The Post-Enlightenment Moral Crisis and the Emergence of Secular Tyranny in the Middle East

Farhan Mujahid Chak

Abstract

This article explores humanity's ethical transformation during Europe's post-Enlightenment era and assesses its impact upon the origins and development of secularism. Thereafter, it investigates how secularism was introduced into the Middle East, isolating that importation as directed through western colonialism or spellbound indigenous elites. Eventually, introducing secularism into the region's socio-cultural milieu achieved nothing resembling what Europe or North America had experienced, particularly as regards the purported aims of social reconciliation, industrialization, and modernization. Without the European context, secularism emerged in a radically offensive manner, one that uprooted the local axiology and thereby leading to unprecedented levels of secular tyranny as well as entailing the justification of socio-economic and political oppression.[1]

Keywords: Islam and Politics, Enlightenment, the Middle East, Secularism, Fundamentalism, Elites, Tyranny, Conflict

Introduction

Throughout history, few events have had such a momentous transformative effect upon society that its repercussions are still being felt centuries later. The European Enlightenment is once such event, for by successfully challenging

Farhan Mujahid Chak is an associate professor of international affairs at Qatar University, Doha, who specializes in political theory, international relations, Islam and politics, and epistemology. He is the author of *Islam and Pakistan's Political Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

the previously understood ethical order and displacing normative boundaries it inaugurated a new amoral archetype. And today, hundreds of years later, it continues to affect us in significant ways.

Some would insist that by leaving Christianity at the Church's door, Europe blossomed.[2] Unshackled from the constraints of dogma and disenchanting the hitherto natural order, Europe embarked upon its intellectual journey. But freeing itself from the chains of blind faith also resulted in the unsightly consequence of destroying established meaning. That "freedom," Charles Taylor stresses, "was won by our breaking loose from older moral horizons."[3] This was appreciably unnerving, since the disappearance of established meaning cast doubt over all that was and how it was understood. No longer was the cosmos or humanity's life within it understood in the same way. Yet, rather than sit back in dismay at the destructiveness they had wrought, Europeans stood confidently and peered ahead with exceedingly high hopes in what could be. Possibilities seemed limitless, and with the sword of science they galloped ahead, trampling religion and racing to forge an era of new meaning.

Doubt, consequently, became the cornerstone of Europe's modern intellectual tradition. Likewise, Thomas Carlyle penned that "sincere doubt is as much entitled to respect as sincere belief."[4] As a result, a competition to discover meaning ensued and the "I don't know" attitude led people to listen more to one another. It encouraged creativity, innovation, and intellectual modesty. To be clear, this mirrors the Islamic value of *Allāhu A'lam* (God knows) espoused during its civilizational pinnacle. This is the customary phrase Muslims use after, or instead of, responding to an inquiry.[5] Imam Malik stated: "The shield of the scholar is, 'God Knows best,' so if he neglects it, his statement is open to attack."[6]

Socrates was revived, along with his exemplary model of scholasticism. When the Oracle of Delphi labeled him the "wisest," he replied: "How could I be the wisest when there is much I do not know?" Thenceforth, in response to the Oracle, he began probing all walks of Athenians and, ultimately, concluded that indeed he was the wisest – but only because he had the courage to admit his own ignorance, rather than pretend to know something that he did not know.[7] Even today, this sobering conviction holds sway on the campuses of Europe and North America. The most striking aspect of modern education is doubt, for claiming to have reached certainty on anything invites academic fury.[8]

One reaction to the loss of meaning was to seek it anew, an approach that eventually culminated in the European secularist movement. Ironically enough, secularism as an ideology began to crystallize after the Christian re-

form movements challenged traditional authority. This, in turn, led to a re-fashioning of the metaphysical world, thereby letting loose two contradictory forces: one that accelerated the loss of established meaning and another one that sought it anew.

One encouraging consequence of this newfound freedom was the un-bridled ingenuity that caused Europe's technological, industrial, and colonial supremacy to skyrocket. Secularism seemingly provided indispensable an-swers to dealing with plurality. God was no longer providing the answers; however, the secularists began to proclaim that people need not be afraid because science would provide them. In unanimity, European and later North American philosophers, among them Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Montesquieu (1689-1755), Hans Mor-genthau (1904-80), and Kenneth Waltz (1924-2013), would euphorically champion those infallible rules of science. Consecutively, meaning was rein-troduced through the liberal prism of individualism, equality, and freedom. Granted, this had a tremendous positive effect, as Harvey Cox highlights, in terms of advocating for inclusion, outlining boundaries among various institutions of power, and securing material wellbeing.[9]

Yet secularism also disenchanted the world and narrowed or flattened our lives by focusing on self-determining freedom. This resulted in the erosion of three critical ideas: intrinsic virtue, a shared concept of the collective good, and the communitarian nature of human beings. Successively, family break-down, juvenile delinquency, pollution, congestion, and new inequalities sur-faced. Michael Ignatieff states that "the real problem is that we do not believe, as our Victorian ancestors believed, that material progress entails or enables moral progress. We demand perfection in our cars, our drugs, our computers – but we no longer demand anything but adequacy from our moral lives."[10] Simply put, "we eat well, we drink well, we live well, but we do not have good dreams."[11]

Comparatively, this contradictory and doubt-infested secular paradigm wreaked havoc when it was unsuitably transplanted by western colonial pow-ers or spellbound indigenous elites into the Middle East – but not in the man-ner that it continues to be both promising and problematic in the West. The secular paradigm infused into the Muslim world's moral fabric resulted in ra-tionalizing the disappearance of ethics from day-to-day life. The ensuing dis-enchantment saw people disconnect from their communities, thereby exacerbating ethnic, cultural, and linguistic tensions that were better reconciled in the now-discarded multi-ethnic and pluralistic Islamic civilizational para-digm. Moreover, as Talal Asad poignantly distinguishes, secularism was in-

tricately connected to power (often foreign) and its coercive aspect remains largely unexplored.[12] Ultimately, secularization heightened instability and strengthened non-consensual social forces by denying freedom, reinforcing inequality, and mandating conflict resolution through brute force.

Intellectually, the doubt that crept into the Muslims' education tore their faith to pieces. Rather than encouraging freedom, equality, and humility, as it did in the West, secularism incited bravado, aggravated class distinctions, and heightened crony capitalism, corruption, and authoritarianism. It did not seek new meaning, but rather mimicked it, and therefore found little resonance among the populace. Most troubling, it became inherently anti-democratic and justified its authoritarianism upon the presumptive backwardness of the unworthy masses. Absurdly, among the least democratic forces in the Middle East were (and remain) the "secularists." Buttressing self over all else, they championed a narcissistic egoism that led to a new class of people who became certain of themselves, doubtful of Islam, and disparaging toward their people.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80) ridicules these whitewashed Muslims, derisively referred to as *béni-oui-oui*, *Brown sahibs*, or *white Turks*, as loving the West in the way that mothers are loved.[13] And "these walking lies had nothing left to say to their brothers; they only echoed."[14] These people begrudgingly returned home and secured important political, educational, and cultural positions. Rather than unleash creativity or encourage power sharing, this unrepresentative and feverishly inferiority-complexed minority began heightening social divisions and repression. Of course how could it not, for the secular model of social development, imposed by foreign-trained or enamored secularists, was originally intended to escape the tyranny of the Church or monarchical absolutism. Substance and meaning were replaced with form and theatre.

Throughout the Muslim world, tyranny existed in those who were the furthest from the ethical and moral precepts inculcated by the mosque. There was no utilitarian rationalization of ethics or service, for the newly trained secular leaders saw only Europe, with its glitter and gold. Imitating the form, and so completely misunderstood the substance of freedom and equality embedded therein. Prodded along by their foreign masters, they often forced this secular model of authoritarianism and inequality upon their people, the consequences of which are blatantly obvious. Extremists began to dominate in the form of secular tyrants who came with chains to whip their people toward moral laxity and telling them that it is freedom, or of reactionary cruel irreligious piety-type tyrants who whip their people toward uncompromising faith and telling them that it is obedience.

