt-right ideologies transnationally are isolationism, hypernationalism, and an obsession with racial purity and demography. Where neoconservatives rally behind aggressive interventionist foreign policies, the dissident right clamor behind isolationist, exclusivist policies. Donald Trump's violence towards the marginalized attracted the alt-right based on an ideology of 'America First,' of bringing capital, resources, troops, and so forth 'back home' – an unreconstructed nativism,

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[2] Beyond the scope of this paper, but these narratives were later weaponized for nationalist purposes, much like the Zionist and Maronite nationalist iterations discussed above.

in essence. This is not a novel concept. In Israel, one of the forefathers of the right-wing Likud party, Vladimir Jabotinsky, championed an "iron wall" that would keep Palestinians out of "Jewish land" and allow the efforts of Zionist colonization to continue (Jabotinsky 1923). Today, the Likud party continues in a similar trajectory to appease the far-right elements of its base, much like the Republican Party in the US. In Lebanon, the resonances in contemporary political parties is murkier; however, the ideological conception of the country as a 'Christian refuge' by some right-wing elements that still operate today parallels the notion of Israel as a Jewish refuge (Pappe 2014), and the alt-right's conception of a decentralized United States with a hierarchy ordered according to race (Lyons 2017).

Indeed, the resonances between these notions of hypernationalism and racial purity, which are geographically removed from one another, are so great that they have been referenced in relation to each other. Richard Spencer, one of the primary figures associated with the alt-right, has constantly referred to his beliefs as a form of "white Zionism" (Abunimah 2017), claiming that ethno-states have "moral legitimacy." Further, during the Lebanese Civil War, which lasted for more than a decade, one of the many federal plans circulated by ideologues to stakeholders in the war "sold [Christian Lebanon] to the US ambassador as a second Israel with all the benefits for the US of the first, minus its inconveniences (meaning that it would be accepted by the Arab world)" (Traboulsi 2012, 218).

In this context, a comparative analysis of different right-wing ethnonationalist movements' reception of Trump's foreign policy is crucial to understanding the nuances in what has been popularly dubbed 'the alt-right.' While there is a tendency to paint the alt-right with a broad brush, we must acknowledge and understand the historical and ideological convergences and divergences embodied by different ethnonationalist parties worldwide.

In this paper, I aim to comparatively examine three different ethnonationalist movements: the alt-right in the United States; Zionists in Israel, with a focus on right-wing Zionists; and Maronite Christian ethnonationalists in Lebanon. Scholars have put forth important analyses of the alliance between the alt-right and Zionists, yet not many have

grappled with the existence of similar strands of ethnonationalist ideology in Lebanon or the history of cooperation that exists between Zionists and Maronite ethnonationalists, or even the alliance between the alt-right and right-wing Lebanese Maronites in the Arab-American diaspora. This comparative analysis strives to add to existing analyses of right-wing ethnonationalist ideologies in the Middle East and United States.

These three groups converge and diverge from each other in myriad ways. One interesting departure point, that I do not analyze in this paper, is the means of mobilization; since the parties I analyze in this paper came to prominence in different time periods, the means of mobilization and recruitment have varied accordingly. For example, the alt-right's primary means of recruitment and mobilization has been through virtual space; this space was not necessarily accessible at the height of some of the events I discuss in this paper. Although the recruitment of members and the mobilization of the alt-right has taken and is currently taking place in virtual spaces, the purpose of this article is to look at the transnational connections between alt-right, Zionist, and Maronite nationalist movements, rather than narrow in on the particular means of recruitment and mobilization utilized by each party. Indeed, this could be a potential topic for further studies in the future.

For the purposes of this paper, I aim to study these groups' reception of Trump's decision to move the United States' embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. I argue that their widely diverging stances on this issue stem from a similar, hypernationalist identitarian rationale, one that dominates the contemporary spirit of the alt-right in the United States and abroad.

This paper aims to contribute to existing analyses of right-wing, ethnonationalist groups across the globe in the context of the growing alt-right in the United States. While these groups have always existed in different iterations, there is no doubt that the election and tenure of Donald Trump have brought to light other ethnonationalist groups beyond the geographic bounds of the United States. Figures like Walid Phares, Middle East advisor to Trump during his campaign year and a former advisor to Maronite ethnonationalist parties during the Lebanese Civil War in the 1980s, are testament to the transnational nature of the alt-right. There have been analyses of the alt-right in the context of the United

States, of right-wing Zionism in the context of Israel, and of Maronite ethnonationalism in Lebanon. Some scholars have examined the relationship between Zionism and the alt-right, or Zionism and Maronite ethnonationalism; this paper aims to take their analyses a step further by putting the three geographic and historical contexts in conversation with one another, to add a new intervention to provocative and nuanced transnational analyses of right-wing ethnonationalism that already exist.

