Theorizing the Religious Resurgence

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd

Department of Political Science, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, Northwestern University,
Scott Hall 601 University Place, Evanston, IL 60208, USA.
E-mail: eshurd@northwestern.edu

Most attempts to theorize the religious resurgence rest on assumptions that reveal more about the social and cultural foundations of contemporary international relations than they do about the phenomenon under study. These assumptions encourage scholars to see religion as either an irrational force to be expelled from modern public life or as the foundation of entrenched competition between rival civilizations. I present an alternative theorization that identifies religious resurgence whenever authoritative secularist settlements of the relationship between metaphysics and politics are challenged. Through a case study of the rise of Islamic political identity in Turkey, I show that the religious resurgence is neither epiphenomenal nor evidence of cultural incommensurability. It is instead a manifestation of attempts to reconfigure modern divisions between the sacred and the secular.

Introduction

For at least three reasons, it has now become impossible to maintain that religion is irrelevant to international politics, as most conventional international relations (IR) theory would have it.[1] The United States and others have had a hard time imposing their vision of secular democracy around the world. Second, there has been the advent of a US foreign policy model in the George W. Bush administration that is officially secular but inspired by a kind of Christianity. Third, over the last several decades there has been a rise in religious movements and organizations with broad bases of national and transnational influence (Keddie, 1998). These developments and others like them have led many to refer to a 'resurgence of religion' in IR (Keddie 1998; Thomas, 2000, 2005). Thomas (2005, 43) has described this resurgence as the result of 'a collapse in the faith of modernizing religion…motivated by the desire…to rethink and reevaluate how religion and modernity are related.'

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There is good evidence for the resurgence. It is now unsustainable to claim that religion plays no significant role in IR; it has become a critical consideration in international security, global politics and US foreign policy (Haynes, 2004). Timothy Samuel Shah testified recently before the House International Relations Committee that 'the importance of the religion factor in public life is not decreasing or remaining static but is increasing in almost every part of the world' (http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/108/sha100604.htm). Berger (2001, 445), previously one of the foremost proponents of secularization theory, has observed that, 'put simply, most of the world is bubbling with religious passions.' Petito and Hatzopoulos (2003, 3) recently suggested that, 'the global resurgence of religion confronts IR theory with a theoretical challenge comparable to that raised by the end of the Cold War or the emergence of globalization.'

This paper tackles this challenge with a theorization of the religious resurgence as a series of attempts to challenge and reconfigure modern divisions between the sacred and the secular. The religious revival is neither a passing aberration on the road to modernization nor is it a confirmation of insurmountable cultural and religious difference in world politics. It is a dispute over the very terms of the debate involving religion and politics, a dispute that is often presumed to have been resolved once and for all long ago. The religious resurgence is evidence of a controversy over how metaphysics and politics relate to each other and to the state that calls into question fundamental received definitions of the 'sacred' and the 'secular.'

This argument differs from most extant attempts to theorize religious resurgence in IR, which tend to add religious beliefs, actors and institutions into the existing literature on sovereignty, security, global governance, conflict resolution, human rights, inter-civilizational dialogue and the role of transnational actors (Appleby, 2000; Falk, 2001, 2004; Dallmayr, 2002; Fox, 2002; Carlson and Owens, 2003; Seiple and Hoover, 2004). Though interesting and worthwhile, none of these approaches addresses a fundamental question posed originally by Asad (1996) regarding religion and politics: to what extent do assumptions about what 'religion' is and how it relates to 'politics' determine the kinds of questions worth asking about (in this case) the 'return of religion' and the kinds of answers one expects to find?[2] In other words, to what extent do secularist normative assumptions pre-structure our approach to and understanding of religious resurgence? These questions motivate this paper. I suggest that secularist assumptions are significant and that they profoundly affect how religious resurgence is theorized. They are part of the epistemological foundation of the discipline and so are embedded in the hypotheses and empirical tests of much IR scholarship. As a result, most attempts to explain the religious resurgence reveal more about the epistemological assumptions of secularist theory than they do about the resurgence itself.

