5. Secularism: Antireligious Secularity

Introduction

The first form of secularity at which I shall look is secularism, which holds that secularity is something altogether different from and in competition with religions. Like Hasenclever's and Rittberger's primordialist stance, such an approach requires an oppositional stance toward religion. In turn, this does not bode well for the peaceful resolution of conflicts perceived to have a religious element. Unfortunately, it is a fairly common position for secular people to take, and so is worth studying to identify common problems in secular thought. More importantly, however, elements of secularism are also at the root of the more problematic aspects of both liberal and postmodern secularity. However, this form of secularity has some positive aspects, particularly its emphasis on the uniqueness of secularity, and is thus also worth studying in its own right. In this chapter, I will analyze two secularist responses to religion, outline how they operate in practice in situations of religious conflict, and analyze them by the strong-open typology of this thesis.

There are two general types of secularism. As originally defined in the nineteenth century, secularism was an active program that opposed religion. The classic example, which I will explore here, is the atheist component of Marxist-Leninist thought, particularly as it was enacted in the Soviet Union and its satellite states. While there are other examples that I will briefly mention, the Marxist-Leninist example is both clear in theory and extensive in practice, and thus worth examining in detail. The second type of secularism extends the original meaning somewhat because it is not a program per se, but it also tends to promote an active opposition to religion because of its supposed essential characteristics and those of secularity. The most famous example of this is Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis, which, although not explicitly concerned with religion and secularity, places them at the center of its explanation as to

why cultural differences tend to promote negative forms of conflict. While Huntington can, at times, be quite respectful of religion, the overall approach assumes that dialog is impossible and violence likely at interreligious and religio-secular interfaces. This sort of approach often features in discussions of fundamentalism, particularly those that place all forms of religious involvement in politics under this banner.

Before I continue, I would like to make two minor notes. Authors sometimes use "secularization" as "the goal of programmatic secularism," rather than as "a social process" as established in the second chapter. My discussion may reflect that, but context should make it clear which sense is intended. Also, as I mentioned in the second chapter, this and the other two forms of secularity in this thesis are ideal types. While I believe certain schools of thought demonstrate a secularist mindset, no one author necessarily adheres to it at all times.

Two Types of Secularism

Marxism-Leninism

The Marxist-Leninist communism of the Soviet Union, as a clear example of programmatic secularism, actually comes close to replicating the ideal type. While Communist regimes still exist in Cuba, China, and southeast Asia, since the collapse of the Soviet Union they have often moderated their response to religion. The Soviet example is still the clearest expression of "secular absolutism," to quote the Yugoslav scholar Paul Mojzes,[1] so I will refer mostly to it. Also, in the interests of space and focus, I will only look at the development of religious policy. However, one should keep in mind that, as Sabrina Ramet notes, shifts in religious policy were also part of broader phases of state development (in Ramet's terms, destruction of the old system, building a new system, stabilization, and decay or reform).[2]

To be fair, Karl Marx's original atheistic stance was rather liberal. It was only with

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1   Quoted in Radić, Radmila, 1999, "The Proselytizing Nature of Marxism-Leninism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36(1-2): 80-94, p. 82.
2   Ramet, Sabrina P., 1998, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), ch. 2, "Phases in Communist Religious Policy".

the work of Frederich Engels and, in particular, with Vladamir Lenin's political interpretation that Marxism-Leninism became ardently secularistic. Arthur McGovern, in assessing whether atheism is essential to Marxism, outlines four aspects of Marxist-Leninist atheism.[3] The first, "humanist atheism," he identifies the most with Marx himself. Humanist atheism is simply the desire to free the minds of humanity from religious submission. Dimitry Pospielovsky, citing David Aikman, connects Marx's thought to the Romantic "cult of Prometheus" of Goethe, Shelly, Byron, and others, which features Prometheus (and Satan) as a liberator who frees humanity without necessarily destroying God.[4] Marx and Engels together took what McGovern calls an ideological turn, in which they focused on the institutional role of religion and its relation to the state. This gets to the full meaning of Marx's famous "opium of the people" statement noted in the previous chapter: religious devotion eases, and thus indicates, a suffering that one must address, but classes advantaged by the suffering of others keep the people on the drug rather than addressing social ills.

It was Engels who added a highly "scientistic" side to Marxism. He popularized dialectical materialism, McGovern argues, to provide an alternative worldview to theism and to strengthen ideological atheism. Engels' philosophical argument was "that idealism stems from the inability of men to cope with the forces of nature and the chaos of social life," religion being a form of idealism. "With the increase of man's control over natural and social processes, religion will vanish from the society of the future."[5] Lenin, in turn, took Marx's and Engels' theory and made it a highly pragmatic political policy. He insisted on the unity of theory and thus an absolute requirement for nontheistic belief as part of communism. This produced McGovern's fourth type of Marxist atheism, militant atheism. As Pospielovsky puts it, "For Lenin, even the

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3 McGovern, Arthur F., 1985, "Atheism: Is It Essential to Marxism?" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 22 (3): 487-500, pp. 489-490.
4 Pospielovsky, Dimitry V., 1987, *A History of Soviet Atheism in Theory and Practice, and the Believer*, v. 1, *A History of Marxist-Leninist Atheism and Soviet Antireligious Policies* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan), p. 13.
5 Both quotes Ibid., pp. 15-16.

smallest traces of idealism in the views of his political opponents or collaborators were equivalent to concessions to the mystical religious view of reality, and therefore, directly or indirectly, supported ideological dominance over the exploited classes."[6]