ESTABLISHING TERMINOLOGIES AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. **On Terminology**

The alt-right is often defined as 'neo-fascist.' Indeed, the alt-right deliberately evokes Nazi symbolism in their work and reiterate similar strands of antisemitism and xenophobia that were central to the ethos of the Nazi parties that existed in the interwar period. For example, *The Daily Stormer*, a media outlet that serves as a mouthpiece for the alt-right in the US, deliberately evokes the antisemitic *Der Sturmer*, an antisemitic paper that served as a mouthpiece for the Nazi party in the 1930s. The alt-right undoubtedly is committed to the circulation of neo-fascist ideas, formulated by the European New Right (ENR) of the late 1960s (Lyons 2017, 3; Griffin 2018, 116). Griffin notes that neo-fascism had undergone a "different, more intellectually high-brow sort of virtualization . . . promulgat[ing] a 'right-wing Gramscism.'" This 'right-wing Gramscism' dictated that postwar fascists should devote themselves to a "sustained campaign of metapolitics" (Griffin 2018, 117). The 'metapolitical' strategy meant that they would operate outside the traditional realms of party politics, concentrating on "transforming political and intellectual culture as a precursor to transforming institutions and systems" (Lyons 2017, 3).

However, it is simplistic to delineate the alt-right as being simply 'neo-fascist.' The movement's 'big-tent' praxis allows it to incorporate the voices of right-wing anarchists, misogynistic anti-feminists and men's rights activists [MRAs], and others who do not fall neatly under 'neo-fascist' lines. While the movement certainly draws from fascist ideas, the movement is not itself neo-fascist. In fact, many who identify with the alt-right do not envision themselves as fascists, especially not in the traditional sense of the word, or even

as neo-fascists. Many claim that their invocation of Nazi imagery is ironic; meant to mock those that call them neo-Nazis or neo-fascists. The ENR were opposed to being defined as fascists themselves, and actively disengaged from traditional elements of fascism such as expansionism. Much like their descendants in the alt-right, they advocated federalism, claiming that a federation of ethnically homogeneous communities was preferable to a centralized state (Lyons 2017, 3). Their ideological descendants in the alt-right have also moved to actively disengage themselves from old-school fascism, with publications such as *American Renaissance* even pioneering a version of white nationalism that moved away from recognizable forms of antisemitism and even welcomed Jewish thinkers whose ideas are palatable in the alt-right sphere. This means that an apparent softening of antisemitic rhetoric has become strategically sound for the alt-right.

It is this fundamental tenet of ENR and alt-right philosophy that I aim to focus on in this paper. For this purpose, I have moved away from terms like 'fascist' and 'neo-fascist' and towards terms like 'ethnonationalism,' for it is the notion of an ethnically homogeneous nation that ties elements of the alt-right with elements of Zionism and Phalangism (Lebanese Christian nationalism). Further, collapsing the three movements under the umbrella of 'fascism' or 'neo-fascism' threatens to obfuscate the virulent antisemitism rife in the alt-right movement. Indeed, these neo-fascist elements have often masked their antisemitism as anti-Zionism and solidarity with Palestinians (Ross 2017). To avoid falling into the trap of reifying these conflations, which have been taken up by Zionists to delegitimize Palestinian solidarity, I use the narrower and more accurate term 'ethnonationalism' and 'ethnostate' to signal the forms of hypernationalism and ideas of racial supremacy that I am referring to in this paper. This is not because I do not believe that these movements incorporate elements of fascism into their organizing strategy and ideological foundations. Rather, it is because ethnonationalist is a narrower delineation of the ideologies I identify and analyze. Further, as Griffin notes in his book on fascism, "the way journalists and politicians bandy the term 'fascism' around does not help create a sober atmosphere of forensic inquiry" (Griffin 2017, 95), meaning that the term has been construed as broad enough to encompass any form of anti-left authoritarianism. While this

paper does deal with movements that are largely anti-left and authoritarian, it is not these aspects of their ideologies and platforms that I am interested in for the purpose of this paper.