The theorization proposed in this paper identifies 'religious resurgence' whenever authoritative secularist settlements of the relationship between metaphysics and politics are called into question. From this perspective, the resurgence is neither epiphenomenal nor is it evidence of cultural or religious incommensurability. It is a manifestation of the attempt to reconfigure modern divisions between the sacred and the secular. It is a challenge to authoritative secularist settlements of the relationship between religion, politics and state power in India, the United States, Turkey, Latin America and elsewhere. My objective here is not to explain or predict when such revivals will occur or why certain forms of political religion emerge at a particular time or place. As Haynes (2004, 456) has suggested in reference to the resurgence, 'there is no simple, clearcut reason, no single theoretical explanation to cover all cases.'[3] Instead, my objective is two-fold: first, to demonstrate how powerful secularist norms have structured knowledge and understanding of religious resurgence in contemporary IR; and second, to offer a new set of conceptual tools for theorizing the resurgence.[4]

The paper is divided into two sections: conceptual and historical. The former summarizes two variations of secularism that I have described in detail elsewhere and then explains how they influence contemporary interpretations of the religious resurgence. I suggest that although these representations identify important dimensions of the resurgence, the increasing presence of religious phenomena, identities and actors in IR is not fully captured as a protest against modernization, a retreat to outdated forms of political order, or a backlash against 'global modernity, authenticity and development' as Thomas (2005, 44) recently observed in his important book on the subject. Though each of these accounts carries valuable insights, I propose an alternative theorization of the resurgence as a political contestation of the fundamental contours and content of the secular and the sacred, a contest that signals the disruption of pre-existing standards of what 'religion' is and how it relates to politics. The resurgence of religion is evidence of a live and ongoing controversy over the relationship between the sacred, the profane and the political that cuts through and calls into question the definition of and boundaries between mundane and metaphysical, secular and sacred. The resurgence of religion is evidence of fundamental disagreement over the relationship between metaphysics and politics that calls into question foundational secularist divisions between the secular and the sacred. One of the central claims of this paper is that the resurgence therefore must be understood and explained not through Western categories of the sacred and secular but as a process through which these basic ontologies of political and religious order themselves are being renegotiated and ultimately refashioned (Casanova, 1994).

The second section of the paper illustrates this argument with a study of the rise of Islamic political identity in Turkey. My argument is that extant, predominantly secularist, epistemological assumptions limit understanding of the rise of Turkish political Islam and other religiously inspired forms of political identification. Developments in Turkey are difficult to theorize from within a traditional secularist epistemology because they do not fall easily into the categories available to Western observers for understanding religion and politics. My theorization of religious resurgence as a challenge to authoritative settlements of religion and politics provides a more compelling account of Turkish Islamism as neither epiphenomenal nor symptomatic of a 'return to Islam,' but as a struggle over authoritative Kemalist divisions between the secular, the sacred and the political. It is a renegotiation of the public terms of the relationship between religion and politics.

Theorizing the Resurgence

Since the end of the Cold War, most political scientists have seen religion as an inexplicable obstacle on the road to secular democracy or as evidence of cultural and civilizational difference in world politics. As Euben (1999, 7) argues, 'both pessimistic and optimistic prognoses of the post-Cold War world are content implicitly to assume and thus reinforce the idea that religio-political movements (among others) stand in relation to Western, secular power and international order as the chaos of the particularistic, irrational, and archaic stand in relation to the universalistic, rational, and modern.' As I have argued elsewhere, two secularist normative assumptions have structured attempts to theorize religion in IR. The first is that religion should be expelled from democratic politics; this is laicism. The objective here is to create a public life in which religious belief, practices and institutions have lost their political significance, fallen below the threshold of political contestation and/or been pushed into the private sphere. Falk (2004, 140) describes laicists as 'those who view religion as disposed toward extremism, even terrorism, as soon as it abandons its proper modernist role as a matter of private faith and intrudes upon public space, especially on governance.' As Haynes (1997, 713) has suggested, this is an especially influential perspective in the social sciences:

> the commanding figures of 19th century social science — Durkheim, Weber, Marx — argued that secularisation was an integral facet of modernisation, a global trend. Everywhere, so the argument goes, religion would become privatised, losing its grip on culture, becoming a purely personal matter, no longer a collective force with mobilising potential for social change.