Thus it is necessary to differentiate between Marxism more generally and the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the Soviet Union. Arguing backward through Marx's stages, McGovern points out that militant atheism is not an inevitable part of Marxism generally. First, it is based on Engels' scientistic philosophies that many modern nontheist philosophers question. Moreover, the ideological component, while perhaps necessary given the traditional nature of institutional churches, discounts radical doctrines like liberation theology.[7] This leaves Marx's humanist atheism, which, while it may support an individual Marxist's personal atheism, does not necessitate a secularist program. The Marxist-Leninist position, on the other hand, was aptly summed up by David Powell: "As Marxists, [the Soviet leaders] expected secularization to follow from scientific progress and socioeconomic change. But as Leninists, they decided to accelerate this process by pursuing an active *policy* of secularization."[8]

The Soviet Union was an authoritarian state, which, as many authors have pointed out, gave the Communist Party control over both public and private aspects of life.[9] Thus, beyond a general antireligious public policy, the Party also took measures to inculcate atheism in individuals. Their approach was, in effect, to apply a strong version of secularization theory as policy. This includes secularization as differentiation of religious and secular (state) institutions. Thus, politics was divested of religious ideology and state bodies took over functions previously done by religious ones, particularly in schooling. However, the Communist Party also sought to create a fully atheist society. Whereas these developments are a (contested) part of a theory analyzing

6 Ibid., p. 19.
7 McGovern, "Atheism" pp. 491-493.
8 Powell, David E., 1975, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union: A Study of Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), p. 3, original italics.
9 Radić, "The Proselytizing Nature of Marxism-Leninism," p. 84. Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, p. 7.

historical processes, under Marxism-Leninism secularization became, in Radmila Radić's words, "a premature, forced, and extorted occurrence."[10]

The Soviet constitution was, technically, relatively open. It guaranteed religious believers freedom of conscience and religious observance, although it officially separated church and state and, importantly, moved schools into state hands. However, as Pospielovsky points out, while on a surface reading of the constitution Soviet citizens had religious freedom, this was contradicted by other articles. By the 1977 constitution, article 6 placed the Communist Party at the center of Soviet society. Article 51, in turn, guaranteed freedom of association only where in accordance with the aims communism. Given that, by Marxist-Leninist standards, religion is antithetical to communism, this article could be easily interpreted to restrict or even ban religion.[11]

Soviet antireligious programs had three main phases. Between the 1917 Revolution and the Second World War there was an ardently secularist phase, followed by a period of relative tolerance during and just after the war, in effect in exchange for church support of the military campaigns. From 1957, the Party returned to active secularism. Two social organizations, one in each secularist period, acted as the Communist Party's antireligious arms – it is difficult, in many cases, to tell where the Communist Party and Soviet state ended and civil society began. These indicate the general tenor of the two periods. The League of the Militant Godless, formed in 1918, coordinated prewar antireligious campaigns, and tended toward overt, even physical attacks on religious institutions and people. The state supported this with arrests of believers and church closures. The League had no official ending, disappearing quietly during the Second World War.

The All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge, formed in 1947, took a different approach. Although the use of force by the state was still a threat, the Society concentrated on reforming the religious through education and

10 Radić, "The Proselytizing Nature of Marxism-Leninism," p. 82.
11 Pospielovsky, *A History of Soviet Atheism*, p. 2.

publishing. Official knowledge held that religion "is opposed to the scientific world view," and that "in religion, man is enslaved by his own imagination."[12] The Society also sought to replace religious rituals with secular ones, for example in marriage or at the registration of a child's birth certificate, as well as with secular holidays. As a side note, a peculiar approach called "god-building" reappeared during this time, which had been proposed by such early thinkers as Leo Tolstoy and Anatoly Lunacharsky, the latter of whom coined the term. Echoing Auguste Compte, God-building was, in effect, the creation of an entirely atheist religion to better ease the masses into atheist views. Discarded by the League, various members of the Society entertained the notion, although it was always controversial – Pospielovsky called it "the God-Building Heresy."[13]

Soviet antireligious campaigns waned through the late 1970s and early 1980s, and particularly so with Gorbachev's reforms. In these conditions, religious resurgence was quick, which belies the notion that the secularizing campaigns had much effect. In analyzing the results of the antireligious campaigns in the middle of the 1970s, Powell found that the Party could claim to have destroyed the political and economic influence of the church and have limited its access to society, especially to education. However, it had less success in convincing people not to attend church or privately celebrate religious events, and it had little to no success in convincing people that religious views were inherently wrong or to make them atheists.[14] Given that the former goals were largely external, behavioral changes while the latter were internal, cognitive ones, one can conclude that, while state power can produce changes in people's behaviors, it is much more difficult to affect their beliefs. Thus, the first form of secularism, programmatic secularism, seems, in the long run, to not have its intended effect.

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12 *Bol'shaia Sovietskaia Entsiklopediia* (*Great Soviet Encyclopedia*), Prokhorov, A.M., ed. in chief, Paradise, Jean, trans., ed. dir., (Moscow, SU: Sovetskaia Ensiklopediia Publishing House, 1975/New York, NY: Collier Macmillan, 1978), v. 21, p. 576.
13 Pospielovsky, *A History of Soviet Atheism*, p. 91.
14 Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, pp. 156-157.

