

## TRACING SECULARISM: RELIGION, POWER, AND VIOLENCE IN WESTERN AND EASTERN (ISLAMIC) WORLD



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### Abstract

This study examines the complex relationship between religion, violence, and secularism by analyzing the perspectives of thinkers such as Marx, Nietzsche, Hobbes, and Karen Armstrong. Although religion is often considered the primary source of violence, this paper argues that violence related to religion is better understood as a manifestation of deeper political, economic, and existential forces. This study also explores the different paths of secularism development in the Western and Islamic worlds. In the West, secularism emerged as a revolutionary response to the corruption of church authority during the Dark Ages. On the other hand, secularism in the Islamic context was shaped by the need to manage religious diversity, as illustrated by the Medina Charter. The method used in this research is a qualitative–historical analysis of texts discussing the relationship between religion, violence, and the state. The novelty of this research lies in the application of Jos  Casanova's concept of secularism to reveal that, despite the process of secularization, the West has experienced a resurgence of religion in the public sphere—thus demonstrating the failure of secularism as an ideology and not statecraft principles.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan kompleks antara agama, kekerasan, dan sekularisme dengan menganalisis perspektif para pemikir seperti Marx, Nietzsche, Hobbes, dan Karen Armstrong. Meskipun agama sering dianggap sebagai sumber utama kekerasan, paper ini berargumen bahwa kekerasan yang terkait dengan agama lebih tepat dipahami sebagai manifestasi dari kekuatan politik, ekonomi, dan eksistensial yang lebih dalam. Penelitian ini juga mengeksplorasi jalur perkembangan sekularisme yang berbeda di dunia Barat dan Islam. Di Barat, sekularisme muncul sebagai respons revolusioner terhadap korupsi otoritas gereja selama zaman kegelapan. Di sisi lain, sekularisme dalam konteks Islam terbentuk oleh kebutuhan untuk mengelola keragaman agama, seperti yang diilustrasikan oleh piagam madinah. Metode yang digunakan pada penelitian ini adalah kualitatif-historis terhadap teks-teks yang membahas relasi antara agama, kekerasan, dan negara. Kebaharuan penelitian ini terletak pada penerapan konsep sekularisme Jos  Casanova untuk mengungkapkan bahwa, meskipun terjadi proses sekularisasi, Barat mengalami kebangkitan agama di ruang publik—sehingga menunjukkan kegagalan sekularisme sebagai ideologi maupun sebagai prinsip ketatanegaraan (statecraft principle).

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, violence and conflict have often been closely associated with religion. This narrative has intensified in the modern era, especially after major events such as the September 11, 2001 attacks (Hall, 2003), which reinforced the perception that religion can pose a serious threat to humanity (Chistyakova, 2024; Esposito, 2015). Prominent critics such as Christopher Hitchens, in his book *How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007), even likened religion to a virus that infects human beliefs, dictating truth without scientific evidence (Hitchens, 2007). Similarly, Richard Dawkins through



God is Delusions (2006) brutally assesses religion as a destructive force, even offering help for individuals who want to "break free from the shackles of religion" (Dawkins, 2006). These accusations, while seemingly extreme, cannot be completely dismissed, given the many cases of violence that use religious symbols and rhetoric.

However, a fundamental question arises: Is religion actually an inherent cause of violence, or is it merely a manipulated tool? While popular narratives often blame religion for major wars, military historians often point out that global conflicts are actually more often rooted in the struggle for resources or geopolitical interests. We need to be skeptical of the simplistic view that religion essentially teaches violence or that all conflicts involving religion are purely driven by religious motives. As Coady (2006) notes, something harmful is not necessarily bad or to be avoided; like a drug that can be harmful in certain doses but essential for healing, religion may have its "harmful" side but also its inevitable benefits (Coady, 2006).

Karen Armstrong, in her book *Fields of Blood*, systematically collects thousands of years of historical data, showing that very few major wars are actually orchestrated by religion. She concludes that violence is more rooted in human nature and state dynamics, with religion often just a scapegoat (Armstrong, 2016). It is this paradox that drives the crucial question in this study: How can the role of religion in historical conflicts be distinguished from political manipulation and power interests, and to what extent has secularism, both in the West and in the Islamic world, emerged as a response to the misuse of religious authority to maintain social order?