The second form of secularism is the belief that Judeo-Christianity forms the unique basis of secular democracy, what I call 'Judeo-Christian' secularism. This refers to the belief that Christianity and/or Judeo-Christian tradition is the unique and inimitable foundation of secular public order and modern political institutions (Stark, 2005). Unlike laicism, Judeo-Christian secularism does not assume or promote a decline in or privatization of religious belief and practice, although it does assume some differentiation between the temporal and the religious. For Judeo-Christian secularists, political order in the West is based in a common set of values with their roots in Western Christianity. Secularism helps to constitute the 'common ground' upon which Western democratic order rests. The West, accordingly, displays a unique dualism between God and Caesar, church and state that is essential for democracy to flourish (author). The idea, as Buruma (2004, 46) observes, is that 'only if secular government [were] firmly embedded in the Christian faith could its democratic institutions survive.'[5] Religious tradition is a source of political cohesion, and citizens who share religious sensibilities and enter into democratic deliberation will arrive at some form of moral and political consensus (Jelen, 2000, 90).

These two forms of secularism are strategies for managing the relationship between religion and politics. Both are secularist in that they defend some form of the separation of church and state, but they do so in different ways and with different justifications. Both emphasize what (Martin, 1978, 2005; Casanova, 1994, 19) refers to as the 'core and central thesis of the theory of secularization:' the functional differentiation of the secular and the religious spheres. Laicism also adopts two corollaries to this differentiation argument, advocating the privatization and, in some cases, the decline and/or elimination of religious belief and practice altogether (Casanova, 1994, 19–20).

My argument is that the assumptions about religion and politics underlying these different forms of secularism make it difficult to fully capture the phenomena commonly identified as 'religious resurgence.' For laicists such as John Rawls and Karl Marx, democratic public order is separationist, in accordance with Rawls' (1993, 151) famous liberal injunction to 'take the truths of religion off the political agenda.' Marx (cited in Euben, 1999, 27) illustrates this view in its most extreme form: '[religions are] no more than stages in the development of the human mind — snake skins which have been cast off by history, and man [is] the snake who clothed himself in them.' For many secular theorists following in the intellectual footsteps of these thinkers, the religious resurgence appears as a reaction against the changes imposed by modernization and globalization, a moment of irrationality to be overcome or outgrown on the road to secular democracy, an epiphenomenal manifestation of structural, social, economic and political grievances, or all of the above. For instance, the resurgence is often explained as a backlash against the effects of

Q2   government efforts to modernize (Saliyeh, 1990). As governments and ruling
elites came under criticism for corruption, economic failure and political
repression, so the argument goes, 'people turned to other leaders and
institutions to champion their interests' (Rinehart, 2004, 271). The essential
element tying laicist accounts together is their common assumption that the
resurgence is epiphenomenal: it is the surface manifestation of deep underlying
political and economic grievances. From this perspective, the key question for
IR is, as Rinehart (2004, 272) argues, 'the extent to which changes in the
international system since World War II have contributed to a resurgence in
the role of religion in the politics of the developing world.' This question leads
directly to a focus on material and structural explanations of religious
resurgence.

For Judeo-Christian secularists, such as Lewis (2002, 1993) and Huntington
(1996), religious resurgence confirms two fundamental elements of world
order. First, it demonstrates the moral, religious and (therefore) political
incommensurability of different civilizations, and, secondly, it confirms the
'natural' relationship between Judeo-Christianity and secular democracy.
Despite attempts to imitate western institutions and legal codes, other
civilizations are seen as incapable of replicating the separation of religion
and state as realized in Judeo-Christian majority settings such as Europe, the
United States and Israel. The religious resurgence thus confirms the existence
of deep cultural divides that cannot be overcome with modernization,
economic and/or moral development or the globalization of secular democratic
norms and institutions.

I do not want to suggest that Judeo-Christianity has no relationship to
secularization and democratization. Protestantism, for instance, played a role
in bringing about the specific form of differentiation between the religious and
temporal spheres that took hold in the West (Philpott, 2002b). There have also
been important developments in the now relatively accommodative relation-
ship between the Catholic Church and modern liberal democracies, cautiously
evolving into what Stepan (2000) has referred to as the 'twin tolerations.'[6] As
Philpott (2004, 43 and 36) argues, 'today it is difficult to think of an influential
Catholic sector in any state that actively opposes liberal democracy,' while also
cautioning that 'the Church's support for democracy has not been the same
everywhere…the Church's democratizing influence…was complex, varying in
time, manner and extent.' The problem is not that Judeo-Christian secularism
posits connections between Christianity and secularization, which certainly
exist on multiple levels (Blumenberg, 1986; Bellah, 1991; Milbank, 1993;
Casanova, 1994; Connolly, 1999; van der Veer and Lehmann, 1999), but that it