These movements' ardent dedication to different ethnostates leads to the formation of seemingly unexpected strategic alliances. When Richard Spencer, a prominent ideologue of the alt-right, professes his admiration for the State of Israel, he is professing an affinity with the ethnonationalist ideology that drives most, if not all, of the Israeli government's policies. When the Israeli government aligned itself with the Phalange of Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War in the 1980s, helping them carry out a massacre of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila, their purpose was twofold (Pappe 2006, 219). First, they were professing an affinity with the notion of another ethnocratic 'refuge' in the Middle East. Second, they were also attempting to exterminate their own Other; the 'Palestinian problem' that had taken root in Lebanon, one that was construed as an existential threat by both the Christian Lebanese Phalange and the Zionists.

For it is these ideas of hypernationalism and racial supremacy, delineated in the idea of ethnically homogeneous nations, that thread the movements I discuss in this paper together. The primary difference is the degree to which these movements managed, or are managing, a takeover of the state for the purpose of protecting identitarian interests and eliminating 'the Other.' One difference lies in their delineation of the 'Other;' different movements have different sources of existential fear. However, this fear is always projected onto a constructed 'Other.' For ethnonationalist Zionists, this Othering has always been directed towards Palestinians, who are indigenous to the land Zionists aim to settle. More recently, Jewish Ethiopians have also been subject to violent exclusion in Israel; in 2013, scandal broke when it was revealed that the Israeli government had been forcibly sterilizing African migrants, including Ethiopian Jews.

To Lebanese Christian nationalists, who believe that Lebanon should either be a juridically Christian nation or that Christians should be allowed to secede from Lebanon, the Palestinian refugee, and more recently the Syrian refugee, is the scourge to be exterminated from its society. This point is most notably shown in the platform of the

Kataeb (Phalangist) party released in March 2018. Under section C, point 13, the Phalangists commit to:

> the Arab Peace Initiative (Beirut Declaration 2002) and to the international resolutions pertaining to the Palestinian cause which is considered as righteous. Launching an international conference that would focus on the issue of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, while *making sure that talks are based on their right to return to their homeland and the rejection of their naturalization, and working on a comprehensive plan to share this burden by all friendly countries until the Palestinians return home.*[3] (Kataeb 2018)

Here, the emphasis is placed on ensuring that the Palestinians are granted the right to return to Palestine, not due to any political sense of obligation towards the Palestinian cause, but rather to ensure that Palestinians are removed from 'Lebanese land.' The platform also reveals a similar attitude towards the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, who the party claims must be "resettled to Arab countries who need [them as a labor force]." Such positions are not limited to the Phalangist party. White nationalists within the alt-right overwhelmingly view Jewish people as one of the primary Others within the white nation. Interestingly, however, tolerance of Jewish presence in 'white homelands' has increased due to what has been deemed as the 'common enemy:' "The brown, black, and yellow multitudes" (Trifkovic, quoted in Lyons 2017, 7). One alt-right thinker, M.K. Lane, even claimed that Jewish people should ally with white nationalists because "if we [whites] go down, they [Jewish people] go down" (Lane, quoted in Lyons 2017, 7). This increased tolerance has also manifested in an acceptance of Israel as a Jewish homeland, to the extent that some have cited it as an example to emulate. Richard B. Spencer[4] has repeatedly referred to himself as a 'white Zionist' and to his ideas as 'white Zionism.' The white nationalist affinity with Zionism is most notably displayed in a 2016 exchange at Texas A&M between Spencer and Rabbi Rosenberg, an audience member who challenged Spencer's

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[3] Emphasis added.

[4] Richard Bertrand Spencer is an American white supremacist. He is the president of the National Policy Institute, a white supremacist think tank, and of Washington Summit Publishers, a white nationalist publisher which publishes books on race as well as racist and racialist content supportive of white nationalism. Rejecting the label of white supremacist, Spencer defines himself a white nationalist, white identitarian, and the equivalent of a "Zionist" for white people. He created the term alt-right, a movement about white identity, and advocates white-European unity and a "peaceful ethnic cleansing" of nonwhites from America, as well as the creation of a new political order he believes would resemble the Roman Empire.

racism: "You come here with a message of radical exclusion. My tradition teaches a message of radical inclusion, as embodied by Torah," said Rosenberg, who attended the media event at the urging of one of his colleagues. "Would you sit down and study Torah with me and learn love?" Spencer shot back by comparing Israel's vision as a homeland for Jews with his own goals for a state for whites. "Do you really want radical inclusion into the State of Israel?" Spencer responded, as Rosenberg said nothing. "Jews exist precisely because you did not assimilate to the gentiles . . . I respect that about you. I want my people to have that same sense of themselves" (Solomon 2016).