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive comparative approach. Not only does it explore philosophical and historical critiques of the relationship between religion and violence from a Western perspective (through the thoughts of Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Thomas Hobbes), it also highlights the discourse of secularization in the Islamic context. This is done through an analysis of key figures such as Ali Abd al-Raziq in Egypt and a case study of Turkey's modernization under the leadership of Atatürk. As such, this study aims to show that religion does not inherently teach violence, rather conflicts arise when religion is used as a tool for political gain. Furthermore, the study will conclude that secularism, both in the West and the East, emerged as an attempt to maintain harmony between faith and the public order, as a response to the abuse of religious authority.

This article will sequentially discuss the nature of religious violence and the context in which secularism emerged in the West, followed by a comparison of forms of secularism in the Western and Eastern (Islamic) worlds.

## **RELIGION, POWER, AND THE CALL FOR SECULARISM**

In his brief essay "Violence and Religion", C.A.J. Coady (2006) provides a provocative warning: we should not conclude that something is evil just because it is risky. Many things that are useful—alcohol, medicine, freedom, sport, even legal systems—are inherently risky, but they perform essential functions in human life. Religion, he suggests, might be analogous: potentially risky, but capable of performing useful social and psychological roles. This measured stance accords with the ambivalent, yet complicated, views of thinkers such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Thomas Hobbes, each of whom examined the complicated nexus between religion and power.

For Karl Marx, religion is famously characterized as "the opium of the people." In *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1970), Marx does not merely condemn religion as evil but criticizes its role under oppressive systems. Religion, through its theological myths, provides solace to the afflicted working class

and deflects their attention from systemic injustice. It anaesthetizes pain by providing expectations of an afterlife, encouraging acceptance of worldly suffering as divine fate. Contrary to popular misunderstandings, Marx's metaphor of "opium" should not be conflated with outright condemnation. During Marx's time, opium was a lawful medicinal drug—used for cure, not merely harm. Therefore, Marx might have recognized religion's palliative effect, similar to Coady's assessment. But he bemoaned how religion's consolatory function had been hijacked by the bourgeoisie to prop up their hegemony, turning it from medicine to poison—a tool of social pacification and class control.

Perhaps like Coady, Marx thought that religion had a medicinal role to play in social life. Unfortunately, the oppressive bourgeoisie has corrupted the function of religion (Bonelli et al., 2012). They use the language of religion to perpetuate their dominance over the working class; through the illusion of religion, the workers are numbed and blurred. Instead of rebelling against the rulers, the workers choose a more acceptable path, namely that the misery they face is part of God's destiny. Destiny they wholeheartedly regarded as the most religious self—acceptance. Finally, instead of being beneficial, religion has become a poison that intoxicates its adherents. Perhaps this supposition is what Marx wanted to convey about religion in the shackles of power.

Friedrich Nietzsche, however, went a step further and proposed a radical critique of religion itself. In *The Gay Science* (2004) Nietzsche famously announces, "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him." This is not a literal statement but a philosophical indictment of religion's demise as the source of moral and metaphysical meaning in Europe. Nietzsche argues that religion—especially Christianity—teaches a "slave morality," whereby the weak celebrate their suffering and await divine justice in a fantasized afterlife. That, according to the slaves, God will reward their misery with eternal happiness (real happiness) only if the servant is willing to live a life of misery gracefully as God's predetermined will. This moral system, Nietzsche argues, has drained European energy and creativity since Constantine's conversion to Christianity. Religion, in his opinion, encourages passivity and resentment and precludes the realization of autonomous, life-affirming individuals. The death of God, therefore, for Nietzsche, is requisite for the rebirth of human greatness.

Thomas Hobbes, meanwhile, was mainly concerned with the political consequences of religion. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes observes that belief in an afterlife—because it cannot be empirically proven—depends entirely on faith in those who profess supernatural knowledge. Religious belief, he thus suggests, is "mere faith in men." Hobbes observes that, unless one has direct supernatural knowledge, beliefs about the afterlife depend on the authority of others. For this reason, Hobbes says, religious belief is not faith God but "mere faith in men". Attributing divine authority to leaders who remained too human for Hobbes could be the beginning of the end of humanity (Newheiser, 2018). This, Hobbes cautions, is perilous: if citizens accord divine right to religious authorities, they will question or defy secular authorities. And if state institutions become too closely aligned with religious authority, they will become absolute and oppressive.