Evidently, the secular-inspired modernizing model failed to achieve social cohesion. If the Arab awakening has taught us anything, it is this: Change cannot be commandeered by those divorced from the spiritual roots of their context or educated in a manner that dehumanizes the local axiology. Thus the secular-inspired doubt model achieves neither social reconciliation nor development. To have an opinion is to betray their education, and to insist upon national interest is to feel the shame of bias that insults their assumed intellectualism. Of course, what had liberated Europe would, to a certain point, imprison the Islamic world. Still, both local and foreign secular proponents in the wider Middle East continue to resist their sidelining through sheer brutality. These so-called secular elites and their instruments of subjugation are embedded quite deeply in their respective societies. They are resilient, persistent, a force to be reckoned with – and often connected to military power.

This article begins by exploring the ethical transformation of the human being in Europe's post-Enlightenment era and assesses its impact upon the origins and development of secularism. Thereafter, it investigates how secularism was introduced into the Middle East, underscoring its importation as a result of colonialism and spellbound elites. Its cultural importation into the Middle East's socio-cultural milieu achieved nothing that resembled the experiences of Europe or North America, especially the purported goals of social reconciliation, industrialization, and modernization. Stripped of its surrounding European cultural context, secularism emerged in a radically offensive manner and led to unprecedented levels of secular tyranny, or what W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963) characterizes as "double-consciousness,"[15] all of which led to justifying socio-economic privilege and political oppression.[16]

Importantly, secularism's proponents include those who self-associate with it in order to protect their autonomy, as well as those who disingenuously utilize secular space for exclusive empowerment, especially among minorities. This represents yet another significant challenge, which only adds to the incoherence and divisiveness of secularism in the Muslim world.

The Transformation of the Human Being in the Post-Enlightenment Era[17]

Political theorists have put forth a bewildering array of opinions to explain the constitution of human beings and the extant conditions in which they live. Yet what is evidently clear but less stated are our assumptions, which reveal deep ontological and epistemological values concerning human beings and the creation of, or reason for, society. In effect, whether it is the presumption

of an inherent selfishness in human nature, viewing humans as solitary individuals instead of as being linked to a collectivity, or scrutinizing humanity before or after the formation of society, political theorists study those beliefs, the types of relationships that consequently develop, and explain the "why." In essence, human beings must be explained because the values we ascribe to them shape the entire metaphysical edifice upon which a political philosophy develops. This, specifically, is our initial query: What is so significant in the post-Enlightenment era that it led to the transformation of Europeans, the development of secularism, and, finally, its importation into the Muslim world?

The importance of exploring Europe's wayward conceptualization of human beings, which transformed them from "classical" to "modern," is that the prevailing world would not have emerged in the absence of this changed conceptualization. Asad states that "the discursive move in the nineteenth century from thinking of a fixed human nature to regarding humans in terms of a constituted normality facilitated the secular idea of moral progress defined and directed by autonomous human agency."[18] That autonomy implicitly implied that human beings were no longer accountable to traditional scholarship, the elders, or even to a Deity, and thus could restructure their own being, including their roles and responsibilities, according to their whims, for nothing was "fixed." As there is no latent intrinsic virtue in the very fabric of human agency, each person could create his/her own ideals of authenticity, presumably without any concern for another person.

In line with erasing this fixed moral constitution of human beings, Europe's modern era led to the erosion of a shared concept of the good by making it something personal, subjective, and contestable.[19] In other words, no substantive agreed-upon societal ethical framework exists. In the classic tradition, Socrates considered not living but living well, which implied living nobly, as inextricably linked to social responsibility.[20] Throughout his writings, he constantly seeks answers to "What is piety?" or "What is the meaning of virtue?"[21] In fact, this was so important to him that he asked those who condemned him to death to punish his sons if "they seem to care for money or anything else before virtue."[22] This concern has now been swept away as moralizing, since each of us is able to find his/her own good – no qualification is necessary.

The classical tradition had clear assumptions about humanity's communitarian nature. For instance, Aristotle saw that human beings had an inherent seed within them of a polity positioned within a community. This polity, into which human beings are born as constituents, is just innate and as natural as

male/female unity, because those who cannot exist without each other must unite as a pair.[23] Aristotelian logic takes that belief to its furthest extent: Starting with the male/female union by which a family is produced, a community and finally a polity must arise. He states that every polity exists in nature, as did the first association: men and women. Therefore, the indication of civilization is inherent and potentially ever-present in the human being's constitution. What is so important here is the idea of humanity's natural inclination toward a polity or, better stated, a collectivity and an ever-increasing level of bonding. Secular liberalism tears this bonding away, or better reverses it, by focusing on individualism.

The post-Enlightenment transformation of Europeans led to the disappearance of intrinsic virtue, a shared concept of the collective good, and humanity's communitarian nature. In turn, the social ideas that facilitate cohesiveness and togetherness became increasingly negligible with the growth of liberalism and its emphasis upon the individual.[24] Looking back, it would not be far-fetched to trace the first indirect assault upon Europe's pre-modern ethical worldview to Martin Luther (1483-1546), the Protestant reformer who challenged Church authority and thereby opened the floodgates of Biblical re-interpretation.[25] This caused the edifice of certainty to crack, and soon thereafter other European scholars (e.g., Machiavelli) carried a new unscrupulous, power-centric, and intellectualism further. Machiavelli reduces moral benchmarks to expediency, stating that "it has appeared to me more fitting to go directly to the effectual truth of the thing than to the imagination of it."[26] This posits the withdrawal of intrinsic virtue by characterizing it as illusory or naïve.

Several European and later North American thinkers were instrumental in further eroding those social values and cementing a cynical worldview, but none so persuasively as Hobbes. In his notorious *Leviathan*, he intriguingly articulates that human equality leads to incessant war, for "if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies: and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavor to destroy or subdue one another."[27] In other words, because we are all equal we will all aspire to that which we cannot all enjoy. Thus we compete for those limited objects of our mutual affection and dispossess what we can, and when we can, from one another. Furthermore, "if one plant, sow, build or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossess and deprive him, not only of his fruit of his labor, but also of his life, or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another."[28] This cycle of violent dispossession is relentless and, in order to subdue it and enjoy our

possessions, citizens forsake their rights by delegating them to an all-powerful government: a "Leviathan."

Thus, Hobbes concludes, nothing can be unjust: "The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no injustice. Force, and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues."[29] Granted, an all-powerful government resolves this notorious predicament and its unceasing social conflict. However, no such supreme power exists in the world of nation-states and, therefore, no mutually agreeable conceptualization of justice. Notably, this freedom from moral constraints, ostensibly between nation-states, has widespread support in western intellectual culture. Morgenthau's concept of *animus dominandi*,[30] Clausewitz's concept of "War as an Instrument of Policy,"[31] Waltz's treatise "Man, the State and War,"[32] and Max Weber's "ethic of responsibility"[33] all attest to this. Most poignantly, this highlights post-Enlightenment humanity's transformation: the disappearance of the concept of intrinsic virtue, the collective good, and communitarian spirit – and, actually doing so but not admitting it, thereby by mandating duplicity.[34]

Of course there was some (largely inconsequential) resistance to this intellectual leaning. Both Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) compellingly differ, and the later goes as far to insist upon intrinsic compassion.[35] Arguably Montesquieu, at least initially, concludes that fear eventually leads to social familiarity culminating in war.[36] John Locke (1632-1704) realizes that without some substantive moral edifice upon which to mandate mutually agreeable boundaries, human society self-destructs. To ensure reciprocity, he thus advocates the supremacy of law.[37] Now whether it is law or a "leviathan," humanity in the pre-Enlightenment western canon is often incapable spiritually or untrustworthy ethically. George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906) contends that this prevalent image of humanity in modern European thought is rooted in the Christian idea of Original Sin, which burdens humanity with guilt and sin.[38] Secularism's aim, therefore, was to rid humanity of this particular worldview and empower people to think on their own.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) concisely defines the Enlightenment as humanity's emergence from its self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity, the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another, is self-incurred because it results from a lack of resolve to use it. Hence, he demands: *Sapere Aude!* [Dare to be wise!] "Have courage to use your own understanding!"[39] This empowerment, dangerously close to egoism, is intricately linked to secularism and affected the nascent Christian reform movements pushing Europe's ethical boundaries, especially in terms of religious authority. Challenging

clergy led to the desacralization of society and the asking of questions concerning immanence and myth. However, the link among the Europeans' transformation, a new moral archetype, and the propagation of secular values globally, especially in the Muslim-majority polities, begins in the context of colonialism. Before that, however, we will closely examine the origins and principles of secularism.