Communism is certainly not the only form of highly antireligious secularity. Richard Dawkins, Charles Simonyi Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University, made his antireligious beliefs quite clear in a speech to the Freedom from Religion Foundation in late 2001, just after the September 11 attacks.[15] In it, he clearly identifies religion, in particular its irrationality, as the source of much violence in the world, and calls for fellow seculars to "stop being so damned respectful!" and begin criticizing religion. While he does not propose any Marxist-Leninist-type measures, it is clear that he sees no positive value to religion. Similarly, much anticult work focuses exclusively on the dangers of fervent belief. As I stipulated before, I will not tackle this issue in full given very real concerns with cult-style group domination in psychological terms. However, it is worth noting that, given the grey area between cult and religion, it is possible to slide from anticult to antireligious – recent French and Belgian reports listed groups like Quakers and Baha'is, usually seen as among the most peaceful of churches, as potentially dangerous cults.[16]

The Clash of Civilizations

Samuel Huntington's civilizations thesis, from *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, is a less programmatic type of secularism. In his view, civilizations, rooted in religions, comprise fundamental units of world society that tend to clash where they meet. The emphasis here is on the difficulty of dialog, not on the relative merit of civilizations. While Huntington often proposes that the West adopt policies to strengthen its identity, this is encouraged as a bulwark against non-Western competitors, not out of belief in the inherent superiority of Western civilization. Still, the assumption that civilizations tend to clash means such a bulwark is necessary.

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15 Dawkins, Richard, 2001, "Time to Stand Up," paper delivered to the Freedom from Religion Foundation (by James Coors in lieu of Dawkins), Sep., <www.simonyi.ox.ac.uk/dawkins/WorldOfDawkins-archive/Dawkins/Work/Articles/2001-09time_to_stand_up.shtml> (as on 27 Jan. 2005).

16 Richardson, James T., and Introvigne, Massimo, 2001, ""Brainwashing" Theories in European Parliamentary and Administrative Reports on "Cults" and "Sects,"" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40(2): 143-168.

Unlike Marxism-Leninism of the Soviet type, which no longer has the worldwide impact it once had, Huntington's thesis and others like it have many proponents. However, as my intent here is not to give a nuanced description of the many debates surrounding such theses, but rather to briefly engage with the underlying philosophy as it applies to religion and conflict, I will work primarily with a few of Huntington's writings. As his works are intellectually robust, I do not believe that limiting myself so will unduly weaken my analysis.

Huntington uses something akin to Fernand Braudel's open-ended definition of a civilization, on the basis of which I understand "civilization" to refer to a relatively stable, very large-scale grouping of people.[17] As mentioned in the first chapter, for Huntington "religion is a central, perhaps *the* central, force that motivates and mobilizes people."[18] One can find similar assertions throughout his work. While his formulation does not specify what role secularity may play, his categorization of civilizations tends to link, although not equate, secularity with the West. This is particularly clear in his discussion of the various characteristics that constitute Westernness. Among these is the "separation of spiritual and temporal authority," the clashes between which "have existed in no other civilization."[19] This separation, of course, has not only been immensely problematic throughout Western history but continues to be today. Many Christians would debate whether it is an authentic aspect of Western civilization. Moreover, Huntington labels – tentatively, at least – Catholic Latin America as a separate civilization. However, Huntington's broader point is that modern social dynamics of the West make is possible to treat it as a discrete entity. Given the secular nature of these dynamics, we can substitute "secularity" for "West" to the limited extent that I do here.

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17 Braudel, Fernand, 1987, Richard Mayne, trans., 1993, *A History of Civilizations* (New York, NY: Penguin), pp. 27-33.
18 Huntington, Samuel P., 1996, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London, UK: Touchstone), pp. 66, original italics.
19 Ibid., p. 70.

Huntington does provide a cogent argument that current attempts to ascribe universal applicability to Western culture are misguided. His first point is that, while one can perhaps identify a world-spanning Westernized, secularized elite, this does not mean that the world fits this description. As I noted in the second chapter, the elite Huntington calls the Davos culture,[20] referring to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Attendees who hail from the West may represent a sizable swath of their culture, but this is a relatively small segment of world population. More importantly, attendees from non-Western countries may only represent a tiny elite in their own society that may not have broad support among the masses. If one were to take Davos as a snapshot of world society, one may conclude that secularity is quite widespread, but this would be inaccurate. Moreover, Huntington contends that even if one could observe widespread modernization in non-Western civilizations, modernization does not equal Westernization. Huntington defines modernization as a technical process that can occur in different societies in different ways.[21] An example of this is the move by East Asian societies to adopt Western techniques but not Western culture – "their goal is summed up in the phrases *ti-yong* (Chinese learning for fundamental principles, Western learning for practical use) and *woken*, *yosei* (Japanese spirit, Western technique)."[22]

On a more general level, this points to a resurgence of local and traditional culture visible in many non-Western civilizations. Given that, in the Clash thesis, religion is a central element of civilizations, this resurgence will often take religious form. This assumption leads to a discussion of fundamentalism. This is a greatly contested term, and I will discuss it in more depth in the next chapter when assessing how it is understood by liberal seculars. For the time being, however, I will use a simple version of Karen Armstrong's approach. In *The Battle for God* she finds that "it is a useful label

20 Ibid., p. 57-58.
21 Huntington, Samuel P., 1996, "The West Unique, Not Universal," *Foreign Affairs* 75(6): 28-46, pp. 29-30.
22 Ibid., p. 35.

for movements that, despite their differences, bear a strong family resemblance."[23] Key to this resemblance is that fundamentalist movements revive and reinterpret various fundamentals of faith (the term itself comes from the American evangelical Protestant experience) in an effort to resacralize the contemporary world.

For Huntington, however, fundamentalist movements are merely the most dramatic examples of a much broader and deeper religious resurgence in non-Western societies.[24] This resurgence is not a rejection of modernization, but "of the West and of the secular, relativistic, degenerate culture associated with the West."[25] In much the same way that some religious rhetoric does indeed stereotype the West as "secular, relativistic, and degenerate," Huntington's view can easily contribute to secularist stereotyping of religious movements. Mark Juergensmeyer calls this tendency toward stereotyping "antifundamentalism."[26] In this context, antifundamentalism rests on the assumption that all religious resurgence is opposed to the secular West. Huntington does not make this argument explicitly. However, without a more nuanced understanding of the nature of religious movements, it is easy to argue that all religious resurgence as dangerous fundamentalism. I will also explore antifundamentalism further in the next chapter.