This, we can take cites the historical precedent of Rome's Christianization, which spawned centuries of religious strife and authoritarian governance across Europe (Armstrong, 2016). It is religion's emotional appeal—based on fear of the afterlife—that, according to Hobbes and subsequent political thinkers like Mark Lilla, makes it so powerful and potentially destabilizing in political life (Lilla, 2008). Religion must thus be rigorously separated from political power to safeguard civic peace and human dignity.

These three philosophers—Marx, Nietzsche, and Hobbes—embody disparate yet intersecting criticisms of religion as a means of domination, illusion, and political manipulation. Together, their ideas form the foundation of the contemporary secularist case: that religion, though significant to many, may not have untrammelled influence in public life.

It is in this context that John Locke becomes a foundational figure for the separation of the state and religion. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1853), Locke writes that religion, which should place human beings above beasts, frequently makes them irrational. Locke's ideas on religious secularism are more fully articulated in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Locke, 1963), in which he presents a threefold thesis: the necessity of religious tolerance, the proper boundaries of state and church, and the value of religious freedom.

For Locke, religion is directed toward eternal, spiritual felicity, whereas the state deals with temporal happiness. To protect both spheres, Locke suggests that they need to be institutionally distinct. Toleration, in this context, is not indifference but state neutrality—guaranteeing that no religion is privileged and that spiritual commitments are kept personal and voluntary. Locke contends that true faith originates from free rational consideration, not force. This position stands in stark contrast to the nature of the state, which uses power—including violence—to impose order.

## SECULARISM IN THE WEST

### 1. The Birth of Secularism

Secularism in the West grew out of a deep disillusionment with the theocratic practices of church institutions in the Middle Ages. Historically, its emergence is rooted in the modern Christian thought of the 17th and 18th centuries, known as the Age of Enlightenment. This era was characterized by the rise of the scientific spirit, as demonstrated by the works of Francis Bacon (*Novum Organum*, 1620) and Immanuel Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781). These works overhauled the medieval worldview, encouraging Christian theologians (such as Ludwif Feubarch, Paul Van Buren, Thomas Altizer) to reinterpret dogma to make it relevant to the development of modern civilization. From this radical effort came the Death of God Theology movement, which sparked the spirit of secularization.

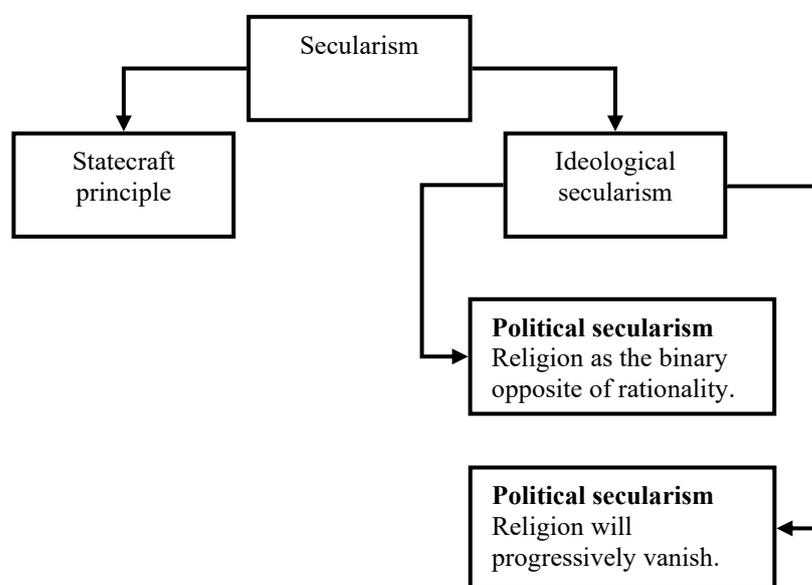
Jose Casanova (2006) identifies secularization can be understood in three ways. First, as a decline in religious influence, which refers to the diminishing of religious beliefs and practices in modern society. Second, as the privatization of religion, where religion becomes a private matter separated from the public sphere. Third, as the differentiation of spheres, which is the separation of religion from secular institutions such as the state, economy and science. This last definition is the most classic and is the Western response to the situation of the Middle Ages. It should be noted that European sociologists tend to see secularization as a decline in the influence and privatization of religion – something that cannot be separated from the historical dynamics of church and state there. In contrast, American sociologists limit secularization to the decline of religious beliefs and practices as a natural process, as the US does not have the history of a corrupt church as in Europe. For Casanova, secularization in Europe is an expression of both ideological secularism (the result of a long discussion on historical vitality) and political secularism (the view that religion is an irrational force that should be removed from the public sphere).