The Origins of the Secularism Project

The word *secular* can be found in the strangest places, from Virgil's *Eclogue* to the Great Seal of the United States. Literally derived from the Latin words *saeculum* or *seclorum*, it means "a span of time in this world." Interestingly, medieval Christians read it in Virgil's poem, symbolically, as signifying the passage of time in the temporal world awaiting Christ's return.[40] During the Crusades the term held a somewhat elusive cultural significance and, although not widespread, was significant enough to be synonymous with "lay" empowerment.[41] Its equivalent *laicism*, used in France and Turkey, comes from the Greek word *laikos* which also means a layperson or a non-expert in the field of religious knowledge, as opposed to a qualified member of the clergy. The word *secularism*, however, comes with significant spiritual currency. It is ironic that those who avowedly want to remove religion from the public sphere should champion a designation evoking Christ's return.[42] For purposes of brevity, the term was transformed following Europe's post-Enlightenment era and continues to distinctly manifest wherever it upsurges.

In 1846, Holyoake became the first European to view secularism as a philosophical system,[43] namely, as a way of life without recourse to theology, often in protest against the clergy but not necessarily anti-theistic.[44] Arguably, Azzam Tamimi contends that the secular movement aspires to utilitarian conduct without any specific religious reference.[45] Evidently, secular proponents espoused ethics without recourse to the use of a higher moral order or religion. Whether doing so is even possible is rather contentious, for, as Will Durant (1885-1981) stated, there is no precedent in human history to determine if one can maintain a moral life without religion.[46] Nevertheless, secularism's intent to restrict religion, or the clergy, to the private sphere sought to protect human autonomy. Clearly, Holyoake's secularism advocated the compartmentalization of life, in which each sphere was acknowledged to have distinct values and modes of behavior. Still, this global secular crusade cannot be understood outside the context of Europe's intellectual evolution and Christian reform movements.[47]

Secularism is intricately woven into the Christian reform movements that swept sixteenth-century Europe, diminishing belief in the miraculous and the mythical. Reform movements "such as Renaissance Humanism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Deism and Unitarianism were all secularizing forces within Christianity."[48] Why? Simply put, the reformists purged faith of immanence by progressively applying the standards of reason to dogma and reducing its mystical, miraculous, sacramental, and sacerdotal claims. Evidently, this facilitated the growth of atheism. Nevertheless, the declining importance of religious institutions and corresponding religious consciousness meant that those who did not subscribe to religion required legal protection or safeguards. Nowhere was this better expressed than in Britain and its infamous British Reform Bills.

Britain, at the forefront of reconciling its tradition with modernity, was expanding political suffrage and disempowering religious authority. The resulting social upheaval culminated in the Reform Bills, which amounted to enabling secular thinking, even making it attractive.[49] Asad writes that the "terms secularism and secularist were introduced into English by freethinkers in the middle of the nineteenth century in order to avoid the charge of their being 'atheists' and 'infidels.'"[50] It is here, then, the importance of Asad's assertion that there was a direct link between British freethinkers and secularism, for society did not readily accept the complete separation of God from public life. This "cover" was granted by the Reform Bills. Similarly, this mirrors Eric Waterhouse's contention that

> secularism was intended to differentiate Holyoake's anti-theistic position from Bradlaugh's atheistic pronouncements, and although Bradlaugh, Charles Watts and G. W. Foote and other atheists were identified with the secular movement, Holyoake always endeavored to make it possible that the social, political and ethical aims of secularism should not necessitate subscription to atheistic belief, in hope that liberal-minded theists might, without prejudice to their theism, join in promoting these ends – an attitude to which he persisted in clinging, despite the small success which it achieved.[51]

Secularism continues to be shielded from anti-theistic accusations, for secularists still hope to win more recruits and pacify resistance. British freethinkers inaugurated this sugar-coating of secularism to protect their religious, or lack thereof, autonomy and direct "emerging mass politics of social reform in a rapidly industrializing society."[52] Within this context, laws were designed to ensure that neither theists nor otherwise were unfairly disadvantaged. Coercion was shunned, for the law was now utilized to allow social actors the maximum degree of maneuverability, no matter how distasteful.

In Britain, secularism negotiated space with ideological competitors in order to legally protect autonomy. But this reconciliatory approach was not emulated in the Middle East. A commeasurable legal safeguard, the will to negotiate space or the coupling of anti-theism with service to humanity, was imitated in Middle Eastern secularism. Cox, who celebrates the expansiveness of global secularities, has ignored this phenomenon.[53] Before examining this issue closely, we will critique the principles of secularism.

Critiquing the Principles of Secularism

Holyoake describes the principles of secularism as containing four primary components: a materialistic this-worldly orientation, science, service, and liberalism.[54] Taken together, these characteristics outline a secular worldview and permit one to unravel its complexity – implicitly anti-clerical but not necessarily anti-moral, pro-individual but not necessarily anti-commuhimis threatened by invasive dogma, and thus this intrusion is exactly what secularism seeks to circumscribe. Still, secularism failed largely because it could not balance itself between these polarities and also because it indulged in intrusion.

First, secularism emphasizes a this-worldly orientation and temporal wellbeing. Actually, Holyoake says as much: "[S]ecularism rejoices in this life, and regards it as the sphere of those duties which educate men to fitness for any future and better life, should such transpire."[55] It is as though this highlights the secularists' unease with using the hereafter to comfort worldly insufficiencies. He goes on to articulate that humanity is the ultimate reality and argues that human beings' social wellbeing should be sought in the observable world and not, implicitly, in the hereafter. This emphasis is popularly signified in the maxim of "living in the now."[56]

Yet this view contains serious contradictions, especially as to how the historical and immediate pasts have no relevance for the present or the still unfolding future. Granted, there is a sensible expediency in focusing upon temporality or the observable world. But by ignoring the past or future, social contestation, which often is years in the making, can neither be adequately understood nor easily resolved. This dissonance is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the philosophical ramifications of a life premised only on the "now." Similarly, it poses serious questions in regards to accountability and what de Tocqueville describes as a tendency toward a narcissistic "me" culture.[57]

Moreover, by focusing on the temporal, the concept of immanence (directly related to the idea of the divine presence in the physical world) was lost. This holds special significance in Christianity, because Jesus is under-

stood as God-incarnate. Of course, how could secularism flourish within the rules that had already been set by God and elaborated upon and firmly established by the clergy? The subsequent revision of the concept of immanence had a monumental impact upon removing ethics, as well as belief in myths and the miraculous, from earthly life. No longer was it considered reasonable that Jesus had been resurrected after his crucifixion and had healed the blind or that God had created Earth in six days. That was all hocus-pocus trickery that bigoted clerics used to dupe people into giving tithes and maintaining their own privileges. In this regard, Asad powerfully cites how Europe intellectuals "liberated the Bible" from being a divinely inspired word to a system based upon human causality and significances.[58] In sum, how one was encouraged to "read" the Bible changed, leading one to discard myth and the miraculous. This, as Asad observes, was "a remarkable transformation."[59]

Second, God was replaced by Nature and a firm conviction in reason and the "scientific method."[60] This principle espouses a belief in natural causation and a consequent emphasis upon the generalization and applicability of the methodological pattern of Newton's physics for the discovery of truth.[61] In other words, the emphasis shifted from revelation, tradition, and religious authority to reason, observation, and experimentation. Science subsequently became a new "god" with all of the hopes, aspirations, and dreams associated with divinity. The emphasis on verifiable evidence, reason, and exploring the natural world led to European scientific excellence. Yet, and frighteningly so for many, science was susceptible to corruption by human manipulation. There is no escaping human bias, but this fact did not deter secularists from using it as a harbinger of global unanimity. Finally, everyone could agree on what science says ... or so it was claimed.