Just such a debate surrounded US policies in the Middle East in the 1990s. Edward G. Shirley, in assessing the possibility of dialog with Muslim moderates in both Iran and Algeria proclaimed that "there are no moderate fundamentalists."[27] Given that these were cases of "fundamentalist" movements (one successfully revolutionary, the other engaged in war), and that fundamentalists are the most implacable of antisecular religionists, dialog would be impossible. Shirley thus proposed a policy of detachment in order to let these movements collapse on their own – recognition would only lend

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23 Armstrong, Karen, 2000, *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (London, UK: HarperCollins), pp. ix-x.
24 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 96.
25 Ibid., p. 101.
26 Juergensmeyer, Mark, 1995, "Antifundamentalism," in: Marty, Martin E., and Appleby, R. Scott, eds., *The Fundamentalism Project*, v. 5, *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press): 353-366.
27 Shirley, Edward G., 1995, "Is Iran's Present Algeria's Future?" *Foreign Affairs* 74(3): 28-44, p. 30.

support to the fundamentalist cause.

Similarly, in the face of the increasing conflict between the West and other civilizations, Huntington's primary policy prescription is a retrenchment of the West in its unique identity. This has two aspects. First, internally, the West should reassert its own heritage. However, this is easier said than done, not least because of the ongoing conflict even within the West over the relation of religion and secularity. This debate will feature in the chapter. Externally, Huntington encourages governments to refrain from intervening in the affairs of states in other civilizations, as Shirley did. With religion, this is somewhat more straightforward than internal retrenchment, but it also entails closing civilizations from external input. With less interaction, there are fewer chances to combat the sort of stereotyping that Juergensmeyer warns of. This process will appear in the next section, when I discuss the annulment of the 1991 Algerian elections. First, however, I assess a case of the damage that unbridled antireligionism of the Marxist-Leninist sort can cause in the case of the former Yugoslavia.

Secularism in Practice

Communism and Religion in the Breakup of Yugoslavia

Of the three cases I examine in this section – the former Yugoslavia, Algeria, and France – that of the former Yugoslavia may not at first seem to fit. None of the various parties that clashed were ardently secularist. While one could argue that various nationalist leaders were highly secular – indeed, many were former communists – their use of religious imagery and their support of religious institutions as repositories of national identity has led many to identify the breakdown of Yugoslavia as a religious conflict. I noted the problems of this term in the first chapter, but here is a conflict with many unmistakably salient religious elements. The argument here, however, is not about those elements. Rather, I want to briefly analyze the ways in which the ethnic and religious policies of Josip Broz Tito's communist regime contributed to the ease with which religious symbology turned nationalist and as such encouraged violence. I say

Tito's regime for a reason – although after his death in 1980 Yugoslavia was officially communist, and especially after Milošević's rise in the late 1980s, internal politics became increasingly nationalist.

Communist Yugoslav policies toward ethnicity and religion suffered from a number of contradictions. The government encouraged the ethnic self-identity of some (notably Muslims and Macedonians) and discouraged it for others (Croats and sometimes Serbs). It proclaimed the desirability of federalization along ethnic lines while centralizing the Party apparatus. Finally, it adopted a rhetoric of "brotherhood and unity" while reinforcing national divisions.[28] The central government sought to play rival nationalisms off against one another to secure power for itself. Religious institutions were a key part of this plan. The two clearest examples of this are Yugoslav support for the Macedonian Orthodox and Muslim communities. In 1967, after years of internal struggle and debate, the Macedonian Orthodox Church declared itself independent from its Serbian counterpart. While Serbian Orthodox religious authorities decried the split, Tito's regime supported it. One year later the central government gave Muslims, a major group in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the right to identify themselves as "Muslims in an ethnic sense."[29] This raised them to the level of Serbs and Croats, between whose nations Bosnia-Herzegovina lay. Importantly, it also linked Muslimness to a single nationality in much the same way that Catholicism was linked to Croatia and Orthodoxy to Serbia. By strengthening national identity and removing links between nations, as when ascribing each nationality its own religion, the regime almost guaranteed a breakdown along national-religious lines. Without the centralizing influence of Tito, who died in 1980, and with few other crosscutting links, the breakdown was well under way before the decade was out.

Support for religious groups as political entities, however, did not entail

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28 Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, p. 149.
29 Appleby, R. Scott, 2000, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), p. 66.

strengthening them as social ones. Although Yugoslavia did not follow strictly Marxist-Leninist lines, particularly after Tito's split with Stalin following the Second World War, religion was never more than tolerated and religious instruction was not encouraged. Yugoslavia's communist leaders sought the "privatization" of religion, in which the public role of religion would be eliminated and religious ritual reduced to a formal but insubstantial shell.[30] R. Scott Appleby points out that in such an atmosphere religious leaders were unable to use the postcommunist religious resurgence to reeducate their flocks and move them toward nonviolent expressions of faith, especially after war began in the early 1990s. Appleby argues that the underlying institutional and social structures for this must be present beforehand, and these the communist state had destroyed by limiting religious participation to outward forms and worship only.[31] In particular, the communist regime routinely prevented interreligious contacts,[32] as part of the "divide and rule" policy. Such interreligious contacts would have been vital in forestalling interethnic war, or at least in removing the appearance of religious sanction for it. They could hardly develop during a war – the foundations did not exist before hostilities began.