Charles Taylor, another leading secular theorist, has a similar view with important nuances. In *A Secular Age*, Taylor does not see secularization as a "crushing defeat" of religion, but rather as a condition characterized by three things. First, the institutional separation of religion and the state. Second, the decline of religious practice. Third, religion becomes one of the individualized sources of meaning (Charles, 2007).. In this context, modern Western humans become "buffered selves" – they are no longer passively forced to accept meaning from external sources (such as religious dogma), but can actively limit or choose their own sources of meaning. This is in contrast to the "porous selves" of the pre–secular era who were more open to external spiritual influences.

Historically, the corruption of the Catholic Church from the sixth century to the next five centuries—with its king–like Popes, relic worship, and institutionalized immorality (Oakley, 1988, pp. 1–4) – triggered the spirit of secularization. This process lasted about five hundred years in the West, through various stages such as the Protestant Reformation (16th century), the Renaissance (14th–17th centuries), the Enlightenment (18th century), Deism (late 18th century), the nova effect (19th century), the age of mobility, and the age of authenticity. According to Nrwastuyati Petronela Mbeo (2020), Taylor's five–century secularization process has resulted in several things: humans become "buffered selves" who are free to choose meaning, the role of religion becomes one of the sources of meaning, and religious choices are based on the search for personal meaning rather than tradition or community pressure (Mbeo, 2020) .

## 2. The Failure of Secularism

To understand how secularism has failed, we need to first realize that the use of the term secularism often causes confusion so we first need to break it down. According to Jose Casanova in his article entitled *The Secular and Secularism* (2009) , Casanova mentions that the term secularism can be viewed in two ways: 1) as a statecraft principle and 2) as an ideology. The summarize of Jose Casanova's explanation in the form of a chart as below:



**Figure 1.** This framework was constructed by the author with reference to Jos  Casanova's classification of secularism

First, as a statecraft principle, Casanova defines the separation of religion from political authority. According to him, this separation is intended to maintain the neutrality of the state towards every religion and to ensure the protection of the rights of every citizen of a different religion. For Casanova, secularism as a statecraft principle does not require certain prepositions about religion; judgments about whether religion is good or bad are not required (Casanova, 2009) .

Secondly, as a secular ideology, according to Casanova, when a state has a certain view on religion, it has entered into the ideological realm of secularism. As an ideology, secularism has two basic assumptions.

First, religion is in a progressive stadial condition, meaning that religion will gradually have less and less place in the modern world, until it gradually disappears (this assumption gave birth to the ideology of political secularism). – One of those who support this assumption is Jurgen Habermas. According to him, in the face of modern rationality, the place for religion will be increasingly narrow as the human need for metaphysical things to explain reality is replaced by what he calls communicative rationality, which is free of dogma and has a universality value instead of the particular value possessed by a particular religion. However, Habermas' views have changed to be more lenient towards religion (Meyer, 1995)

Second, Religion is the binary opposition of rationality, it is irrational so it must be removed from the public sphere. This second assumption of secular ideology can be traced philosophically—historically, especially in European society during the Enlightenment. Secularism, both as a constitutional principle and as an ideology has recently experienced a journey to the nadir. The separation of religion from government and t

he privatization of religion from the public sphere have failed in both Western and Eastern societies. The first shock to secularism came with the establishment of the first modern theocracy in Iran (Moazami, 2013, pp. 135–154) . Soon, other religious voices began to aggressively echo elsewhere. In Egypt, people pushed for the establishment of a Muslim state and the struggle against colonial traces, in 1989, an Islamic state was established in Sudan, in 1991, the Front Islamique de Salut (FIS) won democratic elections in Algeria (Njarakkulath, 2015) . In addition, various Islamic movements emerged in Tunisia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Chad, Senegal, Turkey, and Bangladesh with increasingly theocratic and Islamist overtones.

This kind of condition shows that the ideology of secularism that believes religion is in a progressive stadial condition cannot be maintained, but instead shows a reversal condition. Many sociologists, including one of the greatest, Peter L. Barger, eventually retracted his thesis about modernization and the decline of religion. At many conferences, Barger admitted that the thesis he and other experts believed in the 70s was not supported by empirical facts. Instead, the world is becoming increasingly religious at an unprecedented rate. An American sociologist, Rodney Stark in 2015 published a book that astonished secular western academics. His book entitled "The Triumph of Religion", which is a report of his research on one million respondents from 119 countries, became a slap for secularism. Stark succeeded in proving empirically that humans around the world are moving towards an increasingly religious conscience. Various major religions are experiencing amazing growth around the world; he even found that people who have a history of higher education tend to become more religious, completely contrary to secular ideology which assumes religion as something irrational (Waters, 2018) .