Much like the Phalangist Party's delineation of the Palestinian cause as 'righteous' (see above), Spencer and other alt-right thinkers of similar stature claim that the existence of Israel as a state for the Jewish people holds "moral legitimacy," due to its self-delineation as a homogeneous ethnostate. At the same time, they claim that Jewish people are "remorseless enemies who seek [their] destruction" (Auschwitz Soccer Ref, quoted in Lyons 2017, 7) who have the power to "subvert [white] societies" (Lane, quoted in Lyons 2017, 7).

To these ethnonationalists, an investment in the notion of isolationism, to the extent where some (such as the ENR) advocate anti-imperialism rather than expansionism, is crucial to guaranteeing the sanctity of the ethnostate. What this means is that these right-wing elements advocate for 'anti-imperialism' not in a radical leftist sense, where equality or justice are defining characteristics of their opposition to imperialism, but rather to preserve capital used for expansionist purposes for the benefit of those who fit the criteria of belonging to the ethnostate. Much like the majority of Israeli citizens who protested the 1982 invasion of Beirut, and the overall Israeli involvement in the Lebanese Civil War, this 'anti-imperialism' is more concerned with "self-image" (Pappe 2006, 220) and the deaths of soldiers in the invading army than with victims in the region being invaded. This partially explains why Donald Trump's 'America First' rhetoric and promise to build a wall to keep Others out appeals so much to individuals in the alt-right. Both hold the promise of keeping resources concentrated in the ethnostate. This holds true for both Phalangists (as noted earlier) and right-wing Zionists. There is one caveat when it comes to delineating these groups' anti-expansionism: Israeli settlement-building, which has gone

on for decades now. The question of settlements is interesting because it is a form of expansionism that usually runs contrary to the 'anti-imperialist' or 'anti-expansionist' stance of the ethnonationalists I study in this paper. However, to right-wing Zionists, building settlements is not necessarily a question of expansion into foreign territory; indeed, settlements are deemed to be a reclamation of territory lost, rather than expansion into new lands, which is why it does not fall under the alt-right understanding of expansionism or imperialism, which can be defined as intervention into foreign nations' affairs (such as, for example, the invasion of Iraq, which most alt-rightists would have been opposed to on the basis that it was a neoconservative waste of resources that could be used to preserve the white ethnostate). At the same time, isolationism is not intrinsic to ethnonationalist fervor; indeed, isolationist and expansionist policies are both pursued as long as they preserve the sanctity of the ethnostate.

Finally, there is some contention surrounding the collapse of ethnicity and religion in the notion of ethnocentrism or ethnostates. In this paper, I use the term *ethno*nationalism rather than any other term that references the religious aspect of these forms of ethnonationalism (like the Christian justifications for a Christian refuge in Lebanon or a white ethnostate in North America, or the notion of Palestine being a 'promised land' for the Jewish people according to the Torah). These ethnocratic or ethnonationalist movements use religion as a smokescreen to justify the establishment of an ethnostate, but those within the ethnostate are not necessarily equally aligned by their profession to Christianity or Judaism.[5] Rather, it is ethnic or racial factors, such as the color of their skin or the language they speak, or any other element that could single them out as Others in the ethnostate.[6] We see this in the discrimination faced by Ethiopian Jews or even Mizrahi Jews in Israel, the self-professed refuge for all Jewish people across the world, or in the ethnonationalist alt-right's desire for a *white* ethnostate, that would be culturally

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[5] See the "cleansing operation" of the Christian Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon in Section 1B of this paper, "Historical Background and Contemporary 'Alliances.'"

[6] The work of scholars like Ronit Lentin and Benedict Anderson, among many others, have provided a rich backdrop for me to write within. However, this is a widely-debated subject that is beyond the scope of this paper, which is why I do not expand further on it here.