Then its association with progress took hold, in the broadest sociological sense, and a behavioral tendency emerged, one in which humans are machines that could be deconstructed akin the mechanics of flight. Eventually, the initial optimism was replaced with disillusionment, since neither war nor famine was declining. Arguably, science and technology were not bringing people together, but rather driving them further apart. Worse, it was accentuating our ecological crisis and creating terrible weapons of mass destruction. The loss of belief in science's promised ability to solve the world's most pressing problems is particularly striking when considering that the ongoing modern era, which started with the conquest of the Americas, has been humanity's bloodiest.[62]

Third, Holyoake goes to great lengths to highlight service in his secular conceptualization.[63] Indeed, he mentions it continuously throughout his writ-

ings and certainly adds to the confusion of developing an ethical outlook on life without having recourse to a concrete belief system or by marginalizing the social bonds among people. He spoke of the obligation of giving back to society, assisting the less fortunate, and maintaining one's moral life without theology. Clearly, this outdid those who uncompromisingly resisted secularism's seeming anti-theism. In fact, Holyoake's focus on charity and equitable wealth distribution seemed to have been championed in his own life. Thus how could one discredit secularists when they were doing God's work? However, the contradictory nature of accentuating service and the liberal values of freedom, equality, and individualism, which compel inwardness and disconnection from others, would not make his vision easy to implement.

Fourth, secularism advocates for liberalism, which is closely associated with the ideas of freedom, equality, and individualism. According to Holyoake: "Secularism accepts no authority but that of Nature, adopts no methods but those of science and philosophy, and respects in practice no rule but that of the conscience, illustrated by the common sense of mankind."[64] Vacuity aside, this imprecision is symptomatic of individualism and is cited as modernity's most significant achievement. Taylor writes that "we live in a world where people have a right to choose for themselves their own pattern of life, to decide in conscience what convictions to espouse, to determine the shape of their lives in a whole host of ways that their ancestors could not control."[65] Actually, that is our "freedom," and many still insist that we have not gone far enough. Contrarily, though, what is discomforting is the claim that one's identity may be formed without taking other people into consideration. Is not the impact of our actions more than simply our feelings to do as we wish? Does not John Stuart Mill allude (1806-73) to this when framing his theory on the principle of preventing harm to others?[66]

None of this makes for clear-cut, easy answers. Certainly there is a link between individualism, or the integrity and sanctity of the free individual, and his/her ability to question "truth" and propagate what? without fear. Mirroring that, Mill asserts that "the great writers to whom the world owes what liberty it possesses, have mostly asserted freedom of conscience as an indefeasible right, and denied that a human being is accountable to others for his religious belief."[67] But what about one's responsibility to society? This is the "dark side of individualism … centering on the self, which both flattened and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others or society."[68] Herein rests the complex challenge of protecting human agency and maximizing autonomy by ensuring one's commitment to civic responsi-

bility and social cohesion. Nevertheless, once human agency impacts others in ways against their choosing, intervention is required.

Describing this, Taylor says: "I am free when I decide for myself what concerns me, rather than being shaped by external influences … self-determining freedom demands that I break the hold of all such external impositions, and decide for myself alone."[69] Essentially, this leads to the hyper-celebration of authenticity and uncomfortableness with, even rebellion against, authority. This persuasive idea of self-determining freedom is a pinnacle of secular achievement. Of course, since humanity was no longer answerable to God, His laws, or His representatives, people were now only answerable to themselves. Before the Enlightenment, being connected to God and to an idea of what good meant – not just as it pertains to our self but also others – was normal. Now that has vanished because the source with which we need to connect is located deep within us. Taylor describes this as the "massive subjective turn of modern culture, a new form of inwardness, in which we come to think of ourselves as beings with inner depths."[70] Now people no longer need anyone or anything else, for what we require is inside of us – and we must be true to this invisible, unseen, internal reality. Humanity becomes its own God, constructs its own unquestionable goodness, and disconnects itself from a wider reality.

Secularism in the Middle East

Secularism, which developed amidst a unique milieu of contrasting sociological challenges and cultural paradigm shifts, has gone global. It is often used as a synonym for conflicting and contradicting discourses, including modernity, progress, rationalism, scientism, imperialism, and even the West's so-called civilizing mission. Cox describes the globalization of secularism as spawning "secularities" worldwide.[71] However, he assumes enough similarities among these secular variations to describe them as aggregates. We disagree with this because secularism in the Middle East bears little resemblance to its original manifestation. Instead of being a celebration of human autonomy, egalitarianism, or self-determining freedom, it has become a festival of the *nafs* that educates the region's inhabitants against the local axiology, ontology, and epistemics.

Our focus now shifts to answering three critical issues: How was secularism introduced into the region's various countries and peoples; what does it means in the Middle Eastern context, both by definition and substance, and who supports it and for what ends? These initial queries give shape to the re-

lated questions of how secularism began, what it stands for, and who wants it. Moreover, this approach enables us to uncover the complex power relationship that led to the initial importation and exhortation of this foreign ideology. All in all secularism remains, both in the West and certainly in the Middle East, an elitist ideology.[72]

Introducing a foreign ideology is no easy feat, for doing this successfully requires political and economic support and, most importantly, social willingness. If it can acquire no natural resonance among the host populace, then coercion is employed. Hence, this section sheds light on the emergence of secularism in the region and the ensuing social challenges. Taken together, it becomes critically important to explore how secularism coercively materialized in the Muslim world in order to explicate its authoritarianism. This clarifies the multifaceted and perplexing questions of why is it so essential for some to import a secularist model that has not reconciled but rather has separated people, has led not to development but to delay. Who is so adamantly supporting this ideology that often manifests itself in authoritarian ways?

How it All Began

Initially, secularism's import into the Middle East occurred in a twofold manner: initially by direct colonial/military intervention[73] and then by spellbound local elites or laypersons who were awestruck by western socio-economic and cultural achievements.[74] Collectively, these reasons cover its origins, but only partially, as regards how it continues to be a strong social force. Its perpetuation includes neo-colonial interventions; those who use it to protect their human autonomy, feeling that the opposite would infringe upon their rights; and by social or individual outgroups – often dissociative minorities that utilize the public space secularism offers for subterfuge or self-empowerment.