These conditions have made secularism's reliability questionable. Over the past two decades, renowned scholars such as Jurgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Jose Casanova, and Talal Asad have all called secularism a failed project that needs to be revisited. In Asad's view, secularism is not a completely objective concept but a concept resulting from historical, cultural and political dynamics that have been used to justify certain socio-political practices. In particular, Asad mentions that the separation between secular and religious states is a product of the long history of Christianity in Europe. Meanwhile, according to Jose Casanova, the separation of religion from the public sphere is not entirely feasible, because instead of reducing religious expressions and practices, the marginalization of religion provides a new form of religious expression in society, which he calls religious pluralization and diversification.

Both Asad and Jose Casanova argue that the rejection of secularism is also due to secularism becoming increasingly corrupt. Secularism has often been used to justify the oppression or marginalization of religious minorities, as well as to legitimize certain political understandings that are perceived to be in line with the values of the enlightenment movement. This has been referred to by Rajeev Bhargava – a renowned Indian political scholar – as a form of amoral state secularism. According to him, the nature of an immoral secular state is imperial and autocratic; an example of this is the secularization of India by the British Empire which he ascribes to economic motives. The British, according to him, were interested in imposing secular rule in India not for the sake of religion or local governance, but because they wanted to tap the potential of the people's labor and taxes (Bhargava, 2006) .

The attack on secularism was even more radical by William Cavanaugh. In his book, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, he challenges the common view that religion is a source of violence. He also argues that optimism about secular ideology is overblown. Cavanaugh argues that violence is not a product of religion but the result of an ulterior motive; political and economic power. In his book he mentions that the separation between state and religion is highly unstable. It is fluid and can be the result of political judgment and lobbying. He goes on to say that secularism is often used to legitimize violence; religious violence is considered irrational violence, while violence in the name of the state is considered rational and therefore justifiable. (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 2)

The impossibility of marginalizing religion is also stated by Derrida, albeit cryptically. For Derrida, it is impossible to separate religion from politics, as secularism advocates. This is because of two things. First, according to him, humans are always haunted by something in the past. People believe that secularism is the opposite of irrational religion, in fact secularism is an understanding that originated from the legacy of Christianity itself. Secondly, for Derrida, while religion may have a tendency towards violence, it is an important source of political contemplation; its eschatological nature gives us hope of a messianic justice that is essential for the organization of democracy. In light of this, the potential for violence by religion needs to be ruled out – Derrida never actually wrote anything related to secularism. However, his thoughts on religion can be seen as an indirect rejection of secularism (Newheiser, 2018) .

However, we should note that neither Cavanaugh's writings nor Derrida's thoughts are meant to exonerate religion from various accusations against it, but rather an invitation to review religion and secularism more fairly and realistically. Secularism carries a belief that a set of beliefs such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism are more prone to violence than secular ideologies such as Marxism, capitalism, liberalism, and so on, when in fact both religious and secular labels can be sources of violence. According to Cavanaugh, this kind of disproportionate assumption is very

dangerous because it clouds our judgment about what actually disturbs peace. Cavanaugh finds that rather than religion, it is the state that is the main perpetrator of violence. According to him, states often legitimize violence by using religion (Cavanaugh, 2009) .

## SECULARISM IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Muslim scholars, both traditional and modern, generally believe in the comprehensive integration of religion as a guide to life, including in politics (Al-Atawneh, 2009). However, it is important to note that in the Islamic world, there is no historical experience equivalent to the absolute authority of the church in the West. Therefore, Talal Asad (2007) argues that the genealogy of secularization known in the West (such as the definitions of Charles Taylor and Jose Casanova) does not have the same relevance in the Islamic world. Rather, secularism in the Islamic context has a unique birth and momentum, often sparking confusion even among Western scholars. Nonetheless, this section will attempt to describe secularization in the Islamic world by identifying its two main trajectories.