Christian i.e. exclude people with white skin who do not profess some affinity with Christian religion or culture (such as white Jewish people). Even the Phalange, who claim to desire a Christian refuge for *all* Christians in the Middle East, clearly express their affinity with Lebanism, or Lebanese exceptionalism, as seen in cases where Palestinian Christians or Syrian Christians are rejected by the Maronite Lebanese for being national 'Others.' This is not to say that ethnonationalists do not prioritize religion in any way. However, 'ethnicity' more accurately identifies the priorities of the thinkers behind the notion of ethnonationalism.

B. **Historical Background and Contemporary 'Alliances'**

On 13 April 1975, shots were fired from a car at a congregation of Phalange partisans in front of a church in 'Ayn al Rummaneh, wounding a number of people. Phalangist militiamen reacted a few hours later by machine-gunning a bus heading for the Tall al-Za'tar refugee camp, killing 21 Palestinians. Fighting broke out throughout the southeastern suburb of Beirut between the Phalange and the Palestinian resistance and their Lebanese allies. A war that was to last for 15 years had just begun. (Traboulsi 2012, 189)

Soon after the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War, a writer for *Al 'Amal*, the Phalange media mouthpiece, claimed that "the political domination of the Maronites was the only guarantee of protection for a minority condemned to oppression by a majority that was oppressive by its very nature" (Traboulsi 2012, 195). The political domination of the Maronites, in practical terms, referred to the fact that that the Lebanese parliament represented Christians to Muslims at a ratio of six to five and to the fact that the presidency could (and can, to this day) only be held by a Maronite.

In 1980, Bachir Gemayel, one of the primary figures of the right-wing Phalange, was devising a plot to "establish decisive Christian control over the [Lebanese] state" (Traboulsi 2012, 217). Several plans, set up by different advisors to Gemayel, were circulated internally. One of these plans, drafted by Karim Pakradoni and Joseph Abu Khalil, sold "Christian Lebanon . . . to the US ambassador as a second Israel with all the benefits for the US of the first, minus its inconveniences (meaning that it would be accepted by the Arab world)" (Traboulsi 2012, 218). The parallel between Lebanon and Israel in the imagination of right-

wing elements was no coincidence. Indeed, even when Lebanon was under French mandatory power, a vocal group of Christians, who formed a political front called the National Bloc, even "demanded that Lebanon be made a national home for the Christians under French protection, just as Palestine was to be made a national home for the Jews" (Salibi 1988).

The alliance between the Phalange and the Zionists extended beyond the metanarratives that existed about Lebanon and Israel as refuges of the Christians and the Jewish people. The Phalangist-Zionist alliance was a primary factor in the continuation of the civil war, especially during its second phase (1977-1982). On the 20th of March 1980, *Al 'Amal* responded to calls for peace and national unity by declaring that "there would never be Lebanese unity as long as half a million Palestinians were on Lebanese territory" (quoted in Traboulsi 2012, 217). On the Israeli side, one of the Likud's primary motivations for involvement in Lebanese affairs was the desire to eradicate the 'Palestinian problem' by force (Pappe 2006, 219). Indeed, this is where the interests of the Phalange and the Zionists collide; both shared the view that the 'Palestinian problem' was one to be eradicated by force. This coincidence of interests led the Israeli government to intervene and ensure a Phalange takeover of the Lebanese government at all costs. Traboulsi notes that Walid Jumblatt, the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party (an ally of the Palestinian resistance), referred to Gemayel as "the candidate of the Israeli tanks" (Traboulsi 2012, 222) soon after his takeover of the Lebanese government. Indeed, the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon had been intended to "install a Maronite pro-Israeli government in Lebanon and destroy the PLO" (Pappe 2006, 219). Soon after his election to the presidency, Gemayel had been 'forced' to meet with Menachem Begin, the Prime Minister of Israel at the time,[7] and sign off on an agreement to normalize relations between Lebanon and Israel.

Palestinian refugees were the primary victims in the war (Pappe 2006, 220). As Edward Said notes: "Israel's war was designed to reduce Palestinian existence as much as possible. Most Israeli leaders and newspapers admitted the war's political motive. In Rafael

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[7] Begin was a leader of the Zionist militant group Irgun, which was a predecessor of the Likud Party.

Eitan's words, to destroy Palestinian nationalism and institutions in Lebanon would make it easier to destroy them on the West Bank and in Gaza: Palestinians were to be turned into drugged roaches in a bottle" (Said 1984, 29). Israel's role in the massacre of Sabra and Shatila, and the Lebanese Civil War more broadly, is undeniable. However, it is more accurate to specify that Palestinian refugees were the primary victims of the Phalange-Zionist alliance.