Q3   generally fails to entertain the possibility that these same connections might
exist in the case of non-Judeo-Christian religions and (alternative forms of)
secular democracy. In short, it posits exclusivist cultural boundaries of

democracy that fail to account for non-Western democratic practices with their origins in religious tradition. As Stepan (2000, 38) argues, 'a central thrust of Huntington's message is not only that democracy emerged *first* within Western civilization but that the other great religious civilizations of the world lack the unique bundle of cultural characteristics necessary to support Western-style democracy.' Islamic law, from this perspective, cannot offer fertile ground for democratization, but instead sets the preconditions for totalitarianism by attempting to regulate all aspects of life. As Hashemi (2003, 563) has observed of Lewis, for example, 'according to Bernard Lewis, Islamic tradition and liberal democracy are fundamentally incompatible and the ultimate choice facing the Muslim world at the beginning of the twenty-first century is between religious fanaticism and modernization.' In this view, secular democracy is a unique Western achievement, and non-Western civilizations and in particular 'Islamic civilization' are missing this critical (Christian) distinction between the secular and the sacred. Stepan (2000, 40) has criticized this set of assumptions as 'the fallacy of unique founding conditions.'

The normative assumptions underlying these two forms of secularism are not fatal; indeed, representatives of these positions have brought valuable insights to the discussion of religion in IR. However, I believe that these assumptions also impose significant epistemological limitations, and, as a result, explanations that rely exclusively upon them provide only a partial account of religious resurgence. The religious revival is neither a rebellion against secular modernity nor is it confirmation of intractable religious and civilizational differences in IR. It is part of a dispute over the very terms of the debate involving religion and politics that are often taken for granted. It is evidence of a controversy over how ethics, metaphysics and politics relate to each other and to the state that calls into question fundamental received definitions of the 'secular' and the 'sacred.'

In making this argument, I am building on Asad's (2003) attempt to move beyond Durkheimian attempts to universalize a single concept of 'religion' and the 'sacred.' Instead, the idea is to 'shift our preoccupation with definitions of "the sacred" as an object of experience to the wider question of how a heterogeneous landscape of power (moral, political, economic) is constituted, what disciplines (individual and collective) are necessary to it' (Asad, 2003, 36). 'Religious resurgence' thus appears whenever authoritative secularist settlements of the relationship between metaphysics, politics and state power are challenged. The central concern for scholars of religion and IR from this perspective is not only the *degree* to which religion penetrates international, transnational or domestic politics, which it certainly does, but also and more fundamentally how secularist epistemologies and the metaphysical assumptions and institutional sites of power that sustain them are challenged and ultimately transformed by the developments associated with 'religious

resurgence.' This shift in focus allows for a different perspective on the rise of religion as an attempt to reconfigure the boundaries of the 'secular' and to refashion the frontiers of the 'political'. The next section applies this argument to explain the rise of Islamism in modern Turkey.

Islamic Resurgence in Turkey

At the founding of the modern Turkish republic in 1923, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) adapted the French model of laicism involving state control of religious expression and institutions into a unique mixture of Turkish nationalist, Sunni Islamic and European laicist traditions that became known as Kemalism (Halliday, 2000, 183; White, 2002, 35). For Kemalists, progress was defined as the management and containment of local Islamic culture (Norton, 1995; Yavuz, 2000; Navaro-Yashin, 2002; Yilmaz, 2002). Atatürk's reforms were codified in a new Turkish Civil Code enacted in 1926 (a translation of the Swiss *code civile*), which legalized state attempts to regulate religion. This included a ban on Sufi *tarikats* (religious brotherhoods) and state suppression of Sufi activities. The national capital was moved from Istanbul to Ankara to sever ties with the Byzantine and Ottoman past. The caliphate and the religious courts were abolished in 1924, the calendar changed from the Islamic to the Gregorian and Arabic script replaced with the Latin alphabet. The Turkish language was 'purified' of all words with Arabic roots; and 'within three months all books, newspapers, street signs, school papers, and public documents had to be written using the new letters' (Goldschmidt, Jr., 2002, 219). Clocks were set to European time, rather than Muslim time in which the date changed at sunset. Women were discouraged from wearing traditional dresses, and sometimes were forbidden from entering prominent public places in Ankara in traditional attire (Yavuz, 2000, 24). *Tekkes* (lodges) and *türbes* (shrines of saints) were closed by the state.