Both traditional and modern Muslim scholars believe in the total integration of religion as a guide to life, including politics (Al-Atawneh, 2009) . Even so, it is important to note that in the East, at least in the Islamic world, there was nothing like what the West experienced as an event of absolute power of the church. According to Talal Asad (2007) The genealogy of secularization only occurs in Western societies so that if we borrow Charles Taylor and Jose Casanova's definition of secularism, then secularism has no importance in the Islamic world. On the contrary, in Islam, secularism has a unique birthplace and momentum. We need to realize from the outset that the term secularism in the Islamic world has caused much confusion. Moreover, even Western scholars disagree about secularism and sometimes even contradict it. Nevertheless, I will try my best to describe secularization in the Islamic world, which of course cannot satisfy all parties.

We argue that initially, secularism in Islam emerged peacefully and was a manifestation of a distinctive religious doctrine. It was only when the Abbasid dynasty collapsed and the West influenced the Islamic world that Western ideas including secularism were widely rejected by the Muslim community

### 1. Historical Dimensions and The Necessity of Secularism in Islam

Islam was brought by the Prophet Muhammad to the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula. The Prophet played a twofold role: that of the bringer of divine revelation and that of a political leader. Prior to Islam, Arab society recognized no authority except such as was based on religion (Ibn Khaldun). During his time in Mecca, the Prophet encountered strong opposition in spreading his prophetic message. As discussed by Watt (1996), this opposition came in large part from the Quraysh tribe, especially after Abu Talib, one of the most important persons in the Banu Hashim who had long given protection to the Prophet, died. Fearing for the safety of himself and his followers and having received an invitation from 76 delegates of the Yathrib (Medina) people, the Prophet finally decided to migrate to Medina—commemorated by the acts of allegiance called the Bai'at al-'Aqabah (Watt, 1996).

One of the most intriguing elements of the Prophet's migration was the creation of the Constitution of Medina (Shahifat al-Madīnah), a foundational document aimed at creating a lasting peace agreement between Medina's different religious communities, and especially Muslims and Jews. The Medina Charter has been hailed by many as an

early model of pluralistic governance (Yildirim, 2009), and it is often celebrated for its articulation of religious freedom. Both Islamic and Western scholars have referred to the Charter as an important source of inspiration for principles of coexistence and interreligious understanding.

The Medina Charter also marked a turning point in political organization in the Arabian Peninsula. During the Prophet's lifetime, the early Islamic state started moving away from an exclusively theocratic system—in which Muhammad was both God's messenger and head of state—toward a more secular political system. This change was not simply circumstantial but quite possibly inevitable, as in one hadith where the Prophet is said to have remarked: "The Caliphate among my people will last for thirty years; after that, it will be replaced by kingship" (Ahmad 22568; Tirmidhi 2390).

We can conclude from this that the enactment of the Medina Charter, upheld by the above-cited prophetic tradition, was what brought to a close direct divine governance upon the death of the Prophet. In addition, the Charter could be considered a forward-looking act in expectation of Islam's spread outside of the Arabian Peninsula. The Charter established a precedent for government that was an attempt to include the varied interests of a pluralistic society, and not solely Islamic authority.

The issue of ultimate authority has continued to be at the heart of Islamic political practice and thought. Differences of interpretation of this matter have spawned numerous sectarian splits, such as the Khawarij, Shi'a, and Sunni. On one hand, Muslims have always had the memory of the Prophet as an exemplary personality—one who was not just spiritually wise but also possessed outstanding qualities as a military leader, judge, financial manager, and community organizer (Gabriel, 2007; Oda, 1986). On the other hand, they are faced with the unmistakable fact that the Prophet, being human, died.

The Khawarij promoted the communal type of leadership and the open election of leaders. The Shi'a, on the other hand, believed in ongoing divine guidance through the descendants of the Prophet. The Sunnis took a middle path and legally enacted the principle of communal election but restricted eligibility to the members of the Prophet's Quraysh tribe (Zulkarnain, 2011). In light of this, it can be argued that while the conflation of religion and politics in the West has tended to result in historical trauma and repression, in the Islamic context it has traditionally been a civilizing force. Through the Prophet's leadership, the once fragmented and brutal landscape of the Arabian Peninsula was forged into a prosperous society. Yet this deeply ingrained desire for absolute religious rule has not yet been fully resolved. Tensions between religious and political power have continued throughout Islamic history. Theologians tended to try to submit the state to religious power, and state rulers tried to assert power over religious institutions. Such struggles for power, as during the rules of the Abbasid caliphs al-Ma'mun (813–833) and al-Qadir (991–1031), regularly resulted in instability and fissure. Nevertheless, the dream of combining spiritual and temporal power within one Muslim ruler has continued as a recurring ideal in Islamic political theory.

