

The secularity of security: The secularist bias of modern security-studies and its impact on international relations

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Abstract

The belief that religion needs to be brought back into political theories is fast becoming the new gospel of IR. However, in the realm of Security studies, this restorative discourse can turn dangerous, as in actuality, security thinking in the modern age is heavily pregnant with presumptions on the virtue of secularity over religiosity. This paper argues that the secular bias embedded in modern security-thinking has made secularism the metanarrative against which all security issues are measured. Furthermore, this secular metanarrative has underlined many domestic security-policies, as well as inter-state relations, in modern times. And while domestically, yielding the tool of secularization in the domestic level usually bears the fruits of political stability, at the inter-state level, the division put in place by the secular metanarrative between the 'peaceful and rational secular' and the 'violent and irrational religious' has negatively impacted the relations between the West and the Rest, and in particular the Arab world, which has been wrongfully considered as lacking a tradition of state-secularity, and therefore, inherently prone to violence. To prevent further bloodshed and enhance the region's stability, a better understanding of the nature of state-secularity and its tie to security issues is more than imperative.

Introduction

The belief that religion needs to be brought back into political theories is fast becoming the new gospel of IR. However, one sub-field, that of security studies, seems to be largely resistant to the return of the prodigal son. On the surface, security studies are just starting to catch up with the discipline's attempt to include religion in the field's theories, the most notable product being the *Routledge Handbook to Religion and Security* from a couple of years back.¹ But while security studies have not tried to theorize religion up until recently, that is not to say that religion has been absent from security studies all these years. The truth of the matter is that

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¹ To list but a few prominent publications: Juergensmeyer 2000, 2008; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Petito and Hatzopoulos 2003; Asad 2003; Williams 2003; Fox and Sandler 2004, 2005; Thomas 2005; Haynes 2005, 2013; Olson and Green 2006; Hurd 2006, 2007.

security thinking in the modern age is heavily pregnant with presumptions on the virtue of secularity over religiosity. This partiality for secularism embedded in the modern concept of security is a security practice of its own, taken because this specific secularist interpretation of security was believed to address the biggest security challenges of two periods of Enlightenment—that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that of the establishment of political thought as a scientific discipline after World War II, dubbed by Ira Katznelson as 'the political studies Enlightenment'.²

In reading the rise of secularism in modern time as a security practice, I follow in the footsteps of Michael C. Williams, and of scholars like Pinar Bilgin who adopted Williams's reading of early modernity. However, I diverge from this historical reading on significant points. In Williams's historicity, the consolidation of secularism into the body of knowledge that happened during the Enlightenment period was aimed at addressing the insecurities of early seventeenth-century Europe— the political, social, and theological chaos embodied in the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Meaning, that by limiting the discourse to the positive phenomenal world, the Enlightenment thinkers hoped to remove the destructive conflict endangered by irresolvable questions of religious truth from the political realm.³ While I agree with Williams that security considerations were a significant cause behind the rise of secularism as the main interpretative framework, I differ from him on the question of the security considerations of *which century*. Drawing on William Cavanaugh's criticism of the popular narrative of the creation of the modern state, I argue that the Enlightenment intellectuals were propelled to instill the concept of security with a secular reasoning to address the security challenges of their own time—the need to find a legitimizing ideology for the emerging nation-state. They did so by constructing the very same historical narrative upon which Williams wrongfully based his analysis, namely, that the early modern period was characterized by the growing realization that religion-based arguments were the reason behind the violent conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and therefore religion should be banned from the public sphere.

It should be noted that Luca Mavelli has also challenged the historical narrative that informs Williams' argument, and with it, the idea of a positive relationship between security and secularization.⁴ Albeit, for him this discussion was a starting point to argue in the favor of a different interpretative framework of the modern 'quest for security', one that is the outcome of the earlier crisis of scholasticism that propelled the process of secularization.⁵ This paper has a different purpose, which is trifold: first, establishing what does the secularist partiality of the contemporary understanding of security entail. Second, tracking down the *Historia Sacra* behind this partiality and showing how it was tied to the efforts to legitimize certain political ideologies. Last but not least, evaluating the empirical validity of the propositions constituting this secularist bias,—i.e., that religion has a unique propensity towards violence, that granting religion a public dimension would clash with the very possibility of international order, that

² Katznelson 2003.

³ Williams 1998, 210-3.

⁴ Mavelli 2012.

⁵ Mavelli 2012, 180.

democracy requires a form of secularism to sustain itself, and that religion decreases as modernization increases. As is shown at the closing part of this paper, when confronted with empirical evidence, these presumptions are revealed to be as invalid as the historical narrative upon which the secularist metanarrative rests. To understand how these distorted perceptions of reality have come into being, and which political interests do they serve, let's begin with the deconstruction of the most profound narrative in Western consciousness linking religion and violence together, the state-creation story, and see how it derails from historical accounts of the creation of the modern state, before demonstrating how the construction of such narrative is only but one example of an ongoing securitization of religion, going back to ancient time.

