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Islam and the postsecular

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Abstract. The language of the 'postsecular' acknowledges the enduring presence of faith in politics, repudiating secularisation theses claiming diminution or privatisation of religion in social and political life. In cognitive and experiential worlds, those presumably unfettered by these conceptions (for example, the Islamic Cultural Zones or ICZs), the postsecular presents a different order of challenge and possibility. The term ICZs refers to Muslim majority areas informed by transnational subjectivities loosely connecting varied Islamic societies around symbolic commonality, memory, and historical experience. The term stresses the plurality of Islamic cultural experience, albeit distinguished by recognisable semiotic markers, without essentialising Islamic identity. This article questions the hegemonic view pervasive in both secular and postsecular theorising of the fiction of immutability of faith in the ICZs and recognises its rupture and displacement under conditions of late modernity. The ontological dislocation in the character of religion itself under conditions of late modernity opens up the possibility to account for the assumed resistance of Islam to secular modernity, but also to explain Islam's imbrications in politics read under the sign of Political Islam. Paradoxically, under the condition of late modernity, a more homogenised Islam appears to crystallise in the ICZs at odds with an 'open' Islam.

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Introduction

Diverse conceptions of the 'postsecular' have now entered the discursive spaces of Western social and political theory, spaces previously usurped by secular reason.[1] This is not a new occurrence, but on the heels of a deepening crisis of liberal modernity

* I am grateful to Luca Mavelli, Fabio Petito, three anonymous reviewers, and Ritu Vij for their invaluable comments on an earlier draft. All remaining errors are strictly mine.

[1] Apparently, the 'postsecular' impulse has come mainly from philosophers, not theologians or sociologists. A burgeoning literature on postsecular theorising is now available with notable contributions by leading social thinkers, including Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2007); Alain Badiou, *St. Paul: The Foundations of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); John Caputo, *On Religion* (London and New York, Routledge, 2001); Hent de Vries and Lawrence Sullivan (eds), *Political Theologies in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006); Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*,

marked by its historical failures to speak *for* religious contexts of alterity and widespread politicisation of religious subjectivities on a world scale,[2] the 'postsecular' turn promises alternative sites of engagement between politics and religion, renouncing 'religious decline as the telos of history'.[3] These sites provide new thinking spaces, both to dispel the hegemony of secular frames of capture, and to generate new vernaculars more responsive to local religious context. It is, however, unclear how postsecular awareness could shape International Relations (IR) as theory and practice.[4] A 'derivative discourse'[5] in the non-European world, secularism acquired a familiar currency in shaping models to banish religion from politics. The 'postsecular' turn underscores the limits of those secular models.[6] Recognition of limits, however, only changes the perceptual field in which religion can be interrogated, not vitiate its materialisation as an assorted practice conditioned by circumstance and context.

Assuming diversity of metaphysical perspectives, the 'postsecular' is likely to diverge from its Euro-American modularity in other cultural contexts: the character of postsecularity would simply mirror *cultural* variance; Islam presenting no exception. On received analysis, the 'return of religion' (captured in the generic terminology

ed. and Introduction Gil Anidjar (New York and London: Routledge, 2002); Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essay*s, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008); Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. G. C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Hans Joas, *Do We Need Religion? On the Experience of Self-Transcendence*, trans. Alex Skinner (Boulder, Colorado and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2008); John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007; Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A|theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Also see Philip Blond (ed.), *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology* (London: Routledge, 1998); John D. Caputo and Gianni Vattimo, *After the Death of God*, ed., Jeffrey W. Robbins, Afterword Gabriel Vahanian (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and Creston Davis, John Milbank, and Slavoj Žižek (eds), *Theology and the Political: The New Debate* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2005). Caputo's insight aptly sums up the 'postsecular' impulse: 'A post-secular philosophy, Caputo explains, emerges as a result of the death of God, spelling "the death of any kind of monism or reductionism, *including secularism*"', *On Religion*, p. 133, emphasis added.

[2] José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (3rd edn, rev. and updated, Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2003); Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[3] José Casanova, 'Secularization Revisited: A Reply to Talal Asad', in Charles Hirschkind and David Scott (eds), *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press), p. 18.

[4] As with secularism, the discursive field of postsecularity remains principally Euro-American. Secularism, as Joseph A. Camilleri in this Special Issue reminds us, 'is a distinctly European or Western project, which originates with the Westphalian response to the wars of religion in Europe and eventually adopts the Enlightenment's predilection for reason as the defining principle governing the public sphere'. See Joseph A. Camilleri, 'Postsecularist discourse in an "age of transition"'.

[5] Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1986).

[6] It is important to stress the plurality of secular models, avoiding generic understandings produced by hegemonic variants of secularisation theory. See Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Also see Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini (eds), *Secularisms* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2008). Casanova cautions against reading secularisation as a single theory. Rather, it is best disaggregated into three propositions: '(1) secularization as a differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, (2) secularization as a decline of religious beliefs and practices, and (3) secularization as a marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere', José Casanova, 'Secularization Revisited', p. 12.

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of 'resurgence', 'renewal', or 'fundamentalism', with the prefix 'Islamic' attached to it)[7] merely authenticates the resistance of Islam to modernity (or its by-products, including secularism). The putative failure of secular reason to shape Muslim polity, society, or culture offers few surprises; the postsecular on this reading cannot say anything novel about the ICZs;[8] these zones have been *de facto* 'postsecular'. Challenging this normalised perspective, this article explores the principal forms in which the 'post-secular' resonates in the ICZs. A more reliable approach to scrutinise the 'post-secular' in the ICZs, it is argued, is not to see the postsecular condition as 'a return of religion', but religion's 'rupture' *and* 'displacement'. The former connotes temporal discontinuity characterised by breakdowns in established routine, pattern, and sequence. The latter entails a shift (*Verschiebung*) in spatial terrains. 'Displacement' suggests an unconscious redirection from potentially disruptive effects to familiar sites of ontological safety. For present purposes, however, the term is used quite broadly to register the impact of deterritorialisation on political identity.[9] It is not the absence of the postsecular that characterises the ICZs, but Islam's *particular* instantiation in a globalising context. A key feature of that process is a pull towards more homogenised expressions of Belief to the detriment of multivocality; producing paradoxically, more fracture than unity, as well as greater reliance on secular reason (including instrumental rationality) to materialise religious desires. Viewed, thus, within a broader geo-epistemic frame, the 'postsecular' is not simply a moment of self-transcendence within Western understandings of religion, but a highly differentiated globalised spatio-temporal condition showing localised cultural markers.[10]