## **2. Theoretical & Normative Dimensions: Secularism as a Western Influence and Muslim Responses**

Islamic civilization experienced a heartbreaking decline for approximately three hundred years, between 1200–1500 AD. Meanwhile, in another part of the world, the West had just experienced a process of revival after successfully overthrowing the dictatorship of the church. This success was immediately followed by rapid

technological advances. The glory of Western civilization illuminated the whole world, including tempting the Islamic world to adopt Western ideas, including secularism. Even so, the idea of secularism was not welcomed by Muslim scholars. As Naquib Al-Attas in his work entitled *Islam and Secularism* bulldozes secularism as a western project that is very incompatible with Islamic civilization.

The book, published in 1978, discusses how the views and practices of secularism affect the development of Islamic society and scholarship in the modern world. In this book, Al-Attas argues that secularism as an ideology is contrary to Islamic values. He criticizes the view of secularism that separates religion from everyday public life (privatization of religion), and asserts that Islam has provided a complete and comprehensive guide to life so that it should be able to regulate human life in all its aspects. (Al-Attas, 1993, pp. 11 – 12)

However, we should note that according to Al-Attas the concept of secularism itself can have different meanings, and not all forms of secularism should be rejected absolutely. Al-Attas recognizes that religion and the state have their functions in taking care of the needs of society so that the separation between the two can be accepted as long as it does not conflict Islamic values (Al-Attas, 1993). Al-Attas also recognizes the progress of secular science and modern technology (Al-Attas, 1993).

According to Tariq Ramadan, the privatization of religion launched by secular groups is very misleading. In addition, he also criticizes the management of government that ignores the values of spirituality (Ramadan, 2009). The criticism of this kind of privatization is also expressed by Muhammad Qutb and Ali Shariati who say that the influence of modern secularism has spread like an infectious disease among Muslims. Meanwhile, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and Fazlur Rahman both reject the view of secularism that separates science from the Islamic context. Both of them developed the concept of the Islamization of science which proposes that science must be understood in an Islamic context and must be applied to achieve Islamic goals. (Raji, 1982)

Based on some of the views of Muslim scholars above, we can conclude that the Islamic world's rejection of secularism is specific to efforts to separate religion in the public sphere. However, in order to manage the life of society, religion and the state have their own functions so that the separation between religion and the state can be accepted as long as it does not conflict with the basic principles of Islam.

## CONCLUSIONS

Religion and violence have a complex relationship that cannot be simplified as a cause-and-effect relationship. While many conflicts and violence in history have involved religious symbols and narratives, research and critical thinking from figures such as Karen Armstrong show that religion is often used as a scapegoat, while the roots of violence are more likely to stem from human nature, political interests and power struggles. The thoughts of philosophers such as Marx, Nietzsche and Hobbes reveal how religion can be used as a tool to legitimize power or even as an illusion that weakens the critical power of society. This situation gave birth to secularism in the Western world, although the Western secularization project ended in failure.

On the other hand, secularization in the Islamic world is more a demand of the times. It is a necessity in the midst of the development of Islam. In the Islamic world, secularization also emerged as a response to colonialism, modernization, and internal challenges in responding to changing times. Figures such as Ali Abd al-Raziq in Egypt argued that Islam does not require a particular form of state, including a theocratic state, thus opening up space for the separation of religion and politics. In Turkey,

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk radically implemented secularism in order to build a modern state after the Ottoman Caliphate. However, secularism in the Islamic world is not uniform; some reject it as a form of westernization, while others see it as an adaptive step to maintain the essence of religious teachings amid contemporary dynamics.

One of the most significant contributions of this paper is the use of Jose Casanova's concept of secularism to illustrate that despite massive secularization in the Western world, secularism as an ideology and principle of statecraft has failed. On the contrary, the West has become increasingly religious as the role of religion in the public sphere has grown more significant.

Additionally, this paper highlights the differing historical urgencies behind the emergence of secularism in the Western and Islamic worlds. In the West, secularism arose as a revolutionary movement against the corrupt authority of the church. In the Islamic world, however, secularism was adopted as an adaptation to the expanding reach of religion. This is reflected in the Constitution of Medina, which was drafted by the Prophet Muhammad himself.

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