On the genesis of the secularist bias of security studies

There is a growing consensus in today's academic debate that modern security thinking has an inherent partiality towards secularism. Inasmuch as secularism has become the general conceptual apparatus of western society in the course of the last century, it has become the meta-narrative against which all security issues are measured, drawing upon the perception that religion as a security concern has been the constitutive foundation of the state-system itself. This historical depiction of the creation of the modern nation-state as a solution for the violent nature of religion is perhaps the most well-known narratives of political science and the most profound narrative in Western consciousness linking religion and violence together. As the story goes, the modern nation-state was established upon the need to keep peace between two contentious religious factions in the post-Reformation Europe of the sixteenth century: the coercive, ruling Catholicism and the reformative Protestantism which sought to extricate the Church from its entanglement in coercive power. Wishing to end the bloodshed that spanned more than a century and that claimed thirty percent of Europe's population, the progenitors of the modern system came to the realization that the violence cannot be curbed without removing religion from the sphere of international politics and substituting it with the more peaceful political action of the secular nation-state. By consolidating those realizations into the Peace of Westphalia treaties, the progenitors laid the foundations for a system of class-structured sovereign nation states in which religion is kept out of the public sphere due to its lamentable tendency to ignite violence.⁶

Drawing from this narrative, modern security thought has concluded four main presumptions linking secularism and security together:

- a) 'The myth of religious violence' (so named by William Cavanaugh): religion is inherently prone to violence due to its being (1) absolutist (2) divisive and (3) insufficiently rational;
- b) The 'Westphalian presumption' (so named by Scott Thomas): Since religion spells insecurity, religious pluralism cannot have a public dimension, as this would clash with

⁶ Cavanaugh 2009, 123; Cavanaugh 2002, 21-4.

the very possibility of international order. Thus, only a complete separation of Church and state—like the one that supposedly happened in the post-Westphalia West—can secure peace for the state system;

- c) The assumption that democracy, and in particular liberal democracy, requires a form of secularism to sustain itself;
- d) The secularization theory, proposing that faith decreases as modernization increases;

These four presumptions have underlined many security policies of the states in the last decades, from active secularization of the domestic arena of new states, to restrictions on religious institutions on the inter-national level, and to the efforts to promote liberal democracy in the Middle East. Nonetheless, when compared with empirical data gathered from the research done in the last three decades, all of these presumptions are found incorrect. This is hardly surprising considering that the state-creation story itself is historically inaccurate, as William Cavanaugh has shown at length his 2009 book *The Myth of Religious Violence*, by contrasting the assumptions made by the state-creation myth with historical records of Europe from the 15th and 16th centuries. The first way this narrative is incorrect is in its assertion that the sides in the Wars of Religion were determined solely upon religious differences, when in actuality, Protestants and Catholics often fought in these wars on the same side in line with their political interests.⁷ For instance, until the Schmalkaldic war of 1545, the Protestant princes of the Holy Roman Empire generally supported the Catholic Emperor in his fight against Catholic France. Even in the Schmalkaldic War itself, (the first religious war of Emperor Charles V against the alliance of the Lutheran princes within the Holy Roman Empire), a number of important Protestant princes fought alongside the Catholic Emperor. During that period, Catholic France did all in its power to oppose the Catholic Holy Roman Empire, including allying all too frequently with the Muslim Turks. During the Thirty Years' War, which concluded the age of religious wars, the Bohemian Protestant Soldier Albrecht Von Wallenstein supported the goal of the Catholic Emperor Ferdinand II to consolidate his patchwork empire into a modern state—Habsburg, Catholic and ruled by one sovereign — while the Catholic princes opposed this attempt and condemned Ferdinand's neglect of the Imperial Diet. The last thirteen years of the war—the bloodiest—were essentially a struggle between Catholic France and the Catholic House of Habsburg, to which belonged the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and the King of Spain.⁸

A second discrepancy between the state-creation narrative and historical records lays in the fact that while historians take different positions on the question of the causes for the Wars of Religion, none of them tell the story of wars driven mostly by religious zealotry as political theorists, like Voltaire, Rawls, Shklar and others, did. Most historians agree that elements of social and political discontent were more significant in these wars than religious faith, and this political discontent preceded the rise in religious differences instead of the other way around. The alleged Wars of Religion were in fact the pinnacle of a long power-shift in Europe starting at the late Medieval Ages, in which power gradually transferred from the Holy Roman Empire to

⁷ Cavanaugh 2009, 141-3.

⁸ Cavanaugh 2009, 130-141.

the local princes and rulers, the same power shift that determined whether a certain political ruler adopted the Protestantism or remained Catholic. It was the amount of political autonomy political rulers received from the Catholic Emperor that determined which rulers in the course of the sixteen century chose to convert to the newly- emerging Protestantism. In states like France, in which concordats between the Papacy and temporal rules had already limited the jurisdiction of the Church within national boundaries, their rulers saw no need in throwing off 'the yoke of Catholicism'. Where such concordats were not arranged, such as in England, Germany and Scandinavia, conflicts between the Church and the secular rulers predating Luther contributed significantly— in each case—to the success of the Reformation.⁹ In these countries, the kings and princes converted to Protestantism not only because such move would give them a justification to declare political independence and to seize the considerable assets of the Catholic Church inside their territory, but also because the Protestant theology perceiving the Church as subjected to the civil power better suited their absolutist aspirations. As the historian R. Po-Chia Hsia summed it, 'for the princes who converted to Calvinism, religious and political concerns were inseparable in their personal motivations'.¹⁰

Given these facts, it is evident that Cavanaugh was right in concluding that the conflicts called since the Enlightenment era the Wars of Religion were not the events that necessitated the birth of the modern state; rather, "they were the birthpangs of the modern sovereign state" and had very little to do with religious differences.¹¹ It should be noted that the sixteenth-century founders of the modern state are not the only ones who would have a hard time recognize their story in the account told today by political theorists. Many of the sixteenth century struggles for liberty, which at the time meant an almost inextricable mix of political liberty and a freedom of conscience, were depicted after the secularization project of political thought as solely rebellions for the sake of various forms of Protestantism. William Frijhoff gives the example of the Netherlands's revolt against Spain, which after the eighteenth century was depicted as a rebellion for the sake of Calvinism. Only in the twentieth century historians started to challenge this account and reverted to records from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which revealed that in fact, political and economic factors had been more prominent in this struggle.¹²

This contradictory state of affairs begs the question of how did such narratives come into being and into ruling security thinking today. The answer lies in fact that in disciplines aiming to change the human predicament as political science does, scientific theories are as much organically conditioned as religious emotions.¹³ This, which seems to have been forgotten by many contemporary intellectuals who perceive modern social science as the culmination of natural laws inferred by scientific methods of rational inquiry, was all too clear to the founding

⁹ Cavanaugh 2002, 26-7, 152.