Thus, the policies of Tito's regime at once strengthened various nationalisms and linked them to different religions while weakening the ability of religious leaders from those traditions to mobilize for peace. This greatly contributed to the breakdown of Yugoslavia along national-religious lines, but it is not the only cause. Similar or worse antireligious campaigns have featured in a number of communist countries without resulting in similar troubles. For example, although Chinese policies, and Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in particular, gravely weakened Tibetan Buddhism, the Tibetans have generally followed a peaceful path in their ongoing conflict with the Chinese government. A weakened religion still needs religious or

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30 Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, p. 148.
31 Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, pp. 74-75 and note 62.
32 Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, p. 171.

political leaders to capitalize on it for violent ends, and this the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile have refused to do. Thus, misguided religious policies alone are not sufficient cause for provoking violence – in the former Yugoslavia, nationalist leaders also deserve much of the blame. However, there are times when a secularist government's actions do directly influence the recourse to violence, as happened in Algeria.

Secularists and Fundamentalists in Algeria

In Algeria, the secularist army stepped in and canceled elections in the early 1990s that had been largely won by an Islamist party – here meaning roughly "Islam as a political platform." Internally, this led to a civil war that continues to this day, but equally important was the reaction of external powers, notably France and the United States, in accepting the need to oppose "fundamentalism" in this way. This added to the tension between the Muslim and Western worlds. While the many of the roots of this conflict go very far back, to the Algerian war for independence from France and further, I will focus on the period from roughly 1990, when the Islamist FIS (from the French initials for Islamic Salvation Front) began to make gains in Algerian electoral politics.

Rachid al-Ghannouchi, a Tunisian Islamist, identifies the secularism of the North African states as "one of its most radical forms."[33] Although he links this extreme secularism with the fact that North African states often followed the French model of government, with its ardent separation of church and state and enshrinement of rationalism, he also recognizes that this model ought to be called "pseudo-secularism." More than the French model of a strict division between church (or mosque) and state, and even more than a Marxist-Leninist model of marginalizing religion to hasten its disappearance, North African secularists "seek to impose full control over the institutions and symbols of religion, and not only to claim, but even monopolize the

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33 al-Ghannouchi, Rachid, 2000, "Secularism in the Arab Maghreb," in: Tamimi, Azzam, and Esposito, John L., eds., *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (London, UK: Hurst): 97-123, p. 97.

right to interpret religion."[34] To this end, Algerian imams are not only state-controlled

but state-appointed. This is secularism, as I have defined it, at its most extreme. By

claiming the right to interpret religion secularists, in effect, assert that religion can be

entirely understood within a secular framework, denying religious belief any internal

dynamism whatsoever.

Regimes bent on controlling any aspect of human social behavior usually do not

react well when that aspect ceases to behave as it is "supposed" to. Growing discontent

among Muslims with various aspects of the secularist regime – with economic problems

as much or more than with the place of religion in relation to the state – led to unrest,

even rioting, by the late 1980s. According to al-Ghannouchi, the government decided to

allow free elections to take place in order to placate the discontented without

relinquishing power.[35] Whatever the expected outcome, the FIS succeeded dramatically.

In local elections in 1990, the FIS won 55% of seats. In the first round of national

elections in late 1991, they won 40% of the parliament, and reasonably expected to win

60% in the second round scheduled for mid-January 1992. However, before this could

happen, the army launched a coup, canceled the second round and annulled the first,

depriving the FIS of its democratically determined place in government. Following this,

the army jailed FIS leaders and, by March, banned the party.

Internally, these actions had a terrible effect on Algerian life. Abdelkadir Hachani,

the moderate leader of the FIS, urged followers to limit protests to mosque attendance

and prayer,[36] but after he and other FIS leaders went to jail, no such moderate voices

could have an impact. Before the coup, the FIS "succeeded in defusing many

potentially explosive human bombs made of the clusters of thousands of deprived and

trivialized young men" by channeling their passions into constructive social works and

electoral politics.[37] Afterwards, it was these young men who began a guerilla campaign

34 Ibid., p. 98.
35 Ibid., pp. 102-103.
36 Juergensmeyer,"Antifundamentalism," p. 355.
37 al-Ghannouchi,"Secularism in the Arab Maghreb," p. 116.

against the state. Although the FIS had a more radical element prior to 1992,

Mohammed Hafez contends that "it was not a violently insurgent movement bent on

revolution. Political exclusion of Islamists from 1992 to 1997 was the main impetus for

mass revolt."[38] Compounding the increase in internal violence, the reaction of Western

powers was detrimental to global relations between the Western and Muslim worlds.

The US government's response was that it did not want to get involved in an internal

matter, a stance that many Western media compared to Cold War reluctance to on

behalf of fairly-elected communists. The initial French government reaction was

equally ambivalent, but after a new government came to power in 1993, it pledged

support to the Algerian state's "fight against extremism and fundamentalism."[39] The

French government's willingness to accept the Algerian state's portrayal of their

struggle as such gets to what Juergensmeyer calls the "antifundamentalist syllogism":

that there is a discrete and dangerous phenomenon called fundamentalism whose

proponents seek political power to push their own extreme views, and that therefore it is

justifiable to take extreme actions in response.[40] Whether or not the US and French

governments are internally secularist, their willingness to follow antifundamentalist

logic in external politics makes them appear so to outsiders. In this case, al-Ghannouchi

states that "Muslims have discovered that only the ends matter in Western political

rationale."[41]

   Again, a secularist attack on religion does not guarantee that religions will resort to

violence, and the methods of resistance chosen are the responsibility of those who use

them. Thus, my argument does not justify the extreme actions taken by some Islamic

groups in their fight against the Algerian state. However, if one instead looks at such

events systemically rather than trying to analyze the actions of one side, one can see how

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38 Hafez, Mohammed M., 2003, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*
    (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner), p. 47.
39 Juergensmeyer,"Antifundamentalism," p. 355-356.
40 Ibid., p. 361.
41 al-Ghannouchi,"Secularism in the Arab Maghreb," p. 103.

violence begets violence. The possibility of peaceful if contentious dialog between religious and secular politicians and parties was destroyed when the secularist army of Algeria annulled the elections. Moreover, that Western states at best acquiesced and at worst aided this has damaged the possibility of similar dialog on the global scale.