The burdens of engaging Islamic alterity within hegemonic frames are familiar enough: the picture of a religiously *overdetermined* cultural tradition, unyielding either to mutation or transformation.[11] This representation naturalises Muslim hostility and resistance to secularity, and by extension, makes postsecularity appear redundant: without experiencing secularisation, as is the case with its Euro-American counterpart,

[7] The deployment of these terms alongside the 'Islamic' prefix fixes heterodox and fluid phenomena into neatly manufactured containers giving scarce justification for further interrogation or analysis.

[8] The terminology of 'Islamic Cultural Zones' or 'ICZs' is used throughout this article to refer to Muslim majority areas informed by transnational subjectivities loosely connecting varied Islamic societies around symbolic commonality, memory, and historical experience. The term stresses the plurality of Islamic cultural experience, albeit distinguished by recognisable semiotic markers, without essentialising Islamic identity.

[9] The use of psychoanalytical terms to political analysis is not without its hazards, including the charge of 'methodological individualism'. For present purposes, the deployment is to register principally a *spatial* shift in politics which inevitably entails psychic dimensions, including disorientation and closure. The latter may have significant effects on politics. To avoid methodological individualism, one scholar places these effects under the rubric of 'cultural schizophrenia'. See Darius Shayegan, *Cultural Schizophrenia: Islamic Societies Confronting the West*, trans. John Howe (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997). Another problem with a reliance on 'displacement' in the present context is the impression of temporal fixity within the ICZs, compensated only by a spatial shift. Recognising this problem, the notion of 'rupture' is used to dispel that impression. Hence, 'rupture' and 'displacement' are conjoined to record the specific character of the postsecular in the ICZs.

[10] Needless to say, in challenging hegemonic frames of understanding the relation between Islam and post-secularity, the discussion follows a more schematic format. The spatial and temporal heterogeneity of Islamic practice cannot obviously survive the bluntness of this choice.

[11] This sentiment is pervasive in both Orientalist and post-Orientalist (sociologically-oriented) interpretations of societal processes in the ICZs. For the former, see Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003). Ernest Gellner is a good representative of post-Orientalist mappings of Islam. See his important work, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

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the 'return of religion'[12] in the ICZs appears only as a confirmation of the ever-present postsecular. Faith requires no defensive rationalisations to provide alternate idioms to envision politics, sociability, or cultural production. This picture of the world of Islam as an unchanging or resistant Faith,[13] either outside of modern time[14] or operating on a schizoid track defined by a more or less fixed Tradition-Modernity dyad,[15] makes the postsecular condition wholly superfluous, if entirely transparent.

The present contribution challenges the apparent irrelevance or transparency of the postsecular condition in the ICZs. One option is to refute 'immutability theses' in favour of some variant of secularisation theory. Acknowledging alternative secularities (distinct from the Western ideal-type), the return of religion can then appear not as 'return', but as rejection of secular reason. This option is not entertained for reasons that become clear later. A second possibility is to rethink the nature of Faith itself within the ICZs, outside the 'religious-secular' container altogether. On this alternate reading adopted here, Islamic political, social, or cultural desires do not swing between twin poles of religiosity and secularity, but materialise ruptures and displacements within translocal social and life-worlds. Firstly, the meaning of religion and, by extension, the so-called 'religious-secular' divide in Islam, does not mirror its monotheistic counterparts. Both *din* (religion) and *dunya* (world) come under the jurisdiction of Faith. This is not a tired, recycled view of a symbiosis between the sacred and the profane in Islam, but a concession to a different cartography: the secular *cannot* exist, but the sovereignty of the sacred allows discriminations between different species of human affairs, on the one hand, and the Divine, on the other. What passes as the 'worldly' is essentially the mundane, the everyday, the uneventful quotidian. Its relative autonomy is acknowledged, subject to its compliance to particular rules of performativity. Yet, this is not a world without norms, nor the lack of religion, since it is Faith that affords the general principle which states that not all spheres of sociability and human exchange are equal. The 'secular' in the Islamic domain stands *inside* Faith, yet *outside* Belief.[16] Secondly, the fractured character of social worlds in the ICZs encompasses Belief and the 'religious-secular' divide, producing new forms of religiosity that is given the appellation of 'Political Islam'.[17]

[12] Bernard Lewis, 'The Return of Islam', *Commentary* (January 1976), pp. 39–49.

[13] According to Ernest Gellner: 'One of the most conspicuous and significant facts concerning our contemporary world is that, while the sociologists' secularization thesis is all in all valid, one major part of the world remains absolutely secularization-resistant: the world of Islam. Today, the hold of Islam over the societies and over the societies and the minds of Muslims is at least as great as it was one or two centuries ago; in certain ways, it is probably *more*, not less, powerful.' 'The Civil and the Sacred', The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, delivered at Harvard University (20–1 March 1990), p. 318. {http://stevereads.com/papers_to_read/civil_and_the,_sacred_gellner.pdf} accessed 30 December 2011. Gellner explicates a similar argument in Ernest Gellner, 'Religion and the Profane', *Eurozine* (28 August 2000), {http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2000-8-28-gellner-en.html} accessed 1 January 2012.

[14] Kimberly Hutchings, *Time and World Politics: Thinking the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

[15] Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002).

[16] This raises the important question not only about the operational code that defines religion, but the larger issue of the lines separating the sacred and the profane. The notion of piety may offer an opening into this wider conversation. I am thankful to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this to the forefront.