First, Munir Shafiq states that

> direct colonial intervention in most of the Arab and Islamic countries led to a serious internal imbalance. There was an attempt to create a new equilibrium based on the modern secularist state and a modern secularist army. Both of these were invariably formed in emulation of the colonialist authority and its army. The newly independent states in the Middle East were thus extensions of the colonial states and their institutions, including the army, police, the intelligence services and legal system.[75]

In other words, European colonialists imported secularism by introducing institutional and authoritarian structures that helped them establish their do-

minion over a perceived hostile populace. Actually, one can presume that their enforcement of secularism was meant both as a self-empowering tool and as a way to exacerbate local ethnic, cultural, and/or religious variances. It goes without saying that these colonialists had a clearly stipulated policy of introducing secular ideology, and one can assume that they were aware of the ensuing polarizing effects, especially since the policy of social reconciliation between Church and State in Europe was not emulated in the colonial policy frameworks.[76] Whether it was the French in the Algeria,[77] the British in South Asia and the Gulf,[78] or the Italians in Libya,[79] wherever they went the colonialists uprooted the local axiology and exacerbated local religious, ethnic, and/or cultural fissures.

Franz Fanon (192-61) unequivocally states that "the officials of the French Administration in Algeria, were committed to destroying the people's originality, and under instructions to bring about their disintegration, at whatever cost, of forms of existence likely to evoke a national reality."[80] Actually, even after the colonialists physically withdrew from their foreign territories, their egregious policies continued to facilitate hostilities between Muslims "through the installation of puppet Western supported governments in territorial states they [Colonialists] themselves created."[81]

Ibrahim Kalin eloquently adds that colonial interventions are ongoing in the West's purported civilizing mission. Clarifying, he historically describes western colonialists as justifying their conduct as the "white man's burden," which was never simply about identity or security.[82]

> It was designed to make imperialism look and feel good. From Africa to India, religious and cultural racism was coupled with economic exploitation. Exploitation and enslavement of millions of Africans, Native Americans and Australian Aborigines was as much about the West's new self-perception as the new master of the world as it was about exploiting the resources of the colonized peoples.[83]

Lastly, he highlights the continued propagation of secularism's values into the former colonies through an ostensible civilizing mission that manifests neo-colonial patterns of intervention.

Whether historically or contemporaneously, the indigenous spellbound elites who are often the recipients of significant western financial aid, support, and privilege continue to advocate for secularism. Unable to distinguish between values and behavior, their misunderstanding of the reasoning behind the West's economic and military superiority resulted in their mimicry of European or North American mannerisms, often comically, without thought.

Europe's initial maturation was a consequence of its values; however, thoughtful analysis is needed to clarify what exactly those values were. This project was hardly ever attempted. Nevertheless, Abdul Rashid Moten states that "secularism, in the less developed world, like other socio-political structures was imported from the West and imposed from above: this means it was imposed by leadership in those less developed societies, i.e. Muslim and Arab countries, Latin America, Africa etc…"[84] To be clear, much of the leadership of the Middle East's newly emerging nation-states were imposing a value system that did not resonate among their own people. Quickly realizing that they could not enforce secularism on the majority of people, the elites resorted to compulsion coupled with aggressive ethno-nationalism.

What Does it Mean?

Speaking about secularism to Middle Easterners from all walks of life, not just professionals, academics, or decision-makers, leads to a worrisome and perplexing discussion. Little evidence suggests that these people even understand what secularism is or what it entails. Even worse, there is no agreement on its definition or purported aims or even one scholarly work in Arabic, Persian, or Turkish that clearly outlines its origins or principles in a comprehensive manner. Holyoake's work has not been translated into any Middle Eastern language, and his criteria for secularism have not been analyzed. In his comprehensive four-volume encyclopedia on secularism, Abdelwahab Elmessiri (1938-2008) lists eighteen different uses of the term in Arabic.[85] Essentially, there is no agreed-upon definition, and Elmessiri differentiates it as a concept, a movement, or a process.[86]

In the Arab world, secularism takes on an aggressive, anti-religion overture with terms like *lādīnīyah* or *dunyawīyah*.[87] These were rejected, however, for being considered too offensive to local sensitivities. Therefore, a new word was coined: *'almānīyah* (this-worldliness).[88] In Turkey it was described as *Kemalism*, a virulent anti-democratic elite-driven enterprise adhered to by those who viewed their ethnic kith and kin to be "fatalistic and obscurantist," thereby requiring a different kind of enforced secularism.[89] In the Maghreb, Rashid Ghannouchi describes a laicism that is a "form of secularism more radical than Kemalism."[90] Still, there is no consensus or real understanding of what these various descriptions mean. As noted, secularism has been used in many ways, often shifting according to the given environment. It seems that this very looseness makes it attractive: Secularism becomes all things to all people fictitiously associated with achieving western-style progress and a higher level of civilization.

Of course, there is one entirely inaccurate but remarkably widespread misconception of secularism as nothing more than the separation of Church and State, as if these two institutions exist everywhere as they do in Europe. Still, that simplicity has been largely discredited as having no real explanatory power, for such a description falsely projects the belief that a human being,

> in a world of an all pervasive mass media and iron-fisted ferocious bureau-cracies and multinationals, can nevertheless, according to this paradigm, maintain his integrity and protect his autonomy, living in the church of his choice, leaving the state to Caesar and his soldiers and technocrats, and the workplace to the corporations.[91]

Elmessiri then argues for a comprehensive explanation of the secular world-view that "operates on all levels of reality through a large number of implicit and explicit mechanisms … in modern Western civilization, and for that matter on all modernities."[92]

Keeping that in mind, one must understand that the development, even definition, of secularism in Muslim polities occurred in the development of an alternative worldview or, to put it plainly, as a competing ideology to the local axiology. In fact, what really needs to be explored is how secularism uproots the local axiology and develops into a counter-cultural phenomenon. The wholeness and complementarity that was part and parcel of Islamic civilization for a millennium rapidly ended after the onset of colonialism. Soon thereafter, it was envisioned that importing secularism and the asserted purposes of ma-terial wellbeing would cause the emergence of a free, democratic, and progres-sive Middle East. Instead, the distribution of wealth became atrocious and the schism between the haves and the have-nots became enormous.

The Middle Eastern version of secularism is not simply a method for mod-ernization, development, and economic prosperity. Instead, this alternative competing ideology contains the following distinct ideas, some of which mir-ror those of Holyoake: materialism, this-worldliness, individualism, coercive anti-religiosity, sectarianism/chauvinism, the false compartmentalization of life, the removal of ethics from public sphere, and double-consciousness.

First, Middle Eastern secularists emphasize materialism even more than Holyoake does and place financial considerations over and above all moral constraints or considerations.[93] Morality was personal and contentious, having no place in material progress and civilization – or so it was incorrectly prop-agated. Furthermore, Arab and Turkish secularists believed that religion sep-arated people and therefore should be confined to the private sphere. However, ethics and values encompass every aspect of our social relations, including those between citizens and the state. Removing the rationalization for living

an ethical life, which is implicitly connected to religion, can only heighten corruption and cripple good governance. As a matter of fact, the relationship among ethics, trust, and good governance is well-argued in numerous scholarly articles in which trust is cited, above all else, as a key indicator of economic wellbeing.[94]

This deep inter-connected relationship was entirely ignored. Instead, governments sought to nationalize religion and its institutions, unlike in Europe and North America.[95] Comparatively, then, in the Middle East secularism was not a grassroots movement led by social activists and thinkers for the purpose of social equality, but was often an economically privileged elite-driven movement that sought to enforce its civilizational vision upon their own people while ensuring their own monetary supremacy. It was top-down heavy, rather than bottom-up, and a coercively enforced set of new values, among them materialism, throughout society.[96] This naturally led to resistance, and that unresolved tension is what hinders social maturation.

Evidently, the secularists' rejection of those values held to impede materialism is absurd. Is not considering profit to be the sole determinant of economic policy something other than a value judgment? For this reason, Tamimi castigates Arab secularists for their numerous incorrect assumptions and false parallels.