Traditionalist Republicans and the Hijab in France

My argument above, that a government that is internally liberal can by its actions appear antireligious and secularist to those outside, is something of a simplification. More accurately, while a country may broadly speaking be liberal, there are always elements within it willing to interpret the "essence" of a country in rather more narrow ways. This is in much the same way that religions are internally plural and subject to an ongoing dialog. Such is the case in France, which, as with many European countries, is facing an increasing influx of immigrants. The French state has generally held itself to be *laïque*, or secular, and organizes institutions such as schools accordingly. However, a large number of its immigrants openly identify with a religious, Muslim heritage. This, as Jeremy Jennings has aptly outlined, has sparked an internal debate that he breaks down into three separate camps: the traditionalist, modernizing, and multiculturalist positions on the secular nature of the French Republic.[42] These positions very well match up with my terms secularist, liberal, and postmodern. I will be discussing the traditionalist view here, while the modernizing and multiculturalist stances I will cover in subsequent chapters.

The particular event in question is the first iteration, in 1989, of *l'affaire du foulard islamique,* the affair of the Islamic veil. This concerns female Muslim pupils in state schools wearing hijab, or scarves that cover the hair, in accordance with their practice of Islam. To many, this was an affront to the secular nature of the schools and, by extension, the Republic. Moreover, it represented broader issues of the integration of Muslims into French society. September 1989 was not the first time this had been an

42 Jennings, Jeremy, 2000, "Citizenship, Republicanism, and Multiculturalism in Contemporary France," *British Journal of Political Science* 30(4): 575–598.

issue at the local level, but the suspension of three Muslim girls from a school in Criel, north of Paris, in that year sparked the first nationwide debate on the issue. Nor was it the last time – similar events happened throughout the 1990s and a contentious law concerning scarves and other conspicuous signs of religious adherence, and their place in the schools, has recently come into effect in France. However, those in the later 1990s and especially the recent episodes have all occurred in a different political climate, so I shall consider only the 1989 *affaire*.

As Gerd Nonneman points out, the French situation is somewhat peculiar in that, for many of its citizens, France is *the* country of the Enlightenment and thus rationality is *the* key to French identity.[43] Moreover, as the ideal of rationality as a political or governing principle was established in bitter conflict with the powerful Roman Catholic Church, *laïcité* or secularity thus becomes central to the definition of the Republic. It is even mentioned in the opening line of the first article of the Constitution. Because of this, a challenge to *laïcité* strikes at the very foundations of French state and society. Jennings' traditionalist Republicans thus opposed "the veil" entirely. They saw the standard model of *laïcité*, in which symbols of religious belief are largely removed from the public sphere and particularly the school, as the best way to integrate people into French society. To accept the veil, on the other hand, would be to succumb to American-style multiculturalism. In the more extreme pronouncements, this would in turn lead to "tribalization" and even ethnic civil war.[44]

However, this extreme view overlooks many important nuances. For one, the hijab is a scarf, knotted under the chin, that primarily hides the hair. It is markedly different from chador, the head-to-toe black outfit more common to areas of southwest Asia. Nonetheless, many media, including two consecutive covers of the weekly *Le Nouvel*

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43 Nonneman, Gerd, 1996, "Muslim Communities in the New Europe: Themes and Puzzles," in: Nonneman; Niblock, Tim; and Szajkowski, Bogdan, eds., *Muslim Communities in the New Europe* (Reading, UK: Ithaca): 3-24, p. 10.
44 Jennings, "Citizenship, Republicanism, and Multiculturalism in Contemporary France," pp. 586-589.

Observateur featured chador-clad women.[45] These were undoubtedly allusions to the

Islamic revolution in Iran, which was then just ten years past, and to the more recent

furor over *The Satanic Verses* and the fatwa against its author by Iran's Ayatollah

Khomeini. Traditionalists believed that "multiculturalism" could allow such

fundamentalist Islam to take hold in France. However, civil war was probably not a

grave threat. Sarah Wayland notes that only a minority of French Muslim girls wore the

hijab in the first place, and fewer did so in the official context of the school. For

example, 500 or so of Criel's 876 students were of North African descent, and thus were

likely Muslim, yet only three girls refused to remove their scarves – if they represented

any movement it was a fairly small one.[46] While the motives of the majority of the

traditionalists may simply have been to defend what they saw as a workable model of

integration, representations of the veil as denoting a wider Muslim fundamentalist

menace catered to the extremism of the political far right. Indeed, Rachel Bloul argues

that gains in local elections by Le Pen's rightist Front Nationale in late 1989

demonstrated the potential for political exploitation of the polarized atmosphere, which

led to a moderation of public debate on the affair.[47]

An Assessment

Strength and Weakness

Having briefly presented some examples of the way secularism can work in practice,

I will analyze it according to the strong-open typology of this thesis. The endpoint of

this analysis, that secularism is weak and closed, is already fairly clear, but this does not

mean that secularistic ideas are entirely without merit. Some elements lent by holding

to such an ardent view, such as a certain amount of self-assurance, can be positive if not

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45 Wayland, Sarah V., 1997, "Religious Expression in Public Schools: *Kirpans* in Canada, *Hijab* in
      France," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20(3): 545-561, p. 560, n. 3.
46 Ibid., n. 4.
47 Bloul, Rachel, 1996, "Engendering Muslim Identities: Deterritorialization and the Ethnicization
      Process in France," in: Metcalf, Barbara Daly, ed., *Making Muslim Space in North America and
      Europe*, "Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies" series (Berkeley, CA: University of California
      Press): 234-250, p. 238.

taken too far. I must also reiterate that I do not employ weak in a pejorative sense meaning feeble. Marxism-Leninism was certainly a robust ideology, and Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* was a cogently argued work. Rather, weak here means something akin to "weakly rigid."