[17] John L. Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Nazih N. Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (New York: Routledge 1991); Olivier

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The discussion proceeds in four short sections to explicate these points. The first section addresses the 'myth' of secularity in IR to help situate the problematic location of Islam in received narratives. This location is sanctioned both by Orientalist framings of Islamic alterity as well as IR's self-referentiality as a 'secular' enterprise. This intuition is pursed in the second section, which features the apparently awkward staging of the postsecular in the ICZs. Section three explores ruptures and displacements of religion in these zones under conditions largely *not of their own choosing*.[18] The retrenchment of an 'open' Faith' in favour of an increasingly 'closed' Islam congeals the effects of rupture and displacement. The final section of the article develops the implications of the postsecular turn for IR drawn from the previous sections.

IR and postsecularity

The story of the postsecular in IR is complex and ambiguous, illustrated in part in recent debates over political theology.[19] As these debates highlight, the question of religion remains unsettled despite the self-congratulatory claims of secularisation theorists.[20] It is, however, IR's 'secular' self-image built around specific historical signposts, notably Westphalia that provides the hegemonic template.[21] Once attached to power, self-images in any field of inquiry, including IR, can have enormous heuristic and political effects. A potential effect of hegemonic self-imaging is to ensure the erasure or silencing of alternatives.[22] In canonical accounts drawn from secular reason, the 'return of religion to IR', thus, implicitly acknowledges its extended

Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994); Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, trans. Anthony F. Roberts (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (London: Routledge, 2007); Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2008).

[18] 'Men [and women] make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.' Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (London: The Electric Book Company 2001 [orig. pub. 1852]), p. 7.

[19] Louiza Odysseos and Fabio Petito (eds), *The International Political Thought of Carl Schmitt: Terror, Liberal War and the Crisis of Global Order* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Mika Luomaaho, 'Political Theology, Anthropomorphism, and Person-hood of the State: The Religion of IR', *International Political Sociology*, 3 (2009), pp. 293–309; and Nicholas Guilhot, 'American Katechon: When Political Theology Became International Theory', *Constellations*, 17 (2010), pp. 224–53.

[20] Secularisation theorists distort Weber, as Habermas points out: 'The theory of modernization performs two abstractions on Weber's concept of "modernity". It dissociates "modernity" from its modern European origins and stylizes it into a spatio-temporally neutral model for processes of social development in general. Furthermore, it breaks the internal connection between modernity and the historical context of Western rationalism, so that processes of modernization can no longer be conceived of as rationalization, as the historical objectification of rational structures.' Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity), p. 2.

[21] Westphalia as the originary moment of the birth of IR, however, is open to question. See Benjamin de Carvalho, Halvard Leira, and John B. Hobson, 'The Big Bangs of IR: The Myths That Your Teachers Tell You about 1648 and 1919', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 39 (2011), pp. 735–58. Osiander also shows that cuius region, eius religio was actually stronger in the Augsburg Treaty than in the Westphalian ones already 20 years ago. See Andreas Osiander, 'Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth', *International Organization*, 55 (2001), pp. 251–87. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for these points.

[22] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *The Silencing of the Past: Power and Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

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homelessness.[23] Notwithstanding its particularistic nature, IR's secular self-image continues to serve as a universal reference. Until recently, the *religious* side of IR has remained marginal.[24] The 'secular' promise of Westphalia was *essentially* a Protestant compromise,[25] designed to preserve the religious autonomy of the 'inside' while spurning religion's 'outside' presence.[26] *As* international relations, however, the Protestant settlement carries with it sizeable religious and cultural baggage. In claims invoking humanity, human rights, sovereignty, ethics or justice, the modularity of this settlement has produced not only specific ideals and repertoires of expectations concerning state-building, diplomatic practice, rule-making, and general international conduct, but also preferred ways of structuring 'domestic' society aligned to the intimations of (Western) modernity; the latter despite assumed Westphalian exemptions for that sphere. The 'secular' character of IR has engendered the fiction of an autonomous, 'individuated' political subject, one who provides the measure to gauge the march of freedom, progress, democracy, or development across borders. The exclusionary effects of institutionalised secular expectations are not too remote to unearth.[27] Buttressed by Orientalist frames of apprehending 'religious' others, secularity rapidly evolves into a 'standard of civilisation', both for separating 'insiders' from 'outsiders' in international society, as well as for producing the hierarchicalisation of political community.[28] The confluence of these horizontal and vertical dimensions mediated by Orientalism continues to cast its imposing shadow on international practice. The promise and limits of postsecularity, therefore, can be better assessed, not only in relation to the failing fortunes of secular reason, but to Orientalism's durability and scope.

[23] On the 'return of religion' to IR, see notably John L. Esposito and Michael Watson (eds), *Religion and the Global Order* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000); Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Jeffrey Haynes (eds), *Religion and Politics: Critical Concepts*, 4 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008); Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (eds), *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion*; and David Westerlund (ed.), *Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics* (London: Hurst, 2002). For a broader picture of the terrain of 'secularising' currents, see R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Peter L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999); William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997); Pippa Norris and Ronald Ingelhart, *Sacred and the Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[24] See Luoma-aho, 'Political Theology, Anthropomorphism, and Person-hood of the State'; Nicholas Guilhot, 'Postwar American Political Science and the Birth of IR Theory', *International Political Sociology*, 2 (2008), pp. 281–304; and Daniel Philpott, 'The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations', *World Politics*, 52 (2000), pp. 206–45.

[25] Casanova links the secular to developments within European Christianity. 'Protestant Christianity is intrinsically implicated in the development of secular modernity. One could say that the existence of a theological discourse of the "saeculum" within medieval Christianity was the very condition of possibility and the point of departure of the process of secularization.' 'Secularization Revisited', p. 23.

[26] As Calhoun stresses, 'The Peace of Westphalia did not make states secular. It established the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* – who rule, his religion.' Craig Calhoun, 'Rethinking Secularism', *The Hedgehog Review* (Fall 2010), p. 41.

[27] Judith Butler, 'Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 59 (2008), pp. 1–23.

[28] R. B. J. Walker, 'The Hierarchalization of Political Community', *Review of International Studies*, 25 (1999), pp. 151–6.