The Phalange had started what they called 'cleansing operations' of Palestinian refugee camps as early as 1975, starting with the al-Dhubayeh Palestinian Christian refugee camp. Interestingly, this case affirms that the Phalange were not simply interested in religious homogeneity, but rather in *ethno*religious similarity, with a prioritization of national belonging to the imagined community of Lebanon.

By 1982, following Gemayel's assassination, the Phalange had carried out an internationally condemned massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, aided and abetted by the Israeli troops who were ostensibly present in West Beirut to preserve peace. The Israeli army's monthly journal, *Skira Hodechith*, commented that "the Christians [Phalangists] wanted thus to create a new demographic balance in Lebanon" (quoted in Traboulsi 2012, 225). Thus, in 1982, the ethnonationalist ideology of the Phalange and of the Zionists led to a strategic alliance that aimed to exterminate the Palestinian 'problem' and create a new hegemonic order in the Middle East. This new order would allow for the creation of a Lebanese ethnostate bordering Palestine, one which did not have to deal with the demographic threat posed by Palestinians any longer.

The notion of demographic threats is not new in Zionist thought; indeed, Palestinians have been framed as an "existential demographic threat" to Israel's existence as a Jewish state since its establishment (Oren 2009). Similarly, in 1980s Lebanon – and even today, as noted earlier – Palestinian refugees, Syrian refugees, and other demographics from Muslim-majority areas were seen as a demographic threat to Lebanon's existence as a supposed Christian refuge in the Middle East. This, along with ideological overlaps between the two, is what led to the alliance between the Zionists and the Christian Phalange in the 1980s. The ideological overlaps exist to this day, and indeed, I would posit

that the Christian Phalange and their allies are the most likely to be sympathetic to alt-right hypernationalism and notions of racial supremacy that permeate the current global right. While there have been no explicit policy positions expressing any form of overt alliance with the alt-right, which is a relatively new movement compared to the older Christian Phalange and their allies, ideologically there are too many similarities to deny that they would not, to some degree, ally strategically with one another.

One figure who exhibits the ideological overlap between these right-wing elements is the right-wing pundit Walid Phares, one of Trump's 2016 campaign advisors. Phares is notorious for his past as an ideologue of the Christian coalition dominated by the Phalange in the 1980s. According to Ben Lynfield of *The Jerusalem Post*, "Phares trained Lebanese militants in ideological beliefs justifying the war against Lebanon's Muslim and Druse [sic] factions . . . [he] advocated that Lebanon's Christians work toward creating a separate, independent Christian enclave" (Lynfield 2016). Phares has long advocated for ethnostates in the Middle East, which he calls "Christian enclaves" (Phares 2001). He refers to his envisioned Christian enclave in Lebanon as "Petit Liban." While his views on Christian enclaves might have changed between 2001 to today, it is clear from his time serving as a campaign advisor to Mitt Romney in 2012 as well as Donald Trump in 2016 that his stances on Islam in the region have not, and it is clear that he still holds a pro-Israel stance partially because he views them as a potential ally in the fight to establish Christian enclaves in the Middle East. He claims that Israel's support dwindled between 1985 and 2000 to appease the U.S. government; he then claims that Christians in the Middle East must attempt to reverse the dwindling Western support for Christian enclaves by presenting a "united front" in the international community and a "tragic story of [their status] as an underdog nation" to Western and U.S. audiences in order to garner support.

However, Phares' (and other Christian Lebanese pundits) commitment to the notion of Christian enclaves should not allow us to automatically assume that there is an overt alliance between the Christian Phalangists, right-wing Zionists, and the alt-right. To do so would be a far reach, especially considering the suspicion with which some figures in the alt-right approach Donald Trump and his selection of advisors, sometimes referred to

as the Alt Lite. The Alt Lite, as defined by Lyons, is a "wider circle of sympathizers and populizers" of the alt-right (2017, 13). Figures close to Donald Trump, like Steve Bannon or even Milo Yiannopoulous, are considered 'alt-lite' figures by many in the alt-right. Interestingly, *Breitbart News Network*, which is considered the paragon of alt-lite politics (Lyons 2017, 16), has hosted articles by Phares on Middle East affairs in the past. While a minority of alt-righters are suspicious of the Trump administration and those within it, Lyons notes that these figures are "squarely in the minority" (Lyons 2017, 15).