The most salient weakly rigid aspect of secularism is its essentialism. Secularists tend to view both religion and secularity as fixed, and that this fixedness inevitably results in conflict between the two. This is akin to Hasenclever and Rittberger's description of certain theories of religion in conflict as primordialist, as covered in the first chapter. Where Hasenclever and Rittberger focused on how some theorists assume that religious divisions are intractable and how such a belief can exacerbate conflict, I here contend that some thinkers also have a primordialist view of secularity. For instance, Dawkins' blanket identification of religion with backwards, negative forms of human behavior – specifically, "the urge to carry vendetta across generations, and the tendency to fasten group labels on people rather than see them as individuals," both of which religion fuels[48] – presupposes that secular rationality can not feed into the same problems. That this is not the case is evident through even a cursory analysis of certain types of secularist rhetoric. Such belief also makes it more difficult to deal with the thoroughly human problems that Dawkins lists when they appear in secular form.

Secularist essentialism is also evident in that it can view religions as fixed entities. For example, Huntington uses the history of Buddhism in China as a rather sweeping example of the position that cultures are more or less impermeable. "China's absorption of Buddhism from India, scholars agree, failed to produce the "Indianization" of China. The Chinese adapted Buddhism to Chinese purposes and needs. Chinese culture remained Chinese."[49] Chinese culture may not have Indianized, but it did change. One example of this is the development of Ch'an – in Japanese, Zen – Buddhism, which stems from a mixture of Buddhist and traditional Chinese Daoist beliefs and practices.

48 Dawkins, "Time to Stand Up."
49 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 76.

Although not Indian, it is not Chinese, either. The process of adaptation Huntington speaks of changed both the Indian and Chinese elements into something new. An essentialist view can not account for this process. Nor would an essentialist view have encouraged it, given that it would assume that an immigrant religion can not change or that any changes to the native character would be harmful. Indeed, throughout Chinese history the progress of Buddhism has been opposed by people seeking to protect their identity. Likewise, in the French case, strict enforcement of *laïcité* would not allow the development of new forms of religion that could operate within French society without threatening the identity of either.

On the other hand, a recognition of differences can figure in the development of peaceful relations. In the conclusion to *The Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington calls for a "global multiculturalism" based on the recognition and renewal of local identities.[50] This then becomes basis for what he calls the "commonalities rule" in his vision of global politics – that each civilization seek out and highlight those elements that they widely share.[51] To apply this argument to secularity, to search for commonalities between secularity and religion requires that one first understand secularity. For instance, as I argued in the second chapter, secularity is not solely "nonbelief," the negation of something. Moreover, as I outlined in the previous chapter, secularity is a historically grounded worldview. However, if one adheres too strongly to this position, as Huntington does, any call for dialog may be "too little, too late." Huntington spends the last four pages of *The Clash of Civilizations* outlining how civilizations may be able to communicate with each other – he spends the first 317 pages arguing that this can not be done. But insistence on the uniqueness of secularity, when not taken so far as to become belief in the incommensurability of secularity and religion, can be beneficial. In particular, it can balance a facile universalism that puts secularity at the apex of human development. Unfortunately, such universalism is a primary aspect of the way in which

50 Ibid., p. 318.
51 Ibid., p. 320.

secularism becomes closed.

Openness and Closedness

Central to Marxism-Leninism is the historical direction of Engels' dialectical materialism. In particular, there is the belief that the pattern of change visible in the West, particularly after the Enlightenment, is a universal law of history. It is a short step, one which Marxist-Leninists take, to turn that belief into a political program. Thus, in his analysis of Marxism-Leninism, Radić compares secularization as a historical process in developed industrial societies, where it was linked to often unconscious "deeply rooted changes in the structural nature of modern society," with that in socialist societies where it was an overt part of a political program.[52] This program becomes Radić's "forced, extorted" secularization.

Mistaking deeply rooted social changes particular to one place and time for components of a program of modernization applicable everywhere harms both secularity and religion. That it harms secularity is obvious given part of my definition of a strong worldview from the third chapter – one that is able to change and grow as it takes in new information. That doing this harms religion I sought to demonstrate through the example of Yugoslavia. Much as Powell pointed out in the Soviet case, communist regimes can claim to have reduced outward forms of religiosity through legal and social impediments to religion, but this rarely resulted in a reduction in personal belief. As Appleby argues, all that believers are then left with is a formal, ritualistic shell that is easily manipulated by people citing religious dogma for violent ends. Similarly, the closed secularism of the Algerian state was unable to cope with the possibility of an Islam it did not control, so the military stepped in to forestall that possibility. Doing so exacerbated the situation, pushing radicals toward violence. Again, people are always responsible for the actions they take, so no explanation excuses violence, but in this case the secularists must also recognize their role in sparking Algeria's civil war.

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52 Radić, "The Proselytizing Nature of Marxism-Leninism," p. 80.