It is usually assumed that Kemalism favored a strict separation of religion and politics. Yavuz (1997, 65), for example, describes Kemalist reforms as an attempt 'to guide an exodus from the Ottoman-Islamic past…[using] the French conception of rigid secularism as a compass to determine the direction of the exodus.' As Davison (2003, 341) has shown, however, the situation is slightly more complex insofar as the Turkish state 'never made religion or Islam an entirely separate (and thus, "private") matter…The separation of religion from its previous position of influence constituted a shift in Islam's institutional and legitimation position, not its formal, full elimination…Islam was not disestablished, it was differently established.'[7] This reconfiguration of Ottoman and Islamic tradition brought a range of responses. Some Turks adopted what they perceived to be 'Western' ways, as suggested by the

following statement from Demerath's (2001, 75) interview with a Turkish colleague:

> Turkey became a nation of forgetters. Many in my parents' generation were eager to renounce the past in favor of a new westward-looking way of life. My family even got rid of our heirloom Turkish rugs in favor of chic, wall-to-wall carpeting. I recently learned that some of those rugs are now in museum shows in the United States.

Others looked to both Kemalist and Ottoman tradition, reflecting the fact that Atatürk's reforms had 'split the mind of Turkey between acceptance of secular values and a desire to go back to Muslim principles and institutions' (Goldschmidt, 2002, 223). Yilmaz (2002, 7) has argued that despite the imposition of secular law, Turks effectively combined unofficial Islamic law and official secular law into a hybrid permitting the retention of traditional ties to Islamic practice: 'in all sorts of spheres of life, Muslim law is referred to and obeyed by many people despite the non-recognition of the state.'

Other Turks were uncomfortable with the reforms; Özdalga (1998) for example describes the rise of a 'silent suspicion' of the Kemalists among rural individuals sympathetic to popular Islam and the cultural resources of the *tarikats*. As a result, various attempts to re-legitimize Islam in Turkish public life and renegotiate the Kemalist settlement began to emerge. In 1970 the first party to self-identify as 'Islamic' was established, the National Order Party (NOP). Following the military coup of 1971 the government closed down the NOP, its leaders went into exile, and in 1973 the Party reopened as the National Salvation Party (NSP), led by Necmettin Erbakan. After a coup in 1980 that shut down all political parties, the former NSP arose as the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, or RP) in July 1983. The Iranian Revolution and anger over government corruption added momentum to the RP's program in the early 1980s, at the same time that state-sponsored political and economic reforms favored an accommodationist approach to Islamic and Sufi activism in an attempt to co-opt the Islamists and suppress the left (Yavuz, 1997, 69–70). After a 1987 referendum allowed ex-politicians to re-enter politics, Necmettin Erbakan assumed the leadership of RP and took a strong stance against Kemalism, advocated an Islamic currency, Islamic United Nations, Islamic NATO and an Islamic version of the European Union. He condemned imperialism and Zionism, and publicly supported a campaign to recapture Jerusalem. During the 1980s and 1990s, the RP's appeal spread from its rural constituents to the urban lower middle classes.[8]

In 1994, RP won 19.09% of the vote in municipal elections, with the two leading center-right parties obtaining about 20% each, with electoral participation at 94%. The party won the mayorships of 30 main cities, including the business and cultural capital, Istanbul, and the national capital,