¹⁰ Hsia 1989, 34.

¹¹ Cavanaugh, 2002, 22.

¹² Frijhoff 2008, 104.

¹³ James 1902.

fathers of political thought. Hans Morgenthau, for example, pointed out that 'All lasting contributions to political science, from Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine to the Federalist, Marx and Calhoun, have been responses to such challenges arising from political reality. They have not been self-sufficient theoretical developments pursuing theoretical concerns for their own sake.'¹⁴ For that reason Rob Walker contends that theories of international relations should be seen more as aspects of contemporary world politics than as explanations of contemporary world politics. In truth, IR theories reflect an ideological expression of the modern state, and are a clear indication of the difficulties of thinking about a world politics characterized by profound spatiotemporal accelerations.¹⁵ In that respect, contemporary security theories are of no exception. Not only does the relationship between modern knowledge and security is far more intimate than is often acknowledged, as Williams argued¹⁶, but it is particularly inseparable when the knowledge in hand is the knowledge on the nature of security. Thus, modern security-studies cannot be described at the objective depiction of cause and reason in issues pertaining security, as in truth they are the outcome of prescriptions given by political thinkers wishing to solve the security challenges of their time.

Indeed, a review of modern political thought shows that from the very early days of the modern state-system, the criteria behind every advocacy of a certain political arrangement between religion and state remains the same: its contribution in the writer's eyes to the security and peace of his own time. Since the early seventeenth century was characterized by 'the quest for security', that is, a pressing need to find the best form of rule for the political units established, or re-drawn, after Westphalia to prevent the return of further "wars of religion", most early seventeenth century thinkers prescribed absolutism as the best political policy, applied to the religious realm as well now that the Peace of Westphalia established the principle of *Cuius regio, eius religio* ("Whose realm, his religion"). In their philosophy, the monarch's absolutism should dictate a uniformity of religious worship in the new states, as such uniformity decreases the possibility of civil unrest resulting from the religious differences that were abound after the Reformation. In that respect, Hobbes's philosophy is the embodiment of early seventeenth century political thought. As many scholars of Hobbes pointed out, his prescription of an absolute monarch to which a national Church is subjected suited what he, an English royalist, thought would best remedy the political turmoil sweeping his country at the time, the civil war raging on and off since the separation of Henry VIII from the Roman Church in 1534 until the crowning of William of Orange in 1689 and the end of the legislation stating the supremacy of the Parliament in 1701.¹⁷ One contributor to the war was the imposition of Anglican Uniformity in 1558—making attendance in the Anglican Church compulsory, even for Baptists, Independents and Quakers who were forced to worship the Trinity—which was met with constant resistance from non-Anglicans, like the Bishops' Wars of 1639 and 1640 in which

¹⁴ Morgenthau 1966, 77.

¹⁵ Walker 1993.

¹⁷ Some of this literature is reviewed in Milner 1988.

the Church of Scotland's resistance to the attempts made by King Charles I to regulate the liturgy in Scotland by imposing on it Anglican services and a Book of Common Prayer, led eventually to a military clash between the two sides. In face of this civil unrest, Hobbes was of the opinion that stability is only achievable by strengthening of right of the King to rule and to impose religious uniformity, hence his constant endorsement of an absolute state with one national religion, a philosophy that forced him to flee England in 1640 when the Civil War erupted, out of fear of the Long Parliament's reaction to his writing.¹⁸ It was during his eleven years exile that Hobbes composed *Leviathan*, alongside other political works, in which he combined logic and Christian reasoning to support his prescription.

For example, to justify the post-Westphalia submission of the national church to an absolute sovereign, Hobbes presented the argument that while the involvement of religion in politics had enhanced stability in ancient societies where religion had been man-made, when it comes to Christianity, religion undermines civil security because Christianity's true divinity leaves the subject torn between two kingdoms derived from natural reason, that of the Gostly (*religiou*) and that of the temporal (*state*). Thus, the only solution to this security problem lay in an absolute civil power to which the Church, as all individuals, is subject to, and 'owe to sovereigns simple obedience in all things wherein their obedience is not repugnant to the laws of God'¹⁹ (among which Hobbes listed beliefs such as that God is infinite; that the world was created and not eternal; that we should considered as enemies all those who do not believe God govern the world, hath given precepts, and propounded rewards and punishments to mankind, and more). A similar absolutism should be in matters of worship, where the subjects must obey the dictations of the national Church to such extent that when discussing what is considered part of holy scriptures, Hobbes makes a point to state that he can acknowledge no other books of the Old Testament to be Holy Scripture but those which have been commanded to be acknowledged for such by the authority of the Church of England.²⁰ This prescription of state-church relation, referred today as a confessional arrangement of Church and State, was common Post Westphalia in almost all the European states, and in many ways is still the most common State-Church arrangement in the Western world, with the exceptions of France and the US, as will be discussed more elaborately later.

However, as the seventeenth century progressed, it became clear that the English monarch's power was not powerful enough to enforce religious uniformity and to ensure lasting peace, and so the English political thought began to abandon the prescription of religious uniformity. This philosophical shift is best mirrored in the change that had underwent in the political thought of John Locke thought his life. Lock, whose "influence in the history of thought, on the way we think about ourselves and our relation to the world we live in, to God, nature and society, has been immense"²¹, started his prolific career as political writer and activist with

¹⁸ Milner 1988, 400.

¹⁹ Hobbes 1962, 218.

²⁰ Hobbes 1962, 232.