However, from the same source springs a critical attitude toward religion that, when moderated, could bring some benefits. While this an obviously be taken too far, even the most ardent Marxist-Leninist propaganda may contain some seeds of truth. As Powell pointed out, it was not just religion in general but also specific social consequences to which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union objected, such as the tendency of religion to promote intergroup differences.[53] It is worthwhile noting such arguments, for while the overall Marxist-Leninist attitude toward religion is highly problematic, this does not mean one can discount all antireligious claims made. Likewise, Juergensmeyer states that many of the roots of antifundamentalism lie in real problems that contribute to what he calls the "new cold war" between secularity and political religions. It is only when this extends into violations of people's rights, justified as defense against the opposing creed as in the old Cold War, that this becomes destructive.[54] However, just as the closed side of secularism mostly negates any benefits of the weak, weak secularism's views on the essential characters of secularity and religion easily turn criticism into condemnation.

Secularism: Weak and Closed

Thus, by the typology of this thesis secularism is weak and closed. It is weak in the sense that it is essentialist and works from the assumption that there is an inherent difference between religion and secularity, and concomitantly between religious and secular people. This means that there is relatively little possibility of dialog or development. In being closed, secularists tend to be universalist in defining what constitutes an acceptable worldview. They hold secularity to be superior to religious thought, often focusing on the perceived irrationality of religious belief. These two strands are mutually reinforcing in that if one considers one's position superior, one will be is unwilling to dialog with the other, and vice versa. With dialog difficult or impossible and acceptance of religious views unlikely, secularism presents a number of

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53 Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, pp. 8-9.
54 Juergensmeyer, "Antifundamentalism," pp. 353-354.

obstacles to peacemaking where religion is concerned.

For instance, the universalist historical directionism of Marxism-Leninism presupposes that religion and secularity have certain essential characteristics. These they do not share, but, rather, Marxist-Leninists hold secularity as entirely different from religion. Likewise, While Huntington himself eschews any form of historical directionality or universalism, his tendency to ignore the possibilities for dialog can feed into closed views within the West. In particular, his prescription for Western states to strengthen their identity requires a belief in an identifiable Westernness, which, as I mentioned, Huntington equates rather strongly with secularity. Where this begins to shade into a highly closed belief is difficult to say. However, that distinction may be moot, as the appearance of secularism can be just as damaging as real secularism. As in the Algerian example, while Western states may, internally, be liberal secular, misguided foreign policy may result in those states supporting more extreme, secularist regimes.

Fusing the problems brought by weak and closed views, secularism gravely limits peacemaking where religion is a factor in conflict. Assuming a fixed identity for religion eliminates the possibility of entering into a dialog with religion that could be mutually enriching. Assuming a fixed identity for secularity can lead to a programmatic approach, one that prescribes "secularization" as a solution to the perceived ills of religion. With these aspects building upon one another, secularism can be particularly intractable when it perceives itself to be in conflict with religion.

However, despite its negative qualities, one ought not disregard secularism entirely. Understood in certain ways, many of the attitudes secularism takes can be positive. Two constructive aspects are an insistence on taking a critical perspective toward religion and the argument that one ought to strengthen one's own culture or worldview as one among many. Although I by no means want to argue that people ought to subscribe to a secularist worldview, having an appreciation for such positives as it can

bring will help in assessing it fully, even if the goal is to argue against it. Moreover, the positive aspects I have identified can help us see how to move forward from what is otherwise a violence-promoting view.

If one could check the weak, essentialist side of secularism with a robust critical appraisal of religion, one could develop a strong secularity that included religion in its overall framework. Engels' scientific atheism is an example – it professes the finality of rational materialism but could acknowledge the historical and contemporary importance of religion. Lenin's secularism, on the other hand, requires the active destruction of religion. There is a rather fine line between assuming the historical inevitability of secularity and choosing to act as history's agent, which Lenin crossed. Likewise, checking the universalist aspect of secularity by seeing it as one of many belief systems could open secularity to greater interaction. For instance, Huntington's prescriptions of global multiculturalism and the commonalities rule require an understanding of other civilizations. Similarly, should a secular want to enter into dialog with a fundamentalist group, he or she would need to try to understand, at least in part, their perspective.

Conclusion

Indeed, these possibilities tie secularism to the two forms of secularity that feature in the next two chapters, liberal and postmodern secularity. In liberal secularity, the weak side of secularism is diminished to create something like the idea presented above. This strong secularity is still, however, universalist and closed. Likewise, although postmodern secularity is a belief system open *to* other belief systems, it still tends to weakly essentialize all of them. These similarities are important because they demonstrate that these various issues are not the province of any particular form, but, rather, are general problems that one needs to overcome in the development of strong-open secularity.

The depiction of secularism I presented here is the first step in that development. Secularism, as I have shown, is a weak and closed form of secularity. Even when

intellectually robust, as with Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis, weakness takes the form of rigidity, an essentialism that assigns secularity and religion certain immutable characteristics. This enters into a mutually reinforcing dynamic with the closed aspects of secularism. These fail to engage with religion but, rather, treat secularity as the only valid belief system. Together, these make secularism particularly unpeaceful in conflicts where religion is an element. However, as I argued, all is not lost. Such positives as one may find in secularism can help create the somewhat more beneficial liberal and postmodern secularities. Understanding these, in turn, further aids the development of strong-open secularity, which I will outline in the final part of this thesis. This chapter has begun that development, and now we analyze liberal secularity.[55]

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55 Not cited but useful in this chapter was: Marty, Martin E., and Appleby, R. Scott, 1991, "Conclusion: An Interim Report on a Hypothetical Family" in: Marty and Appleby, eds., *The Fundamentalism Project*, v. 1, *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press): 814-842.