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The cumulative effect of the 'postsecular' turn on global horizons is yet to be ascertained.[29] As other contributors to this volume suggest, the postsecular is linked to the exhaustion of secular modernity marked by recognition of its failures to order social, cultural, or political life drawn principally from rationalities ensconced in frames of immanence. Alternatively, postsecularity is attached to sectors of the global condition in which religion resists eviction despite the consolidation of materialist civilisation on a world scale. Religion continues to provide cultural defence, escape, succour, and a resource of meaning to the majority of the world's population. Paradoxically, postsecular sentiment reflexively confirms both the historical transformation wrought by 'secularising' processes *and* their absolute limits. The ubiquity of the 'immanent frame'[30] in contemporary life speaks to the first; the inability of this frame to afford answers to deeper existential questions, to the second.[31] Without secularity, no postsecularity; but a secularity that is increasingly unable to explicate the durability of transcendence in human affairs, except the one that is couched in received claims of secular reason: religious attachments as residues of tradition, irrationality, or 'incomplete' modernisation.

Disguising its religious underpinnings, secular imaginaries have provided much of the philosophical and substantive content of IR,[32] both in its self-understandings as a discipline as well as in international practice. Rational verities apparently purified of religion have continued to structure normative ideals and practical conduct of agents. In disparate arenas of state-building, democracy, or development, 'secular' rationality authors and authorises participation in international society to the exclusion of alternative cultural (read 'religious') expectations; 'reasons of state' not 'value rationality' being at the core of relations across borders. The master narrative for IR remains, it seems, the quest for the good life secured within an 'immanent frame'. The arrival of postsecularity does not revive religious consciousness, but places it, on Taylor's reading, alongside secular reason as another option in imagining normative futures and present concerns.

The main effect of postsecularist thinking in IR is the recognition that, as Camilleri notes, 'not just the Enlightenment version of secularism but also the Westphalian conception of the state' is under scrutiny. Yet, to the degree that the appeal and constrictions of postsecularity are spatially dispersed, it is unclear whether the Westphalian state is under active reassessment *everywhere*. Rather, discussions of the character of secularity in the public sphere have mainly sought understandings of a seemingly problematic, vague, and fluid relationship between religion and modernity.[33]

[29] Camilleri's critical intervention highlights 'the need to rethink the simplistic separation of religion and politics and the consequent need to redefine political space and authority; the unveiling of some of the cognitive and normative underpinnings of distrust, verging on rupture, between Islam and the West; and, perhaps, most importantly, the search for a new conception of political pluralism that can more effectively address the challenges posed by rising levels of religious and cultural diversity'. See Camilleri, 'Postsecularist Discourse in an ''Age of Transition''''.

[30] Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

[31] A problem with secularisation theory is the assumption, as Taylor notes that 'the motivation to religious life in human beings is very shallow and not very profound, so that religious life is tied to certain sociological forms that existed earlier. And when these sociological forms are destabilized by modernity, religion disappears as well.' See 'A Secular Age: Akbar Ganji in conversation with Charles Taylor', *The Immanent Frame, Social Science Research Council*, {http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/12/23/akbar-ganji-in-conversation-with-charles-taylor/} accessed 21 December 2011.

[32] This point is explicated in Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*.

[33] Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Multiple Modernities as Limits to Secular Europeanization', in Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein (eds), *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1–33.

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For the most part, this relationship has been interrogated within 'national' boundaries. Postsecularist discourse has neglected, as Camilleri notes, 'the rise of identity politics of which the resurgence of religion is but one striking manifestation, and the limits of modernity that spell the slow but probably irreversible demise of the grand narrative associated with the Modern project'.[34]

Islam and the postsecular

Is postsecularity merely a signpost for Europe's anxiety and response to Islam's unavoidable presence in its midst, a Europe unable or unwilling to absorb Muslim alterity either in the public sphere or social relationality? These questions are easy to pose against received binaries and discriminations between the traditional and the modern; the religious and the secular; or totality and particularity.[35] In mainstream analyses of Islam, naturalised common sense readily displaces complex answers. Furthermore, in a politically charged climate of civilisational divergence,[36] cognitive certainty furnishes defences against ontological insecurity; the greater the paranoia, greater is the need to lean on the familiar and the known: in this case, Islam, the familiar Other manifesting its true disposition, except only now visible across the full spectrum of the international. In this context, the difficulty of forging alternative thinking spaces becomes readily apparent. Can the 'postsecular turn' unfreeze common sense?

Although postsecularity draws no territorial boundaries, in relation to Islam it helps comprehend European anxieties and responses about an inassimilable Other. Islam's assumed position within the broader culture of 'misrepresentation, disadvantage, and discrimination',[37] makes postsecularity a potential source for generating a new cultural code of inclusion. Recent proposals to establish this code, however, tend to reproduce cultural hierarchies embedded in strategies of translation.[38] The limits of postsecularity, nonetheless, become acutely visible not necessarily in attempts to impose stringent criteria for including religious speech and subjectivities attached to that speech, but in reinforcing the otherness of Islam. Cultural and civic forms of

[34] The slowness of its demise, however, does not necessarily diminish modernity's appeal for all, especially to those seeking emancipation from material want, alternate horizons of connectivity and belonging, or escape from 'ascriptive' identities.

[35] However, as Casanova notes, 'Self-definitions of modernity are tautological insofar as secular differentiation is precisely what defines a society as modern.' 'Secularization Revisited', p. 20.

[36] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

[37] Humayun Ansari, *Muslims in Britain* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002), p. 4.

[38] Jürgen Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 14 (2006), pp. 1–25. A principal flaw of several extant dialogical approaches is their inherent propensity to reduce the problem of difference to language, stressing the need for translating incommensurable speech. The problem lies deeper. It is not merely one of language, even of metaphysical incompatibility, which are certainly important, but more crucially, one of recognising the heterogeneity of immanence/transcendence complexes in different cultural settings. In other words, postsecularity can offer more fruitful avenues of engagement not only if its proponents appreciate the limits of rationality, but also the multiplicity of attempts to reconcile rival claims of immanence and transcendence. For an excellent discussion of these and related issues, see Luca Mavelli, *Europe's Encounter With Islam: The Secular and the Postsecular* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

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citizenship sought by postsecular thinkers do not overcome the problem of difference.[39] Rather, the inassimilable otherness of Islam and the (new) requirements of inclusion both reveal and disguise the cultural makeup of postsecular theorising.