²¹ Aarsleff 1994, 252.

views similar to those of Hobbes and of other early seventeenth century thinkers. When, at the age of twenty-eight, he penned *the Two Tracts on Government*, he proposed absolutism and religious uniformity for the political and religious form that England should adopt now that King Charles II was crowned as the lawful monarch for the first time since the execution of Charles I in January 1649.²² The *Two Tracts*, presented a very gloom view on religion, which, according to Locke, had become over the course of the European history 'a perpetual foundation of war and contention' and the inciting force behind the bloodshed of the War of religion:

"All those flames that have made such havoc and desolation in Europe, and have not quenched but with the blood of so many millions, have been at first kindled with coals from the alter."²³

Unlike modern versions of Lockean Liberalism, in this manuscript Locke did not depict religion's propensity towards violence as an intrinsic feature of faith in the divine, but as the outcome of the perversion of Christian faith by power-hunger clergy, who, for the sake of gaining access to political power, inculcated in the rulers and the laity two erroneous beliefs: that there is only one true way to heaven, and that it is a Christian duty to uphold and to spread the true way by force and compulsion and to suppress heresy. The manuscript concluded that as long these false beliefs are upheld, a policy of religious toleration would only invite instability because certain religious groups would use said toleration to build up strength and eventually to precipitate another civil war in the attempt to gain political power. The right course of action should lay henceforth in the separation of the clergy from any position of political power, which is achievable only by total alienation of power to an absolute monarch, without which, no sovereignty would be formed. The similarities to *Leviathan* are abundant and undisputable.

However, as James Tully pointed out, Locke never published the *Two Tracts*. The events following the Restoration seemed to convince him that this solution was unfeasible as King Charles II was too weak in face of a strong opposition, an alliance in the Parliament between the Anglican Church and the gentry, especially on the issue of how to treat those dissenting from the Anglican Church— Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, Independents and Catholics. Against the King's reservations, the Anglican-gentry Alliance managed to enact the *Clarendon Code*, a set of repressive laws designed to compel conformity with the Anglican forms of worship and to punish dissenters. The pretext for the repression was that dissenters instigate civil unrest in the hopes of reversing the Restoration and regain their power, the same claim Locke himself had made in *Two Tracts*.²⁴ In actuality, the enactment of the *Clarendon Code* incited even greater civil unrest as thousands of religious Dissenters refusing to conform were sent into poverty, death, jail or transportation throughout the 1660s and 1670s. Witnessing the dissenters' unwavering refusal to conform and the disruption of the public good by a policy of religious uniformity, Locke reversed his stance, and from 1667 onward he lobbied in favor of religious plurality and toleration.

²² Tully 1993, 50-51.

²³ Locke 1967: 160-1.

²⁴ Tully 1993, 53.

Locke's revised position was first expressed in *an essay concerning human understanding* (1667), then in *a letter from a person of quality to his friend in the country* (1675) and most elaborately in *a Letter concerning Toleration* (1689). Locke sought in these publications to justify a revolt against the oppression of religious uniformity, since the attempts made by the dissenters and their sympathizers, like Locke, to gain toleration through Parliament had failed. For that purpose he introduced a new theological reasoning to his writing: to act against one's religious beliefs, even if the magistrate so orders, is tantamount to the sin of hypocrisy, and will lead to eternal damnation. Individuals neither do, nor ought to, alienate their right to judge and to disobey laws they believe to be unjust, and when oppressed, as are the dissenters, they will resist, not only passively, but also by the force of arms.²⁵ Hence, a policy of uniformity causes civil unrest, as it will be resisted, making toleration the only pragmatic means to civil peace²⁶. In this new theory, the source to conflicts in the worlds is not the diversity of opinions (which cannot be avoided), but it was 'the refusal of toleration to those that are of different opinions (which might have been granted), that has produced all the bustles and wars that have been in the Christian world upon account of religion.'²⁷ The revised theory also presented an eloquent appeal for a complete separation of church and state since the Church's responsibility is limited to the business of the salvation of souls, and ought not to intervene in any civil matters, while the state's responsibility is entirely and exclusively secular, the protection of the public good (i.e., liberty, health and property), and cannot intervene in matters of faith. To mix the two responsibilities would be like 'jumbling heaven and earth together, the things most remote and opposite'. Invading the civil rights and worldly goods of individuals upon pretense of religion ensures that there will be 'no peace and security, no, not so much as common friendship'.²⁸ And so, in Locke's eyes, ensuring religious freedom in the state was essential to its security.

The securitization of religion in political theory reached a new peak when European history entered the period of Enlightenment and of the establishment of the European nation-state. The consolidation of secularism into the body of knowledge was done to address the security challenges of the same time—the need to find a legitimizing ideology for the emerging nation-state. As the forgoing debate implies, the 'quest for certainty' that happened during the Age of Enlightenment was preoccupied with questions of politics no less than questions of ontology and epistemology. Political theorist Claude Lefort describes this period in time as an attempt to replace the loss of unity and security characterized with modernity with new 'secured' patterns.²⁹ One of the patterns behind which most Enlightenment positivists united was the ideological stance that faith *should* decline for the sake of the political idea of a nation-state. It should be noted that by the nineteenth century, religion, while greatly influential in matters of politics and social issues, was not the main principle of political governance anywhere in Western Europe, so its removal was not required for the development of a modern, secular

²⁵ Tully 1993, 53; Locke, 1689.

²⁶ Tully 1993, 54.

²⁷ Locke, 1689.

²⁸ All quotes in this paragraph are from Locke's *A Letter concerning Toleration* 1689.