At the same time, the Trump administration and the alt-right are not one and the same; rather, their alliance is symbiotic, much like the alt-right's fraught alliance with Zionists and other hardline right-wingers. At *The Right Stuff*, another alt-right blog, 'Professor Evola-Hitler' argued that "[we] need to be taking advantage of Trump, not allow Trump to take advantage of us" (quoted in Lyons 2017, 14). In an essay about Trump's Zionism, known anti-semite Kevin MacDonald argues that "for . . . advocates of a White America, our first priorities should be domestic policy – ending the immigration onslaught first and foremost. If doing that is made easier by [allying with Trump and] supporting Israel, so be it" (MacDonald 2016). In 2016, Richard Spencer, notorious for calling himself a 'white Zionist,' tweeted: "We need a foreign policy that doesn't treat Israel as if it were America's 51st state. #AmericaFirst" (Spencer 2016).

These quotes adequately sum up the relationship between the Trump administration and the alt-right, who see Trump as a mean to an end, and who see their alliance with Zionists as a strategic one, based on similar interests, rather than a moral or ethical one. Indeed, Trump's pro-Israel policies have been a point of departure between him and many in the alt-right, who either advocate 'America First' foreign policy that involves cutting aid to Israel and investing those resources in the ethnostate, or those who are antisemitic and believe that the White House is controlled by 'the Jewish establishment.'

Regardless of these points of departure, the alt-right were willing to throw their support behind Trump in 2016, claiming that he would be a 'lesser evil' than Clinton and coming to terms with the differences that would appear once Trump was in the White

House. In a similar fashion, when the Likud took control of the Israeli government in the late 70s, it was due to a coalition of right-wing groups. These right-wing groups (National Religious Party, Agudat Israel, and Shlomotzion) did not necessarily see eye-to-eye with the Likud on several issues; however, any difference can easily be overlooked "in order to obtain the necessary amount of seats for a majority government" (Bsisu 2012, 31). Again, the strategic element of these alliances is clear; for all these parties, the expansion of settlements was a cornerstone of the alliance, as well as the 'threat' of Palestinian existence. As Bsisu notes, "nothing united the Israelis [especially those on the right] like the threat, whether real or imagined, of Palestinian aggression" (Bsisu 2012, 33).

In sum, while the figures of these different movements may eye each other (and even other individuals within their own movements) with suspicion, the ideological overlaps vis-a-vis the notion of ethnonationalism cannot be denied. The alt-right, Zionists, and Phalangists all lean to some degree towards the establishment of ethnostates. All believe, to some degree, that they belong to a persecuted ethnoreligious class in their geographical contexts, and all believe that the state should mobilize their resources not towards imperial expansion but rather towards bettering the conditions of those belonging to the ethnostate. This is a fundamental tenet of these parties' stances towards different phenomena, which I will elaborate upon in the next section.

THE EMBASSY MOVE

Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem indicated a marked shift from previous administrations' stances on the issue. Indeed, the decision has been lauded and criticized in equal measure. As mentioned previously, those in the alt-right who advocate an 'America First' foreign policy or hold the antisemitic belief that the 'Jewish establishment' controls the White House have a fraught yet strategic relationship with Zionism. On the one hand, Zionism is ideologically appealing to figures like Richard Spencer, who calls himself a 'white Zionist;' the notion of ethnoreligious enclaves, as I established above, falls in line with the alt-right's white ethnonationalism. On the other, the alt-right sees Israel as a representation of two undesirable elements in politics. First,

the strong U.S.-Israel alliance is seen primarily as the result of neoconservative interventionism and expansionism, whereby U.S. resources and capital that could be used to preserve and develop the white ethnostate are sent to Israel. Second, the anti-semites in the alt-right see the growth of Israel as a direct result of the 'Jewish establishment's' firm grip on the White House. The first view is primarily pushed by proponents of 'America First' nativism, and the second is pushed by antisemites who exaggerate the influence of Zionism on the White House. Both stem from an ethnonationalist point of view; indeed, antisemitism in the alt-right, as discussed previously, stems from an avid desire to preserve the sanctity of the white ethnostate. Jewish people have usually been represented as part of an elite dedicated to subverting and destroying 'white culture' (see section 1A of this paper, "On Terminology"). Further, the view that the U.S. should not provide Israel with any foreign aid stems from 'America First'-ism, whereby 'America' is envisioned as the ethnostate for white descendants of Europe in North America.