The obvious challenges postsecularity faces in reference to Islam are the effects of the 'secular' point of departure intrinsic to these conceptions. The new cultural code promised by the postsecular is contingent upon specific readings of the career of secularity. To be of general value, the new cultural code cannot merely reproduce *particular* temporalities inhabiting the world of secularity, but recognise suppressed heterodox religious desires subsumed under the 'deprivatization of religion';[40] a universal temporal reference can impede appreciation of other forms of negotiations between religiosity and secularity. Extant conceptions of secularity, secularisation, or secularism inevitably find their originary impetus in Protestant Christian settlements negotiated *within* European cultural spaces and *within* specific histories.[41] The universalisation of secularity, akin to notions of modernity's global diffusion, comes at the price of marginalising alternative histories and sites.[42] Postsecular theorising appears to reproduce this social imaginary.

To the extent that conceptions of 'the religious' or 'the secular' are fluid and unevenly distributed across time and locale, the advent of postsecularity can only be partial and arbitrary; its meanings heterodox and malleable.[43] Acknowledgement of other temporalities does not mean a recycling of relativist notions in which the non-European (read Islamic) cultural zones have preserved their religious essence, uncontaminated by processes of flux, change, or transformation of social and life-worlds – a view basic to Orientalist mappings, but to concede heterogeneity and plasticity of cultural programmes in which 'the religious' intermingles with the 'secular', on the one hand, and to recognise alternative temporalities, on the other. In that sequence, the conception of religion itself needs denaturalisation.[44] Postsecularity opens up new spaces for recognising suppressed religious vernaculars within Western modernity as a condition of possibility to be attentive to alternative cultural programmes, including their religious idiom. Yet, it cannot serve as a blanket concession to the immutability of religious sentiment; but help recognise its unsettled character here and elsewhere. Reflexive postsecularity would show an awareness of cultural particularism inhabiting its own universe.

[39] Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).

[40] José Casanova, *Public Religion in a Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), especially chap. 8.

[41] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular*. Taylor's magisterial opus, *A Secular Age*, remains remarkably, albeit self-consciously, Eurocentric.

[42] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

[43] As Calhoun notes: 'The "sharp binary of secularism and religion" obscures (a) the important ways in which religious people engage this-worldly, temporal life; (b) the important senses in which religion is established as a category not so much from within as from "secular" perspectives like that of the state; and (c) the ways in which there may be a secular orientation to the sacred or transcendent.' Calhoun, 'Rethinking Secularism', p. 35.

[44] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*. As Waardenburg notes in reference to Islam: 'The word "Islam" itself is used in very different senses: by scholars (Islamicists with different approaches) as a subject of study, or a "symbol" for their concrete subject of inquiry; by Muslims who, as Fazlur Rahman points out, may have different orientations as to what they consider to be religiously normative, to the; and in ordinary language in the West (with different evaluations and appreciations of what is felt to be "foreign" to the West.' Jacques Waardenburg, 'Islamic Studies and the History of Religion: An Evaluation', in Azim Nanji (ed.), *Mapping Islamic Studies: Genealogy, Continuity and Change* (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), p. 199.

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Despite the postsecular promise, the historical baggage of secularity[45] is carried into postsecular frames of understanding with the penchant to replicate an image of an overdetermined Islamic faith unwilling to yield to sociological dynamics. On this image, the 'religious' lurking behind the sign of Islam resists modernity and defies modernity's inherent immanentist force – an unyielding transcendent faith remarkably impervious to attritions of time. This image not only confounds recognition of fluidity and flux, but disregards Islamic heterogeneity and the plurality of discourses that inform social or political practice.[46] The postsecular promise to allow recognition of a largely variable nexus between the secular and the religious characterised by multiplicity easily succumbs to established secular modes of capture. The secular gaze resists supersession. Unwittingly, perhaps, postsecularity recycles the confining perspective of Orientalism. The acknowledgement of the durability of religious sentiment appended to Islam has a familiar ring to it, its antipathy to modernity.

Rupture and displacement

The language of postsecularity captures the durability of religion in IR with recognition of the enduring presence of faith in politics. However, can the postsecular also acknowledge the ontological dislocation in the character of religion itself under conditions of late modernity? Can it avoid an exceptional stance relative to Islam, exempting it from the force of immanentist imaginings, horizons, or practice? Secularisation claims or those of the privatisation of religion are easier to discard in the face of 'living' Islam. From Weber to Gellner to Lewis to Tibi,[47] Islamic Exceptionalism ensured the supposed absence of secularity in Muslim doctrine, consciousness, politics, or lived practice. The narrative of unity of all spheres militated against the separation of Faith and the mundane. Muslim self-conception also allowed no worldly intrusions to disrupt the primacy of Faith; politics could never untie God from the polity; social practice in the ICZs indelibly coloured by the experience of the Holy. Similarly, however, tacit knowledge of Islamic alterity taints postsecularity in a variety of both known and unexpected forms. This is an instance of what Charles Taylor calls, 'block thinking' which 'fuses a varied reality into one indissoluble unity, and in two ways. First, different manifestations of Islamic piety are seen as alternative ways of expressing the same core meaning. Second, all Muslims are then seen as endorsing those core meanings.'[48] Sensitivity to alterity ends up freezing it in time.

The transformed character of Islam, however, presents more pain than consolation. Postsecular theorising readily acknowledges the transformation of public,

[45] For Casanova 'the core component of the theory of secularization was the conceptualization of societal modernization as a process of functional differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres – primarily the modern state, the capitalist market economy, and modern science – from the religious sphere, and the concomitant differentiation and specialization of religion within its own newly found religious sphere'. 'Secularization Revisited', pp. 12–13.

[46] Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 1996).

[47] For a forceful engagement with Weberian readings of Islam, see Armando Salvatore, 'Beyond Orientalism: Max Weber and the Displacements of "Essentialism" in the Study of Islam', *Arabica*, 43 (1996), pp. 457–85.

[48] See Taylor 'Block Thinking' (10 September 2007), {http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/taylor4/English} accessed 31 December 2011.