²⁹ Flynn 2005.

state, but it was for the construction of a liberal, national one. The success of the nationalist ideology, reaching a peak around this time with the Spring of Nations (1848), brought in its wake a pressing need of the political leaders of the nationalist movements for a civil religion that would lend legitimacy to the concept of nation-states, and that would tie together communities with different languages, cultures and religions within the framework of the European continent. For that end, philosophers and practitioners alike started pushing forward historical narratives portraying modernity as an emancipation from religion in order to remove any competing sources of authority and to lend a sense of historicity to the nationalist nation-state as the next evolutionary step in the progress of the world. In depicting religion as inherently violent and the modern state as the medicine to violent conflicts, the leaders of nationalist movements successfully managed to smooth the expansion of civil power, to transfer one's loyalty to the church to one's loyalty to the nation-state, and to legitimize the state's monopoly on the means of violence. In that essence, constructing a revulsion toward killing and dying in the name of the religion was one of the principal means to convince that killing and dying in the name of the state is laudable and proper³⁰.

Subsequently, the complex political and social processes that had amassed in the modern European states were re-written to be nothing but a conflict between two religious camps. By all means, the construction of the secularist discourse, with its historical revisionism, should be seen as a national security practice taken by intellectual and political elites during the Enlightenment era in order to facilitate the transfer of power to their newly founded states. This constructivism successfully concluded in infusing the civil religion of nationalism with a sense of sacredness previously exclusive to religious worship. To borrow the terminology of the securitization theory developed by Barry Buzan and the Copenhagen School, the construction of these historical narratives was a speech act used by agents (19th century European political leaders and intellectuals) to articulate an allegedly perceived threat (religion) to a referent object which implies a claim for survival (a security concept necessitating secularization of the public space as the only way to ensure stability).

And just as the creation of the modern state presumably liberated society from the violence entailed in religious differences, the empiricist revolution of modern time were seen to liberate science from the clutch of religion by the separation of claims of faith from claim of knowledge, deemed necessary for the reduction of violence. It is usually agreed upon that the Positivism of the nineteenth century, with its definition of anything which cannot be understood by rational knowledge as meaningless or superstitious, played a significant role in the development of an empiricist justification for the exclusion of the religious from the observed world, thus, consolidating secularism into the base knowledge of modern-time, which is now presented as neutral tool of descriptive analysis that is valid internationally. This justification, later known as the secularization thesis, went like this: since theology and metaphysics are deemed incompatible with positive knowledge, the religions of the past are losing their vitality as science no longer permits one to believe what the Church teaches; thus, faith will gradually

³⁰ Cavanaugh 2009, 4.

disappear or will decline into superstition as societies progress.³¹ This dictates the exclusion of any non-materialistic explanations as the basis of the political thought. Karl Marx's *opiate of the masses*, Sigmund Freud's *mass neurosis* and Frederic Nietzsche's *transvaluation of all values* are only few of the many prominent social theories who embrace this belief.³²

In conclusion, the combined weight of these influences resulted in a successful securitization of religion that transformed the nature of security and the politics of violence. To use Foucauldian terms, the disciplines, both as bodies of knowledge and as practices of fostering and administrating individuals and collective life, became by the nineteenth century united by the belief that to be secure means to be secular. From that point forward, a secularist concept of security had arisen, one that lends support to the nation-state by maintaining that religion spells insecurity and is an ill omen for world security. In this new interpretation, allowing religion a public dimension clashes with the very possibility of domestic and international order, hence, security cannot be achieved unless the public space is to be secularized and religion is to be firmly relegated to the private sphere and prevented from having any political power that is not derived from the state.³³

The adoption of the secular bias into modern-day security thinking

The secularism prescribed by the 19th century's concept of security is liberal through and through, first in its demand for secularization of the state and society as a prerequisite to stability, but also in its confidence that this meta-narrative reflects a transcendent and universal truth. It was this liberal orientation that contributed to the adoption of such interpretation of security after the Second World War. Williams rightly detected in an article from 2013 that the founders of political science in the US, profoundly shaken by the disasters of the two Wars and their apparent refutation of Enlightenment's promises of progress, peace, and the reign of reason, sought to create an international political theory that would defend the conditions necessary for the flourishing of the Western model of liberal state.³⁴ What Williams's account failed to consider is that developing a political theory which favored political liberalism was particularly aimed to address the security challenges that the Cold War poised to the Western liberal states. Hence, it should be argued that since liberal politics and secularism are tied in a Gordian Knot, adopting the Enlightenment's secularism, and the Enlightenment's secularist interpretation of security, helped the West to promote liberal ideology and liberal forms of government in the world as an instrument to win the Cold War, and thus, to enhance the overall security of the Occident liberal states.

³¹ Aron 1962.

³² Fox, 2013: 18

³³ Cavanaugh 2011, 4.

³⁴ Williams 2013.

Once again was secularism implemented as a security measure, and once more was a process of construction of narratives to follow in the form of the secularist turn of political science in the 1950s and 1960s, that by a juxtaposition of ideological and historical explanations, along with a selective reading has re-affirmed the sense of sacredness infused in the secularist narrative. For example, seminal political texts, like those of Hobbes and Locke, have been continually appropriated to authorize various readings of the secular, taken out of the historical context in which they were written. For instance, when discussing the political philosophy of John Locke, what has been presented as his philosophy on religion is what he wrote in the manuscript *Two Tracts on Government*, published for the first time in 1967, because this text, unlike the rest of Locke's philosophy, can be used to support the idea that the religion was the inciting force behind the bloodshed of the Wars of religion and hence should be marginalize from the public sphere. In a similar fashion, books I and II of Hobbes's *Leviathan* are usually included in every mandatory reading of introductory classes to political thought, and are analyzed in a way that lauds secular forms of governance, but books III and IV, which discuss the required nature of the Christian Common-wealth and advocate a confessional model in which there is public worship, are typically ignored, and sometimes not even included in the book's translations into other languages.³⁵