> After all, there was and is no Church in Islam, no clerical hierarchy provided for by the faith. No distinction was made in scripture (Qur'an) between temporal and spiritual affairs. Nothing in the Qur'an is opposed to earthly or temporal good, and there is no religious authority set up in order to subjugate temporal institutions in Islam.[97]

More specifically, Islam did not impede progress and development, as Christianity had done in Europe. Hence, the examples cited by Arab secularists to delegitimize religion were incoherent. In other words, Middle Eastern secularists often lauded the descriptive ways in which secularism reconciled contestations in Europe, oblivious to the fact that those contestations did not apply to their own societies.

Second, Middle Eastern secularism exhibited an emphasis on this-worldliness, analogous to Holyoake's conceptualization. In the regional context, this led to disregarding the hereafter as it was understood in Muslim societies. The conceptualization of this-worldliness directly conflicts with the local Islamic axiology, which views life as a series of stages in which the ultimate objective is the eternal hereafter. In other words, it stipulates a clear connection between our beliefs and actions in this world with eventual accountability in the hereafter. Propagating ideas that disregard or consider those religious con-

victions unimportant upsets the entire normative order. Separating our temporal actions from eventual accountability or intrinsic worth renders a wide range of deeply entrenched values, norms, and mores redundant.

The concept of this-worldliness is also closely related to the aforementioned secular principle of materialism, given that goodness is thought of in primarily material terms in our temporal, observable world. This also directly conflicts with Islamic axiology. Hence, we begin to notice that the secular worldview manifests itself in diametrical opposition to local values.

Third, another principle is the notion of individualism. In the Middle Eastern context, this notion was transformed into a Machiavellian form of self-interest minus the positive elements of freedom and equality. The region's secularists espoused rampant individualism while almost encouraging a disconnection from societal or even familial approval. This was bound to lead to social upheaval, for the Islamic axiology encouraged one to look both at community and individual interests, thereby emphasizing one's responsibility to the whole, rather than solely to one's self. Holyoake understood the dangers of unbridled individualism and hence mandated service as a critical component of secularism.

Furthermore, the liberal values of freedom and equality were championed to buttress civil disobedience. In the Middle East, no such rationalization exists in terms of service, freedom, or equality, and therefore no serious scholarly work conducted by either Arab or Turkish secularists rationalize them in a consistently applied moral or legal manner, whether through the school system or the judiciary. Henceforth, secularism merely becomes synonymous with self-interest without moral constraints, or without the positive social elements of freedom and equality that necessitate social responsibility.

The importance of service, freedom, and equality for the development of western secularism cannot be overstated. There was a clear rationalization that European intellectuals championed empowering individuals. People were equal, each and every one of them – gradually this was expanded to include different colors, sects, and religions. Their freedom was sacrosanct. Yet in the Middle East, no intellectual rigor supports the equality of peoples or their inherent freedom outside the Islamic axiology. Instead, it turns into despotism and the denial of civil liberties for personal gain. There, individualism leads to a battle royal or a free-for-all, both through citizenry in the public sphere or coercive state institutions. Unsurprisingly, then, its inhabitants closely associate secularism with authoritarianism. Certainly, it is a flagrant absurdity of Middle Eastern secularism that even though it cannot tolerate the will of the people, in the same breath it can nevertheless claim to champion the individual.

Notably, not a single, actual charity developed in the Middle East draws inspiration from secular principles or values. Irrespective of what is stated, all of them rationalize their service through religion. In Europe, secularism made a strong call for social work, people's empowerment, and humanitarianism. Numerous examples attest to this, among them Human Rights Watch, Transparency International, and the United Nations and its various charitable bodies that all embody a secular liberal ethic. No such rationalization has ever appeared in its Middle Eastern manifestation, where it became purely a power phenomenon.

Fourth, by emphasizing the temporal material world and ignoring the concepts of the hereafter and personal accountability, as well as propagating self-interest as individualism without social responsibility, Middle Eastern secularism exhibits a coercive anti-religiosity. Precisely because it has no resonance with the local axiology and shuns the people's will, which would naturally send them into oblivion, the tyrants use the extremist threat card to rationalize their own tyranny. This aggressive anti-religiosity plays well in European circles, which in general view religion with suspicion at best or even contempt.

Consequently, secular Middle Eastern tyrants are more able to secure their own hegemony if they can exacerbate or even facilitate extremisms. There are many examples of this in modern history, and one only needs to take a precursory view of the literature written by Arab or Turkish secularists to rationalize oppression. In fact, numerous self-avowed secular scholars, academics or policymakers in Turkey,[98] the Maghreb,[99] and the Arab world[100] have justified coercion due to their people's ignorance, simplicity, superstitions, or backwardness. These pseudo-scholars quickly point to insulting – even outrageous – caricatures of their own constituents. The holders of state power then inflict an aggressive anti-religiosity upon their own people to secure their authority.

Fifth, and closely related to its authoritarian and non-consensual manifestation, Middle Eastern secularism cannot accommodate diversity and thus emerges as the sectarian chauvinism of whatever group seizes state power. This occurs because the various social contestations have no agreed-upon framework from which to proceed and negotiate power. In other words, there is no acceptance of the rules of the game, which is yet another misreading of the European nation-states' development and the values of pluralism and diversity.

In a very undemocratic sense, Middle Eastern secularists defined unity myopically as "one people, language, and values," thereby misunderstanding the difference between sameness and equality. As they believed that diversity

threatened their incontestable conception of power, there could be no Berbers in the Maghreb, no Kurds in Turkey, and no Bengalis in a united Pakistan. In fact, their response to diversity was to stifle it, which only aggravated already existing ethnic, religious, and separatist tendencies. The secularists viewed the various sects and people's use of their own languages as threatening, debate as stagnation, and differences of opinion as unhealthy.

Sixth, Middle Eastern secularism developed a false compartmentalization of the spheres of life without creating any relations or interconnectivity among them. This is where the incoherent phrases of "separation of church and state" and of "religion and politics" come into play. These phrases are constantly invoked but have no substantive meaning outside Europe. In fact, the region's false compartmentalization led to disconnecting the local axiology from existential life, meaning that the temporal was no longer connected to the afterlife, education was not connected with living truthfully or nobly, economics was not about justice, and politics was no longer about service.
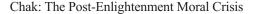
Almost every part of life that was ethically informed by Islamic norms was discarded and replaced with an incoherent imported value-set. Politics is about power, economics is about profit, and philosophy is no longer about rationalizing the good life. Europe discarded all that needed to be replaced, whereas the secularists in the Middle East removed religion from the public and private spheres without providing any substitute for that lost meaning.

Seventh, and closely related to this false compartmentalization of life, is the removal of ethics from public life or the disappearance of a comprehensive moral worldview. Since religion had become a personal affair, it was no longer connected to the people's day-to-day lives. This led to the detachment of morals or ethics from their everyday public practice, for uprooting the wellspring of ethics without providing any new rationalization means that self-interest will become the prime motivating factor. Actually, some Turkish secularists rationalized the need to prohibit personal religious observance on the grounds that it might corrupt others. Similarly, after Pakistan's General Pervez Musharraf seized power in 1999, he refused to promote army officers above the rank of major general if they prayed openly – a clearly absurd and counter-productive policy.

Eighth and last, perhaps the most peculiar characteristic of Middle Eastern secularism is what Du Bois describes as double-consciousness, an idiosyncrasy of

> always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts,

two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.[101]

Here, Du Bois describes the cultural context of African-Americans following slavery, especially concerning their agency amidst the pervasive ideological domination of white elites. According to him, the sheer enormity of the socio-economic and cultural subjugation subconsciously compels the "black man to look at himself through the cultural prism of his oppressors, thus creating a condition of self-loathing and racism that is directed against himself and his own kin."[102]

Commenting on this unique internal dynamic in Arab society, Maged Mandour describes it as Arab-Arab racism.[103] But this double-consciousness is far more than that, for although it certainly exhibits those racist features, it is also symptomatic of the Arab secularists who despise the religious convictions of their ethnic kin. It is not racism per se that drives this aggressive self-loathing, but what they perceive as a threat to their lifestyle and privilege, as well as an affront to their own value-set, all of which are challenged by a contrary moral worldview.