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cognitive, and private spheres in the West,[49] yet this logic languishes on the 'Islamic' cultural shores: the ICZs remain unaffected, seeking refuge in transcendental dreams and commitments. As noted, this establishment perspective makes postsecularity largely irrelevant to Islam, since presumably the problem of secularity never breached the impregnable walls of religiosity in Islam's vast, albeit unchanging, universe.[50] This totalising view of Islam allows no distinctions between, for example, 'official' and 'popular' forms of Islam.[51]

Similarly, the Ideal of Islam and its practice, as with any other Faith, not only diverge, but inescapably face immanent rationalities; materialist civilisation is unavoidable. Yet, what cultural resources become available and how they are in turn shaped by this encounter is not pre-ordained. Above all, this confrontation is *political*, which can often metamorphose into existential struggles.[52] To escape Eurocentricty, the postsecular must furnish an apparatus to recognise other struggles, and more to the point, Islamic subjectivities that are forged by those struggles.[53] The major problem, however, is the overdetermined character of Islamic alterity, an otherness accessible only in *religious* terms, marginalising the wider sociological or political context in which the force of Immanence confronts Islamic understandings of Transcendence. This problem is compounded with the assumption of a singular (Protestant) narrative of Salvation equally distributed across the monotheistic field. A simpler way out of this conundrum is the adoption of frames produced by 'multiple modernities'.[54]

Linked to the 'multiple modernities' option, the postsecular presents greater possibilities to escape the risk of overdetermination. No longer attached to the equation, West = Modernity in standard civilisational narratives, the potential for an 'Islamic' modernity is conceded. However, this promising option tends to conflate logical and historical categories. The former continues to derive its constitutive elements from the European experience, which conditions the trajectory of its travel elsewhere. A more fundamental problem persists: a failure to appreciate 'connected histories' and entanglements across civilisations in the making of the 'modern'.[55] Denying connectivity

[49] Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

[50] An alternative to this recognised notion is the implicit distinction between modernisation and secularisation. Disjuncture between the two is likely to disrupt established narratives long naturalised in hegemonic frames. A disturbing question emerges: if Islam is *modernizing but not secularizing*, how does the postsecular turn simultaneously avoid post- or reflexive Orientalist mappings or the relativizing scheme of 'multiple modernities'?

[51] The 'official' religion, as Waardenburg notes, 'is that of true Tawhid, and although Islam has no "official" organisation of its own, throughout Islamic history this Tawhid has been upheld by all religious scholars in opposition to the popular religion of shirk'. p. 318). By contrast, 'popular' Islam expresses the heterogeneity of everyday religious practice, open-ended, and fluid. Jacques Waardenburg, 'Official and Popular Religion in Islam', *Social Compass*, 25:3–4, p. 318.

[52] 'A sharp distinction should be made between "normative" Islam and "actual" Islam. Normative Islam consists of the prescriptions, norms, and values that are recognised as divine guidance by the whole community. These are taken from the basic normative texts, mostly with what is held to be normative interpretation. Actual Islam comprises all those forms and movements, practices and ideas that in fact have existed in the many Muslim communities in different times and places, and that have been considered to be "Islamic and subsequently legitimate and valid"'. Jacques Waardenburg, 'Islamic Studies and the History of Religions: An Evaluation', in Azim Nanji (ed.), *Mapping Islamic Studies: Genealogy, Continuity and Change* (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), p. 199.

[53] Mavelli speaks directly to these struggles in his contribution to this Special Issue. See Luca Mavelli, 'Postsecular Resistance, the Body, and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution'.

[54] S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus*, 129 (2000), pp. 1–29.

[55] 'Contrary to what "area studies" implicitly presumes, a good part of the dynamic in early modern history was provided by the interface between the local and regional (which we may call the "micro"-level), and the supra-regional, at times even global (what we may term the "macro"-level)', p. 745.

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and entanglement, monadic 'alternative' modernity programmes seek realisation in more or less spatially bound containers. The potential for cross-contamination, mutual borrowing, caricature or mimicry can be sacrificed in favour of alternative pathways towards the same destination. This problem becomes more pronounced in mappings of the international.

The location of the ICZs within a Westphalian order poses specific challenges for postsecularist theorising. Notwithstanding several extant readings of the existence of a global *Ummah* (a worldwide community of believers), Muslims negotiate their social world principally within state boundaries subject to the operations of *raison d'être*. This does not limit Muslim horizons which may have a tendency to spill-over, but *conditions* forms of cultural life, citizenship', and political community. Although considerably enfeebled by global connectivity, the Westphalian order enjoys considerable fidelity amongst political elites in the ICZs. Hence, a distinction needs to be drawn between the idiom of politics in the ICZs, and its substance. The former often betrays compulsions of religiosity, not the latter.

Paradoxically, demands for aligning political practice to doctrinal principles in much of the ICZs confirms the actual chasm separating political and civil society. The exceptional cases of religiously-coded politics (Iran or Saudi Arabia) confirm the rule: *political* struggles shape the content of religious practice. The so-called 'return' of religion is invariably subordinated to the dictates of the State. A further distinction between statist and non-statist Islam illuminates the dilemmas facing the ICZs. Statist Islam solidifies legitimating processes by the political classes. Wedded to the narrative of national sovereignty, statist Islam enjoys the stability of the Westphalian order. This version of Islam feeds nicely into imperial constellations of power. By contrast, non-statist Islam is inherently tied to transnational narratives of a borderless Islamic community. This postnational vision of Islam presents mixed challenges for organising political life. Postsecularity must speak to both variants.

To reiterate, postsecularity offers new horizons for reimagining the international. Cognisant of the limits of secular reason in structuring dialogue with religious others, postsecular sensitivity can allow circumvention of hubris drawn from stories of progress, the Great Divergence,[56] or self-affirming tales of European Exceptionalism.[57] It is, however, uncertain how postsecular sentiment can forge new horizons of post-Westphalian relations unaffected by narrower interpretations of 'community' or the 'Cosmopolis'. Can the appeal of the postsecular to the ICZs also lead to a real, not nominal, discovery of civilisational others?