Consequently, by the second half of the twentieth century, in practice, as in theory, secularism has become the general conceptual apparatus of western society and the meta-narrative against which all security issues are measured; religion has been de-facto barred from the discourse of security and the conceptualization of national security has been limited within the bounds of physical threat and the capacity for it, meaning that whether other polities were or were not a threat is discussed in empirical terms of material military capabilities.³⁶ The growing role of secularism in the politics of security has led to a secularist bias embedded at the heart of modern security studies and of security thinking, and indeed, as mentioned earlier, a review of security policies since the start of the Cold War shows that this secular bias has underlined many security policies, from active secularization of the domestic arena of new states, to restrictions on religious institutions on the inter-national level, and to the efforts to promote liberal democracy in the Middle East. In some cases it also led to intelligence failures stemming from perceiving religion immaterial to the analysis of political scenes., such as the CIA's dismissal of the proposal made in early 1979 by Earnest Oney, a former CIA branch chief and an Iran expert, to focus on the religious aspect of Iranian politics, and to monitor the activities of prominent religious leaders. The CIA's reason to dismiss this suggestion was that '*it's only sociology*'.³⁷ The literature today is fraught with similar examples like the American misestimating of 'organized religious zeal' in the war carried against al-Qaeda³⁸ and of religion's impact on the overall worldview of key groups and individuals in Iraq during the Second Gulf

³⁵ For example, the translation of *Leviathan* to Hebrew: *Leviathan* has been translated for the first time in 1962 by the Hebrew University Press but included only the first two books of the original text. Only in 2009, Shalem Press published a copy of *Leviathan* in Hebrew including all of its four books. .

³⁶ Williams 1998, 215.

³⁷ Bill 1988.

³⁸Stemple 2013.

War³⁹. In the academia, the secularist bias of security thinking has manifested in discussing religion's impact on politics and security only in terms of religiously based conflict or religiously inspired violence.⁴⁰ The end of the Cold War in the victory of West, perceived by many as the victory of the liberal ideology, seemed at first to ensure the continuing dominance of the myth of religious violence in the security of states, but as post-modernist and post-secular discourses have grown more popular, these critical theories have started to challenge this dominance by drawing attention to the rising salience of religious beliefs in politics worldwide, and by broadening and deepening the subject matter of security. Given time, we might have seen an eventual rewriting of the working assumptions regarding religion's inherently violent role in destabilizing world order, yet, the immediate danger that religion seemed to pose to US national security by Al-Qaeda in the 11 September 2001 attacks pushed security thinking towards reinforcing this secular meta-narrative in its various expressions. I'd go as far as arguing that in the framework of the secularist meta-narrative, the impact of 11 September 2001 on security thinking equals that of the Wars of Religion in the way that it "re-branded" religion as a real threat to the powers of the time. Religion re-emerged as part of a security dilemma of global import, to which political leaders seem incapable of responding, and academics, incapable of theorizing.⁴¹

Fifteen years later, not much has changed. The proclaimed crusade to bring religion 'back' into IR theory has not succeeded much in knocking down the impenetrable boundaries of the secularist definition of security studies; The academic treatment of religion remains largely confined to the diagnosis of religiously motivated violence and intolerance in its various manifestations.⁴² That is because the restorative discourse fails to understand that when the 'objective' concept of security is political through and through, from its methodological precepts to its political orientation, equal only to the constructivist nature of religion, what the discipline needs is not the broadening of existing theories and presumptions, but the complete transformation of security thinking, including a rigorous examination of our presumptions on the nature of the security-religion nexus in today's system because, as I show henceforth, many of them are empirically inaccurate.

Evaluating the empirical validity of the secular bias's arguments

While being the product of speech-acts of political leaders and intellectuals does not necessarily imply that the secularist concept of security is biased, an empirical examination of the presumptions following this concept does. As aforementioned, the secularist discourse of security is constituted of four main presumptions linking secularism and security together. These presumptions, which are so embedded in Western thinking they have become a blue

³⁹ Stemple 2005; Sieple 2007.

⁴⁰ Camilleri 2012, 1120.

⁴¹ Gutkowski 2013, 125.

⁴² Camilleri 2012, 1120.

print that informs occidental decisionmakers, intellectuals and publics in matters of security, are in contrast with true political and societal phenomena. The first assumption, postulating that religion deterministically entails violence, is challenged by two types of research. The first line of research points out that in the course of modernity, ideologies and institutions labeled "secular" have been just as violent as those labeled "religious", if not more: The greatest violence in the modern age is attributable, not to conflicts between the historic "world religions", but to conflicts between the modern political religions of Jacobinism, Fascism, Nazism and Communism.⁴³ The second line of research shows that a public dimension of religion does not necessarily invoke violence. A plethora of studies conducted since the end of the Cold War on the relation between religion and conflicts found that the strongest tensions exist between different interpretations of the same religion, rather than between different religions, and that the most frequent and most violent armed conflicts are between states belonging to the same religion and to the same level of religiosity, despite Mark Juergensmeyer's prediction from 1993 that after the end of the Cold War most international conflicts today would be between religious and secular states.⁴⁴ These studies have additionally found that religion's relation to war is usually constitutive, not casual. Religion may shape participant and opponent identity, how participants talk about, or justify, conflict; the duration of a war, the legitimacy of weapons and targets; the timing and location of confrontations; tactical and strategic calculations, conceptions of victory and defeat; and the materiality and ideaspcape of soldier life including how they "dress, eat, fight and die". But rarely does religion instigate the conflict.⁴⁵ The claim that granting religion a public dimension necessitates violence is quite apparently over-simplistic when observing Iran's foreign policy. The Islamic Republic of Iran is considered by most scholars as the most religious state in the world, receiving, along with Saudi Arabia, the highest score in the indicators of state-religiosity provided by the Religion and State (RAS) project.⁴⁶ If a public expression of religion in a state indeed compels violence, then the high visibility of religion in Iranian politics would have dictated that Iran would be in conflict with all of its neighbors since none shares its denomination nor level of state-religiosity. However, in actuality, the Iranian government promotes extreme Islamic movements only in those neighboring countries with which the official relations are poor— such as Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan—but not in countries with which relations are good — such as with Turkmenistan⁴⁷.