> Paradoxically enough, as much as those elites have fallen under the cultural hegemony of the west, they still have a strong antipathy against it. Those who have contact with it, have a strong admiration for the west, but are also acutely aware that the distinction they make between themselves and the rest of their compatriots is not echoed in the hegemonic center.[104]

Consequently, these Middle Eastern secularists further detach themselves from their fellow nationals, thereby facilitating the false imaginary of their civility. Thus the disorder of double-consciousness manifests itself where Middle Eastern secular elites are intensely aware and fiercely resentful of their lowliness in the western imagination. They begrudgingly concur only to release that explosive frustration at their own society and its values.

In essence, Fanon further explains this unusual predicament when he declares that "the colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards."[105] But that elevation is never enough to get himself/herself qualified as fully human, for that would reverse the patron-client relationship that is facilitated by the Middle Eastern secular elites, global capital, neo-imperialism, and local subjugation. Thus this double-consciousness plays a critical role in the false imaginary of Middle Eastern secularists and in securing their privilege and prestige.

Conclusion

The disappearance of established meaning and the breaking of older moral horizons in post-Enlightenment Europe eventually removed God from His earthly throne and replaced Him with self-confident Man. In fact, the successful discrediting of the previous moral order enabled the emergence of a new Europe, for this revolutionary idea liberated human agency from God's Will or that of His earthly representatives. In Europe, human agency first re-created the world according to its elites' imaginings. And, alongside this were new ideas concerning human nature, social responsibility, and autonomy. No longer were people innately good or made in the image of God. Instead an evil, or at best, an opportunist human being was described as natural, one motivated only by self-interest. What all of this meant was that everything connected with ontology, epistemology, and religion began to be re-evaluated.

With demystification, unraveling the sacred, and forfeiting immanence, post-Enlightenment Europe experienced the erosion of three critical ideas: intrinsic virtue, the concept of the collective good, and the communitarian nature of humanity. In general, this moral shift from the pre-modern to the modern human being is vividly pronounced in contemporary western political theory.[106] As a result, the social ideas that facilitate cohesiveness and togetherness would become increasingly negligible, especially with the growth of liberalism and its emphasis upon the individual. Looking back, it would not be farfetched to trace the first indirect assault on those ideas to those who challenged Church authority and, consequently, opened the floodgates of Biblical reinterpretation within the Christian reform movements. By doing that, the edifice of certainty was cracked and other important European scholars, such as Hobbes, carried this new unscrupulous intellectualism even further.

Eventually, all of these social transformations crystallized into a new theory of secularism as articulated by Holyoake, who advocated for focusing on the empirical world and therefore describing secularism as a way of life without recourse to theology. This was often done in protest against the clergy, but was not necessarily anti-theistic.[107] Theoretically, he explicitly outlined secularism's four primary principles: a materialistic this-worldly orientation, science, service, and liberalism.[108] Taken together, these characteristics were both confusing and clarifying and thus added to secularity's complexity and contradictions. It was implicitly anti-clerical but not necessarily anti-moral, pro-individual but not necessarily anti-communitarian, and empowered humanity but impoverished society.

Self-determining freedom, or viewing human beings as having inner depths from which to evaluate themselves, meant that moral judgment in an inter-dependent social reality became confounded. More interestingly, the further society moved away from shared moral precepts, the higher the volatility of a fundamentalist reaction. Still, secularism's failure lay in its inability to locate the mean and its ultimate facilitation of anti-moral and excessively individualistic tendencies. For that reason, the disenchantment of the world and serious concerns about secularism's ability to dehumanize and isolate peoples grew.

Notwithstanding the serious challenges secularism posed in Europe, it was sophisticatedly managed through consultation and negotiation. Secularists, traditionalists, and conservatives – actually, all of the ideological contenders – committed themselves to sharing space and accommodating one another. This defines secularism's growth and management in the West.[109] Commenting upon this, the late Munir Shafiq states that secularism was

> not the same in Britain as in Italy, Germany or the United States. Indeed, a variety of models came into effect. In Britain, for example, the monarch is also the head of Church as well as state. In contrast, the state in France after 1789 revolution was initially hostile to religion and religious institutions. But, in the process of asserting its independence of the church … the French state reached a historical rapprochement with the church ending the enmity between the two establishments and erecting numerous bridges of cooperation and mutual respect.[110]

This highlights the fact that rapprochement is only possible via negotiations among rival social contesters. Emphasis was placed upon cooperation, consultation, and recognizing spaces for all, undertaken on the principles of equality, freedom, and the sanctity of the individual. It was never a zero-sum game.
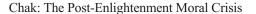
On the contrary, importing and perpetuating secularism in the Middle East occurs in a threefold manner, all inherently violent: direct colonial/military intervention, coercive spellbound indigenous elites or minorities, and disenfranchised or otherwise sects, classes, or races that utilize the secular space for subterfuge, sectarianism, and chauvinism. For that reason, secularism was intimately tied to an alternative social reality or, to put it plainly, it was a foreign ideology that would compete with the local axiology. In fact, what really needs to be explored is how secularism uproots the local axiology and refuses to negotiate independent spaces.

Soon thereafter, it was envisioned that the importation of secularism and the asserted purposes of material wellbeing would cause a free, democratic,

and progressive Middle East to emerge. Instead, the wealth distribution became atrocious and the schism between the haves and the have-nots became enormous. Secularism was not simply a method of modernization, development, and economic prosperity, for this alternative Middle Eastern variation only superficially mirrored Holyoake: a this-worldly emphasis without civic responsibility, an echo of Europe that spoke of liberty but became coercively anti-religious, and that spoke of the individual's primacy but became indifferent to the social cohesion affecting all kinds of chauvinism.

Outside of its original European cultural context, secularism emerged in a radically offensive manner that led to unprecedented levels of secular tyranny, which entailed the justification of repression with socio-economic and political oppression. In Europe, secularism was led by a belief in service, a rejection of tyranny, and a mandating of equality and praising freedom. In the Middle East it did not negotiate; rather, it steam-rolled its way over the hearts and minds of people and confronted and ridiculed local axiologies, particularly Islam, which frowned upon materialism and mandated social responsibility. By introducing individualism and disrupting normative values, it aggravated social fissures, led to the disappearance of inter-relatedness, and created a double-consciousness that facilitated a self-loathing and the leadership's disconnect with the masses.

Europe struggles to balance the loss of intrinsic virtue, a shared conceptualization of the good, and communitarianism with freedom, equality, and a utilitarian humanism. In the Middle East, however, the elites cultivated a rampant materialism, an unchecked egoism, and a Machiavellian public culture that separated ethics from the public sphere. Speaking of separating religion and the state was incoherent, for no such social or institutional distinction existed that could entertain such a demand. Instead, morality was eradicated from the public sphere and declared a private matter.But even then it continued to be mocked as naïve and unintelligent. This way, all forms of dictatorship, deception, or immorality could be rationalized without questioning one's worthiness.

This ruse, which European intellectuals used to endorse their behavior with nation-states in the international arena, was a consequence of not recognizing any overlord to adjudicate justice and was mimicked by the region's secularists against their own citizenry. In other words, no social contestations are being managed skillfully through compromise, negotiation, and mutual consultation, a reality that leads to further alienation from the state and centers of power, not to mention an increased number of unresolvable grievances that only await a spark to erupt.