To effectively release new vernaculars of engagement, postsecularity must find an alternative idiom of interpreting the assumed stubbornness of Islam to secular modernity. This exercise rests upon recognition of the *relative autonomy* of political practice detached from religious attachments. Neither secular nor religious, recognition of the *political* can portend new orders of interpretation. Implicit in this process

Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies*, 31 (1997), pp. 735–62. Although addressing 'early modern Eurasia' Subrahmanyam's general point about connectivity applies with unequivocal force to entanglements between Islam and Europe.

[56] Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*; Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[57] William McNeill, *Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). For an unambiguously hubristic recent statement, see Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

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is a rejection of the totalising nature of Islam, not only in contemporary but historical terms. The presence of differentiated spheres, albeit conditioned by Islamicity, presents an important signpost. Presence of differentiated spheres[58] renounces the fictionalised totality of Islam, offering instead alternative sites for understanding the kernel of the Islamic 'Reformation'.[59] Both law and politics yield alternative constructions of the social order in relation to Faith. In this context, an alternative perspective would rest ultimately upon rethinking modernity's relation to historicism. The received timeline of modernity inescapably shadows the career of the Protestant settlement. On a postsecular reading as well, this timeline erects a universal reference. The task, paradoxically, is to produce a more *secular* history of modernity in which Christian retrenchments against the force of secularism would no longer sanction authorisations of authority.

In brief, the postsecular must come to terms with rival, if mutually connected, forms of Islamic encounters with modernity: a more homogenised Islam at odds with an 'open Islam'.[60] This classification is well-established, but usually drawn within culturalist readings of Islamic history.[61] Stressing the *political*, this distinction would, instead, capture struggles within the ICZs over the nature of the social and political order. Inescapably, the real political contestation is *not* between the secular and the religious in these zones, but political struggles linked to battles over the *religious* itself.[62] An 'open' Islam suggests an ecumenical Faith responsive to internal heterogeneity and difference. Paradoxically, it is in its 'traditional' forms that an 'openness' has been enacted, recognising historical continuities, diverse patterns, and multiple temporalities. By contrast, a 'closed' Islam is the end-result of ruptures in Islamic history and memory, exacerbated by the dismantling of traditional religious institutions both under colonial and globalised modernity. Separated from the certainties of locality and place, and under pressures of generalised exchange, infirm secondary attachments, urbanisation and 'cultural schizophrenia', a more homogenised Faith has engendered illusions of ontological security. Modernity does not expand the discursive space of religion, but narrows it. Often, politics masquerades as piety. It is

[58] Sami Zubaida, *Law and Power in the Islamic World* (London and New York: I. B. Taurus, 2003). Calhoun's remarks seem relevant: 'Europe's trajectory was state churches followed by militant *laïcité* … In fact, post colonial societies around the world have given rise to most of the regimes of religious pluralism and religious tolerance.' Calhoun, 'Rethinking Secularism', p. 42.

[59] Gellner presents a provocative reading of the Islamic Reformation: 'The great reformation which has overtaken the Muslim world in the last hundred years or so and which the West has noticed barely, if at all, has been the displacement of folk superstition, particularly the previously widespread practice of saint worship, by a more ''proper'', scholarly, not to say scholastic, puritanical, scripturalist version of the faith. The high culture which had ever coexisted with a folk low culture, but had never been able to dominate it properly, has at last achieved a victory, thanks to modern condition.' 'The Civil and the Sacred', p. 320.

[60] According to Casanova, the Islamic tradition has experienced 'an unprecedented process of pluralization and fragmentation of religious authority' (p. 1059). However, Casanova does not take into account processes that have given Scripturalist and puritanical variants of Islam greater visibility and force. The apparent democratisation of interpretation has not guaranteed that a more 'open' Islam would be accorded greater legitimacy. The potential for a more homogenised Islam to emerge in contexts of mass media dissemination is unaccounted for in Casanova's otherwise rich account. 'The destabilisation of religious authority does not offer any insurance against a more puritanical version of the Faith to inspire the multitude under conditions of cultural or economic dislocation in much of the ICZs.' Jose Casanova, 'Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam', *Social Research*, 68 (2001), p. 1059.

[61] Gellner, *Muslim Society*.

[62] In his contribution to this Special Issue, Mavelli shows how the 'secularist-Islamist polarisation' has been defied in the recent struggle in Egypt.

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not the assumed success, but 'failure of political Islam',[63] whose exhaustion assumes puritanical variants of religion and its pathologies, including nihilistic violence.[64]

The deterritorialised character of Islamic imaginaries[65] is not peculiar to this Faith; it has been representative of all world religions refusing bounded walls sanctioned by political authority. However, the temporal context of deterritorialisation is remarkably different now, relative to earlier historical epochs. The speed, acceleration, and scope of global connectivity produced by flows of information, ideas, symbols, objects, and people[66] are linked to a globalised political economy producing distanciation between identity and territory. In this larger context, the diminutive capacity of the postcolonial state does not produce localism or tribalism, as generally believed, but translocal commitments. Globalised forms of Islamic intersubjectivity assume more 'modular' forms. Reshaped by global flows, both politics and piety require post-national modes of recognition and address. Exportable forms of a homogenised Islam can circulate more easily than those 'traditional' variants interwoven into local structures. The more homogenised the Faith, the greater is its capacity to transcend 'borders'.[67]

Displacements in Islamic identities are products of global processes of connectivity, producing ruptures in the social and lifeworlds of Muslims. These ruptures show an uncanny resemblance to fractures experienced in the past. In a 'postnational' context, however, deterritorialisation increasingly severs the nexus between community (ascriptive or imagined) and location. While the political elites in the ICZs recite eulogies on behalf of post-Westphalian sovereignty, the State in much of the Islamic World appears increasingly fragile. It is unable to regulate the effects of globalising currents, provision distributive justice, or generate domestic security, except to rely on large-scale repression against potentially restless populations. Conversely, dependence upon managerial forms of governance to align 'national' economies to the globe offers a favoured passage out of persistent crises.[68]

'Open' and 'closed' Islams are ideal-typical images of the two principal forms noticeable in capturing the terrain in which the postsecular confronts the ICZs. In actuality, there is considerable plurality in both the discursive and non-discursive realms of religiosity. The discursive field ranges from redemptive to rejectionist mappings of the Muslim predicament. On the other side of the equation, the non-discursive arena is saturated with social, class, and gender divisions, each with its

[63] Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*.