Historical evidence also refutes the second presumption of the secularist discourse, that ever since Westphalia, the West has separated religion and state. This is what Eric Patterson called the '*myth of the secular state*'. In actuality, the western liberal state is not as secular as the secular meta-narrative would like us to believe, because despite what the state-creation narrative tells us, religion was never truly separated from the European states. The state that emerged in post-Westphalian Europe was not secular, but confessional, a state in which there's a national Church subordinated to the civil authorities and regulating some of the aspects of life

⁴³ Gorski and Turkmen-Dervisoglu 2013, 138.

⁴⁴ Sandal 2012; Bar-Maoz 2011; Juergensmeyer 1993.

⁴⁵ Hassner 2011; Little 2006; Patterson 2013.

⁴⁶ Fox 2008.

⁴⁷ Tisdall 2006

in the state. This is still the case today, as Jonathan Fox elaborately demonstrates in his book *A World Survey of Religion and the State*. With the exception of the US and France, almost every Western state gives preferential treatment to a major religion or religions over the others. To give but one example, among the twenty-six western countries included in RAS dataset, only the US and France do not support religious education in public schools. That includes states that declared separation of church and state in their constitutions, such as Australia, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain; in these countries, with the exception of Germany, the religious teachers in public schools are clergy or appointed by religious institutes. Some of these countries also collect taxes that are passed along to religious institutions in accordance to the citizen's declared faith.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is evident that the idea that there is one Western model of secular state that has a complete separation of religion from the politics of security is another invention of the secular meta-narrative, one that has been frequently employed in the discourse of the West regarding non-western states, mainly towards the Middle East, a point I would like to explore in the succeeding paragraph.

The argument that Islam is incompatible with a secular state, predating September 2001 but employed most frequently after, has drawn primarily from the thought of the American Orientalist Bernard Lewis. When Lewis first coined the term 'clash of civilization' at his 1990 article *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, he was trying to explain what he perceived as a collective hatred of the Muslim world toward the US. According to Lewis, such hatred was not a response to a certain American policy or action but a historic reaction against 'our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both'.⁴⁹ In his reasoning, the Muslim world never learned to separate religion and politics because it was spared the experience of the Wars of Religion. The result is a clash of civilizations between the secular West and a Muslim World that cannot abide by the Western separation of religion and politics. This theory has greatly affected the American thinking on the Middle East, and Former Vice President Dick Cheney acknowledged Lewis's intellectual influence behind the invasion of Iraq in 2002.⁵⁰ Thereafter, it has become very common to argue that Islam as a theology cannot accommodate the notion of a secular state. Here is not the place to go into a full exploration of Arab secularism, as its history goes back to the nineteenth century, but sufficient to say that in most Arab states, with the exception of the Gulf countries, there is a vast degree of separation of religion and state and a tradition of secularism rooted so deep that even the rise to power of Islamic forces in the wake of the Arab Spring does not seem to shaken it, as the case of Egypt and so pointedly demonstrates.⁵¹ It should be noted that even before the backlash to the election of Islamic parties coming from the secular forces in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, the elected Islamic parties did very little towards the establishment of a theocracy, and in fact took a moderate stance on the separation of politics and religion and have been implementing

⁴⁸ Fox 2008.

⁴⁹ Lewis 1990, 60.

⁵⁰ Cavanaugh 2009, 196.

⁵¹ Recommended literature on Arab secularism: Salem 1996; Roy 2012; Xiangang 2013.

secular legislative, administrative, and judicial principles. That is because the political space they have entered was formatted by certain constraints put there either by the secular mechanisms of the state or by the opposition of the military, bureaucratic and professional middle-class that controls most of the levers of power, and have a fairly secular worldview constructed around various nationalist formulations.⁵² All things considered, those who claim that Islam is incompatible with a secular state have only to study the history of secularism of in the Arab world to realize the error of such a claim.

The case of the Arab Spring also disproves the third presumption of the secularist bias, arguing that secularization has to precede democratization, which must also be, by definition, liberal. The Arab Spring was mainly a democratization movement, yet, as Olivier Roy points out, there was no flowering of "liberal Islam" preceding the spread of democratic ideas in the Middle East that led to the civil revolutions of the Arab spring. Moreover, many staunch secularists in the Middle East are far from being democrats since they would like Islamist leaders and movements to be repressed, while fundamentalist religious actors, such as the Islamists of Tunisia or even the Salafists of Egypt, could become reluctant agents of a form of specifically political secularization that should in no way be confused with a secularization of society.⁵³ Hence, the presumption of Western thought that equates "secularism" with "democracy", and that the Middle East has to be secularized in order to be democratized, needs to be put to rest, not at the least because it does not abide well with the history of the West itself. The Founding Fathers of the United States were not secularists and they advocate the separation of church and state as a way of protecting religion from government, not the reverse; the French Third Republic was established in 1871 by a predominantly conservative, Catholic, and monarchist parliament that had just crushed the Paris Commune (although in later years the Third Republic was dominated by anti-clerical Radicals and Socialists, and was marked by *Laïcité*); and the concept of Christian democracy was developed in Europe not because the Catholic Church wanted to promote secular values, but because that was the only way for it to maintain political influence.⁵⁴

The last presumption of the secularist bias to be evaluated is the enlightened belief that all societies would inevitably be secularized along a linear path as they modernize. This presumption has been among the first conventional wisdoms on religion to be challenged by sociologists and political scientists, when during the 1980s there was a perceivable return of religion into the public space. As their studies show, not only has religion's political influence been revitalized and on the rise all over the world since the 1980s, with exception of Western Europe, but it has resurged with the help of the very same forces that secularization theorists thought would lead to its demise: the unprecedented flow of people, ideas, commerce and technology all over the globe.⁵⁵ As Barry Rubin explained, 'the Modernization process, rather

⁵² Roy 2012; Xiangang 2013.