Lastly, secularism continues to be espoused by the spellbound indigenous elites, neo-colonialists, and those who rightly guard their autonomy – there being no alternative offered – and, deceptively, by those who utilize the spaces of maneuverability that secularism opens for self-empowerment or subterfuge. Much more needs to be explained about this; however, doing so is beyond the scope of this current article. All of this evidently produces an equally incoherent, reactionary cruel irreligious piety that emerges as a consequence of coercive practices and the denial of legitimacy to conservative segments of society. Both pose significant challenges for facilitating social cohesion in the Middle East. In essence, therefore, neither coercive secularism nor imposed religiosity will do much to reconcile ideological rivalries; instead, they will only heighten polarization, exacerbate conflict, and increase the likelihood of civil unrest.

Endnotes

1. Maged Mandour, "On Arab-Arab Racism," in *Open Democracy*. Published February, 2015, https://www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/maged-mandour/on-arabarab-racism.
2. Salim Hassani, ed., *1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in Our World* (UK: Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilization Ltd, 2006), 6.
3. Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, ON: Anansi Press, 1991), 3.
4. Collette Sciberras, "New Religion – Cult of Ego," in Times of Malta. Published January, 2015, www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150127/opinion/New-religion-cult-of-ego.
5. Farhan Mujahid Chak, "Critiquing the Modern Occidental Theory of Knowledge with Insights into Qur'anic Epistemology," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (2012).
6. Yusuf ibn Abd al-Barr, *Al-Intiqā' fī Faḍā'il Thalāthat al-A'immat al-Fuqahā' Mālik wa al-Shāfi'ī wa Abī Hanīfah* (Beirut: Dar al-Hikmah, 2006), 38.
7. Thomas West and Grace West, trans. *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato and Aristophanes* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 71.
8. See Chak, "Critiquing."
9. Harvey Cox, "Introduction to the New Edition," in *The Secular City*, 5th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), xxxviii.
10. Michael Ignatieff, "The Ascent of Man," *Prospect Magazine*. October 20, 1999, accessed June 2016,www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/features/michael-ignatieff.
11. Ibid.
12. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, and Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 205.
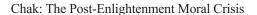13. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Preface," in *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 7.

14. Ibid., 7.

15. W. E. B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Mineola, NY: Dover Pubs., 1994), 2.

16. Munir Shafiq, "Secularism and the Arab-Muslim Condition," in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (London: Hurst & Co., 2000), 148.

17. Farhan Mujahid Chak, "Islam, the West, and Man in the State of Nature," *Orient* 3 (July 2014).

18. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 24.

19. West and West, trans., *Four Texts on Socrates*, 10.

20. Ibid., 105-06.

21. Ibid., 95.

22. Ibid., 97.

23. Aristotle, "Politics Books I and II", trans. Trevor J. Saunders (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 2-3, in *Oxford Readers: Political Thought*, ed. Michael Rosen and Jonathon Wolff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10-11.

24. Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 3.

25. John McKay et al., eds., *Understanding Western Society: A Brief History* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 2012), 248.

26. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 61.

27. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 83.

28. Ibid., 83.

29. Ibid., 86.

30. Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1973), 27.

31. Carl Von Clausewitz, "War as an Instrument of Policy," *On War* (London: Kegan Paul, 1911), 120.

32. Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," in *Classic Readings of International Relations*, ed. Phil Williams et al. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1994), 39.

33. Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishers, 2004), 86.

34. Harold Jones, "Machiavelli in Euroland," in *The Times of Oman*, accessed 9 March 2015, http://www.timesofoman.com/Columns/2779/Article-Machiavelli-in-Euroland.

35. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Roger D. Masters (ed.), trans. Roger D. and Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 131.

36. Charles Louis de Secondant, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent (New York: Hafner Press and London: Collier Macmillan, 1949), 5.

37. John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C. B. Macpherson, originally published in 1690 (Indianapolis and Cambridge, NY: Hackett, 1980), 8.

38. George Jacob Holyoake, *The Principles of Secularism* (New York: Dossier Press, 2015), 5.

39. Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (New York: Penguin Books USA, 2010), 1.

40. Ann Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2003), 13.

41. Giles Constable, *Crusaders and Crusading in the 12th Century* (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), 177.

42. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory*, 13.

43. Holyoake, *Principles of Secularism*, 1.

44. Ibid., 6.

45. Azzam Tamimi, "The Origins of Arab Secularism," in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (London: Hurst and Co., 2000), 15.

46. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: The Age of Voltaire* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965), 697.

47. Tamimi, "The Origins of Arab Secularism," 14.

48. Ibid., 14.

49. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 2:347.

50. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 23.

51. Eric Waterhouse, "Secularism" in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 2:348.

52. Owen Chadwick, T*he Secularization of the European Mind in the 19th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 22.

53. Cox, "Introduction," xxxviii.

54. George Jacob Holyoake, *The Principles of Secularism* (London: Austin and Co., 1871), www.gutenberg.org/files/36797/36797-h/36797-h.htm. See, also Abdul Rashid Moten, *Political Science: An Islamic Perspective* (London: Macmillan Press , 1996), 1.

55. Holyoake, *Principles of Secularism*, 5.

56. See, Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now* (Vancouver, BC: Namaste Publishing, 1999).

57. Alexis de Tocqueville, "The Nature of Modern Servitude," in *Oxford Readers: Political Thought*, ed. Michael Rosen and Jonathon Wolff (Oxford University Press, 1999).

58. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 37.

59. Ibid., 37.

60. Holyoake, *Principles of Secularism*, 5.

61. Moten, Political Science, 2.

62. See George Fink, *Stress of War, Conflict, and Disaster* (New York: Academic Press, 2010), and David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), x, 11, and Appendix I.

63. Holyoake, *Principles of Secularism*, 7.

64. Ibid.

65. Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 2.

66. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields Publishers, 1863), 28.

67. Ibid., 20.

68. Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 3.
69. Ibid., 27.
70. Ibid., 26.
71. Cox, "Introduction," xxix.
72. Ibid., xxiv.
73. Moten, *Political Science*, 30.
74. Ibid., 31.
75. Shafiq, "Secularism," 148.
76. Ibid., 148.
77. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 37.
78. Akbar Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997), 54.
79. Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization and Resistance* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011), 103.
80. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 37.
81. Rachid Ghanouchi, "Secularism in the Arab Maghreb," in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, 116.
82. Ibrahim Kalin, "White Man's Burden," in *Daily Sabah*, accessed 12 December 2015, www.dailysabah.com/columns/ibrahim-kalin/2015/12/12/white-mans-burden.
83. Ibid.
84. Moten, *Political Science*, 31.
85. Abdelwahab Elmessiri, *Tafkīk al-Khitāb al-'Ilmānī* (*Deconstructing the Secular Discourse*) (:2001) 1:4.
86. Ibid.
87. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 205-06.
88. Ibid., 206.
89. Bulent Daver, "Secularism in Turkey," accessed January 2016, www.politics.ankara.edu.tr/dergi/pdf/43/1/3_bulent_daver.pdf.
90. Ghanouchi, "Secularism," 97.
91. Abdelwahab Elmessiri, "Secularism, Immanence and Deconstruction," in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (London: Hurst & Co., 2000), 52.
92. Ibid., 53.
93. Alberta Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 246.
94. Yann Algun and Pierre Cahuc, "Trust, Growth and Well-Being: New Evidence and Policy Implications," in *Handbook of Economic Growth*, ed. Philipe Aghion et al. (Elsevier, 2013), 34.
95. Ghanouchi, "Secularism, 101.
96. Daver, "Secularism in Turkey."
97. Tamimi, *The Origins of Arab Secularism*, 26.
98. Daver, "Secularism in Turkey."
99. Ghannouchi, "Secularism in the Arab Maghreb," 97.

100. Tamimi, *The Origins of Arab Secularism*, 26.
101. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 3.
102. Mandour, "On Arab-Arab Racism."
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 18.
106. West and West, trans., Four Texts on Socrates, 10.
107. Holyoake, *Principles of Secularism*, 5.
108. Ibid.
109. Shafiq, "Secularism," 148.
110. Ibid., 151.