[64] Mustapha Kamal Pasha, 'Islam, Nihilism and Liberal Secularity', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 15 (2012), pp. 272–89.

[65] Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press in association with the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherché Internationales, 2004).

[66] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

[67] The notion of 'borders', however, is increasingly weak to comprehend global connectivities. Perhaps, a more accurate description of processes of religious deterritorialisation is to acknowledge spatio-temporal dislocation.

[68] Clearly, ruptures and displacements do not produce singular trajectories. As the recent 'Arab Spring' and its immediate aftermath highlight, the 'religious' question is not the most pivotal one in the politics of the ICZs. Protest and 'revolution' in globalising times may not herald ideological dreamworlds. Rather, the ordinariness of cries for justice in a world with few certainties may simply reveal the pervasiveness of the crisis that afflicts the ICZs. It is obviously too early to ascertain the contours of politics in the ICZs (or elsewhere) in the wake of the Arab Spring. A key point, though, is apparently the sudden disappearance of 'religion' in the analysis. Less noticeable, is the mutation within religion itself, not secularisation; religion finding new modes of instantiation.

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own political effects. What is less ambiguous, however, is the ascendancy of more puritanical answers to the supposed crisis in Islamic identity: an apparent disillusionment marked by weakened conviction in evolutionary utopias. The extreme expression of this state of dystopia is the spectacle of nihilistic violence, more as certitude of apolitical powerlessness, than politics. Without the ability to materialise alternative futures, a refracted world of internal fracture stages its pathologies in self-defeating attempts to seek coherence or meaning. Neither coherence nor meaning is easily available, especially to a variant of Faith that subverts any possibility of dialogue or tolerance.

Although the exteriority of fracture is not uniform, it is the extreme variant that typically appears as the public face of Islam. The postsecular may provide a countervailing tendency in deploying more heterodox modes of capture. Freed from secularist prejudice, the Islamic World can become more recognisable in its heterogeneity. Yet, in order to achieve that aim, the postsecular has to release itself from Orientalism or cultural relativism. This would entail not just reflexivity towards religious plurality, or recognition of universality in particularised otherness, but a shift from the endogenous to the international plane. A key aspect of that shift is an appreciation of the wider global context in which seemingly local processes materialise. The forms of 'postsecular' politics in the ICZs are inseparable from globality, its processes, dimensions, and effects.

Conclusion

Postsecularity casts its shadow upon the intricate relation between religion and politics in IR, principally in its successful dismantling of the hegemony of the secularisation story. Yet, the forms postsecularity assumes are heterodox and recursive. A meta-narrative of postsecularity is clearly fraught with more ellipses and silences than discrete moments of its unfolding in time. Within the context of Islamic political practice, historical and contemporary registers are opened up. Recognition of both the heterogeneity of the ICZs and the discourses that inform that practice presents a first step towards an appreciation of the transformed nature of the secular-religious nexus.

'Provincialising' postsecularity,[69] therefore, offers more promise than merely its embrace as a universal template for global distribution. At a minimum, this exercise entails baring the cultural assumptions embedded in the postsecular critique of secular reason. Concretely, this would mean de-Christianising postsecularity, while profiting from the cosmopolitan aspects of Christianity.[70] On the other hand, greater engagement with internal dialogical processes in the ICZs can help curtail the monological character of postsecular reason. These are only preliminary steps in a long journey, but necessary to avoid the fateful career of postsecularity's forerunner. Indeed, a more ambitious undertaking would involve engagement with other cultural zones, their subjectivities, and cosmological imaginings. In a sense, stepping outside the

[69] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[70] Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); *On Belief* (New York: Routledge, 2001); *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (New York: Verso, 2000).

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worlds of monotheism could furnish even more fruitful avenues to fully comprehend the limiting horizons of the postsecular.

This article cautions against celebratory receptions of the 'postsecular' in IR with reference to the ICZs. Without delineating processes that will allow the postsecular to produce more expansive terms of religious inclusion in the global public sphere, it could end up consolidating older barriers, or simply erect new ones. The repudiation of secularisation theory clearly releases discussions of the relation between Islam and modernity. The universal 'Western' reference of modernity, essentially an *ethos of secularity*, can be discarded in favour of more generous understanding of modernity – a spatio-temporal horizon combining the religious and the secular. Similarly, the confining framework of secularisation can be replaced with less hegemonic modalities of engaging with Islamic subjectivities. However, the postsecular is a global condition of possibility only in a very general sense: it remains chiefly a European problem and problematic. Hence, it still remains unclear how the postsecular will bear upon political practice in the wake of turbulent times gripping the ICZs.

The international serves as the limit of political modernity. Only in relation to the international can particular political forms emerge. The international is also the container of political modernity. The organising principle of political modernity is sovereignty – which congeals the essence of the settlement between the sacred and the secular. The postsecular is recognition of the exhaustion of that settlement; sovereignty can no longer operate within national containers, as other contributors to this volume also suggest. Both the secular and the sacred must attach themselves to forms that transcend the nation-state. But the struggle over the character of the nation-state must first play out;[71] this assumes heterodox forms. The 'return' of religion is only a condition of possibility for the postsecular. Rather, the 'postsecular' is better conceived as the undoing of the sacred/secular settlement within political modernity without a discernible alternative. The sacred/secular settlement in Islam precedes Protestantism, but under colonialism that settlement is undone with the emergent divergence between state and society. On balance, the state gravitates toward the secular; society embraces the sacred (initially in the private realm); in the postcolonial era, society seeks to redefine the 'secular' state in its own image. In some instances, the state pre-empts society by adopting the language of the sacred. The secular international constrains this transition by unleashing a war against the sacred, paradoxically sacralising the international. The secular international is never totally secular; it reflects the hegemony of the Protestant Westphalian settlement. Political Islam, and its varied manifestations, is, therefore, not anti-modern, but a rejection of that Protestant settlement.

[71] Partha Chatterjee, 'Beyond the Nation? Or Within?', *Social Text*, 56 (1998), pp. 57–69.

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