⁵³ Roy 2012, 5-18.

⁵⁴ Roy 2012, 6-7.

⁵⁵ Haynes 2013, 35; Thomas 2003; Camilleri 2012: 1021-1022.

than causing religion to weaken and disappear, often makes its public role stronger and a more necessary part of the process of state-building or revolutionary transformation.⁵⁶

Considering the above, it is undeniable that not only does contemporary security thought have a secularist agenda, but its theorization on the link between security and religion is vastly off the mark. The consequences of this shortcoming of the secularity of security are numerous. Elizabeth Hurd lists three policy consequences of Western secularist views on the security evaluation of the Islamic world: a profound skepticism in policymaking circle about the possibility of success for any oppositional politics within Muslim-majority societies that use Islamic language; any attempts to renegotiate the boundaries of the religious and the political that actually are taking place in Muslim-majority societies are dismissed as unnatural and ill-fitting attempts to realize a modern secularist world; and the secularist framing of religion and politics discourages engagement between secularists and moderate 'civil Islamist'⁵⁷. In more general terms, the secularity of modern security thinking ascribes an extreme focus on extremist expressions of religion; a tendency to view religions as monolithic and static; a perception of religious players as irrational and violent-prone; and a tendency to treat the need to export the separation of state and religion as an equal priority with establishing peace and security. Additionally, the false image of national security as not including religion is dangerous because it causes states to concentrate on military threats and to ignore other and perhaps even more harmful dangers, thus, reducing their total security.

Implications for the Art

There are several implications for the study of security issues. First and foremost, the field has to address the inadequacies within the concept of "secular" and "secularism" before it can tackle questions regarding the security-religion nexus. It is clear that security studies can no longer conceptualize the "secular" as a mere medium for discourse that is open to all. That "secular" has content. Reconceptualizing these terms is imperative not only so the field upholds scientific standards, but also for the sake of advancing more peaceful international relations. For instance, if Colin Dueck's argument is true, and Americans tend to favor military actions either for liberal reasons or not at all, the current interchangeability of "liberal" and "secular" in Western discourse spells the continuity of the divisive worldview between the West and the Rest.⁵⁸

In addition, any analysis of security issues regarding the Siamese twins of religion and secularism should be focused at the mezzo-level, i.e., the space between secular states and religious societies. At the mezzo-level, for example, lays the main difference between the Muslim world and the West, which, as shown above, are quite similar in the micro and macro

⁵⁶ Rubin 1995.

⁵⁷ Hurd 2008.

⁵⁸ Dueck 2008.

levels. In other words, the gap between the Muslim world and the West is mostly in the religion/politics category rather than in the religion/state category.⁵⁹ Here, again, the case of Iran can embody this point best: While modern Iran is officially closer to theocracy than any other state except Saudi Arabia, all indicators suggest that the Iranian society has become more modern and secular over the years. For example, although a law adopted after 1979 allows girls as young as nine to be taken as brides, the average age at which Iranian women marry has continued to rise and now stands at about twenty-five.⁶⁰ So even when Shari'a law is supposedly implemented, we do not see a return to a traditional society. That is because official state-mechanisms are not the only force shaping the nature of a society, as is also evident in the opposite case of the US, where the state-mechanisms are very secular but there is a constant rise in not only in personal religiosity but in its impact on social discourse as well. Focusing on religion as a societal institution is also greatly relevant in the face of the rise of Muslim cultural politics across Europe, and in particular in Britain, France and the Netherlands, and the need to find theoretical frameworks to measure its influence on current and future security politics.

Last but not least, the discourse on state-secularity ought to leave behind the Weberian approach that sees a division between "the enchantment of religion" and the "secular social remainder", and embrace instead the Durkheimian approach that perceives religion as nothing but the social⁶¹. More accurately, religion is nothing but the political, as religion's impact on politics and on security policies has always been a derivative of political circumstances. There is no binary division between secular and religious states, or between Western Democracy and Islamic Theocracy. Instead, there is a spectrum of secularity. Its imagination as dichotomous is not only inaccurate but also dangerous and reckless, as it carries in its wings the legalization of violence against the evil "Other". Thus, I second Pippa Norris's call for the unpacking of the complex concept of 'secular democracy' for the sake of a better typology.⁶²

In lieu of a conclusion

This paper presents the *Historia Sacra* behind secularism becoming the security Gospel of modern time and establishes that contemporary security thinking is heavily saturated with preexisting assumptions regarding religion. Going past the common explanations on the neglect of religion by IR theories, I argue that security studies do not lack a grasp of religious practices; rather, they are secularist practices on their own. Their reason for the marginalization of religion do not arise from the belief that such action is the best measure to secure peace between and inside nations; but out of the thesis that secularism is the best way to legitimize certain political ideologies.

⁵⁹ Norris 2011, 4.

⁶⁰ Roy 2012, 10.

⁶¹ Cavanaugh 2009, 159.

⁶² Norris 2011.

Undeniably, there is a dire need for a rigorous empirical testing of security studies' presumptions on the nature of religion and secularism, made all too urgent by the continuous disintegration of secular regimes all over the Middle East and the prominent religiosity of their contenders. Raymond Aron argued that Communism is the first intellectuals' religion to have succeeded, but it can be argued that the religion of secularism preceded it.⁶³ The revolution created by the General Theory of Relativity liberated the field of Physics from many metaphysical-philosophical categories that were still embedded in the Newtonian Physics. Political studies are still awaiting their own liberation from the many philosophical constructs holding the field back from achieving its purpose of securing lasting security.⁶⁴ Leaving the current situation unchanged, history would portray modernity as nothing more than the substitution of one unscientific base of knowledge with another.

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⁶³ Aron 1962, 279.

⁶⁴ Leibowitz 1976, 12.

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