In Lebanon, the decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem was met with equal derision by some right-wing elements, many of whom adhere to the two-state solution in their policy stances. While the Kataeb Party has mellowed in recent years, other adherents to hypernationalist ideology, such as the Free Patriotic Movement's[8] Gebran Bassil (who is currently the foreign minister of Lebanon), condemned the decision, even claiming in an Arab League meeting that economic sanctions should be placed on the U.S. (Hayward 2017). Some may argue that this is unusual for Bassil, who recently faced backlash after remarks about having no ideological qualms with Israel and affirming "Israel's right to safety" (Bassil 2017). However, it falls in line with the ethnonationalist stance represented by the Kataeb Party and others with a similar ideological orientation. Many hard-line right-wing Christian ethnonationalists in Lebanon support Palestinians' right of return as the primary way to ensure that they would return home and leave Lebanon; thus, Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem is seen as an impediment to that

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[8] The Free Patriotic Movement is allied with Hezbollah; however, they share many similar ideological stances with the Kataeb party, such as Christian nationalism. Former allies of the Kataeb Party from the time of the civil war are part of the FPM. One prominent figure is the country's current president Michel Aoun, who was one thinker behind the many plans that mapped out Bachir Gemayel's coup in 1982; he is the founder and former leader of the FPM.

process. Like many alt-rightists who support Israel as a means to move Jewish people outside what they perceive to be their rightful "white" ethnostate homeland, many Lebanese right-wingers support the Palestinian right of return (and to some degree, the Palestinian cause for liberation) simply as a mean to move Palestinians beyond Lebanon's borders. To these people, much like alt-right figures in the U.S., the U.S.'s firm alliance with Israel is an impediment to the Lebanese state's ability to expend resources on the Libano-Christian ethnostate, since it impedes the process of removing Palestinians (always implicitly seen as "Muslim") from the "only Christian refuge in the Middle East."

Meanwhile, in Israel, the move was (unsurprisingly) lauded by many right-wing figures. As many scholars, analysts, and journalists have noted, the move consolidates the Israeli state's claim that Jerusalem is the undivided capital of Israel. Again, this firm pro-move stance stems from the same ideological ethnonationalism discussed in the case of the Lebanese right and the U.S. alt-right respectively. In this scenario, the ethnostate is seen as wrongfully contested by the international community, and the Trump administration's decision to challenge that contestation is thus an affirmation of the supposed legitimacy of the Jewish ethnostate. While these stances are wildly divergent from each other, there is no denying that they emerge from the same hypernationalist ethnoreligious dedication to the formation of a homogeneous ethnostate, whereby anyone who deviates from the majority ethnic creed or challenges the ethnostate's investment in its own people is violently ostracized and expelled.

CONCLUSION

This paper identifies the ideological overlaps between the alt-right, Zionists, and Maronite nationalists in the U.S., Israel, and Lebanon respectively, drawing attention to the historical alliance between Zionists and Maronite nationalists and the tentative alliance between alt-rightists (who draw on historically antisemitic ideology, mythology, and symbology) and Zionists. This paper attempts to prove that these three right-wing elements draw on similar notions of ethnonationalism and advocate for similar iterations of homogeneous ethnostates, albeit appealing to people of different "ethnicities." Finally, using their

reception of Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, I establish that while their stances on the issue were different, they stemmed from similar strands of ethnonationalist ideology and thought.

The ideological overlaps and potential for strategic alliances between alt-rightists, Zionists, and Maronite nationalists will be crucial to identify and analyze in the years to come. Many of these overlaps have not led to overt alliances between alt-rightists and the Lebanese right, or even re-established overt alliances between the Lebanese Christian right and Zionists. However, the potential for strategic alliances between these right-wing elements is an imminent threat to the contexts within the geographies these movements operate in. On top of this, they represent the rightward shift of global politics, where advocating for ethnostates so overtly has become acceptable and even, in some places, representative of the status quo. In terms of American Studies, it is crucial to look at the sort of impact created by alt-right mobilizations, especially online.[9]

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[9] One shortcoming of this paper is that it does not look at the online mobilization of the alt-right. The movement conducted most of their metapolitical approach to shifting politics rightward in virtual spaces rather than physical ones.

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