Ankara. Shortly thereafter in the 1995 general elections, RP received 21.4% of the vote, and Erbakan became Prime Minister in a coalition government with Çiller's True Path Party to form the first religious-secular coalition government in Turkey's 73-year history. By the mid-1990s, RP had established itself as one of the most influential political actors in Turkey although it remained internally divided, with conservatives supporting an Islamic-friendly form of modernization and radicals skeptical of universalist approaches to law and governance on the other (Gülalp, 1997). RP drew support from Islamist intellectuals seeking freedom of religious expression, Sunni Kurds seeking state recognition, the urban poor seeking social justice and the new bourgeoisie advocating liberalization and the eradication of state subsidies for large corporations (Yavuz, 1997, 79–80). As White (2002, 3) notes, 'the political interests of its constituents ranged widely, from social and economic reform to replacing the secular state system with one founded on Islamic law.' Gülalp (2001, 444) describes the social base of the movement as 'a vertical bloc comprising segments of different socio-economic classes…united in their common opposition to Kemalism and their expression of political will through the assertion of an Islamic identity.' Göle (1995, 39) traces the party's success to the participation of critical Islamist elites such as engineers, intellectuals and women in a system supportive of their social mobility and political participation. The RP also contained within its ranks 'the peripheral groups, the urban underclasses who, in a context of frustration and despair, can easily turn toward terrorism and crime' (Göle, 1995, 39). For example, Welfare brought in the Kurdish vote 'timidly in discourse, but forcefully in election results' (Göle, 1995, 41). It offered a means of identification for individuals who identified with Islamic and/or Ottoman tradition by seeking to 'incorporate the Ottoman times into national memory, unsettling the secularist constructions of national history centered around the Kemalist/Republican era of the twentieth century' (Çinar, 2001, 365).

The Kemalist response to the rise of RP was to 'drown the party at the bottom of the sea.'[9] On February 28, 1997, the National Security Council forced Erbakan to accept 18 'recommendations' reaffirming the secular nature of the Turkish state and designating political Islam the top national security concern. The military briefed governmental, judicial and non-governmental organizations on the presence of an 'Islamic threat' in Turkey. Succumbing to the pressure, Erbakan resigned on June 18, 1997. In this 'soft coup,' the army enjoyed the backing of the Kemalist establishment, including much of the military, civil service and intelligentsia. In January 1998, the Turkish Constitutional Court banned the RP, expelled Erbakan from Parliament, tried him for sedition, banned him from politics for 5 years and seized the Party's assets. The Court argued that, 'laicism is not only a separation between religion and politics but also a necessary division between religion and society'

(Yavuz, 2000, 38).[10] Defying the official ban, the RP was succeeded by the Virtue (*Fazilet*) Party, which Gülalp (2001, 434–434) has described as 'eager to distance itself from the Welfare legacy, even though it inherited Welfare's political cadres and most of its parliamentary seats.' Virtue was banned in June of 2001, charged with serving as a 'center for antisecular activities.' Virtue split into two factions: conservatives led by Erbakan became the Felicity (*Saadet*) party and reformists under Recep Tayyip Erdogan became the Justice and Development Party (AKP). In national elections on November 3, 2002, AK received 34% of the vote, far more than any other party and enough to form a government and nominate a Prime Minister. Disposing of nine out of 10 members of the previous parliament, voters granted a mandate to a party with Islamic connections for the first time in the history of modern Turkey.

While some argue that AK has successfully renegotiated the religious/secular divide in Turkey since taking power in late 2002, others counter that the party has distanced itself from its previous affiliations so as to render its challenge to Kemalism insubstantial or even nonexistent. In any case, despite trepidation on the part of the military and its allies concerning the 'Islamicization' of Turkish politics, AK has not imposed Islamic law but instead has endorsed what White (2003, 6–9) describes as a 'Muslimhood' model, in which 'religious ethics inspire public service but overt religiosity is not part of an individual's public political identity.'

Theorizing the Turkish Resurgence

From a laicist perspective, the Turkish resurgence appears as a form of 'backsliding' away from modernization and toward archaic forms of political order that threaten domestic stability and international security. Islamism from this perspective is, as Gülalp (1997, 431) describes it, 'a remnant of underdevelopment that is bound to disappear with industrialization and urbanization.' The revival of religion must be suppressed in defense of democratic norms and institutions. Laicist ideology underlies both domestic and international actors' responses to developments in Turkey. The Kemalist establishment and its allies abroad, including the United States, are wary of the rise of Islamic political identification due to its alleged threat to democratization.[11] As Caliskan and Taskin (2003) argue, 'no party generally accepted as Islamist can be a welcome part of the ruling civilian–military bureaucracy, who embrace militant secularism, neo-liberalism, authoritarian rule and a hawkish foreign policy as the main principles of government.' The influence of laicism is also evident in the August 2001 decision by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to support the Turkish establishment's suppression of the Welfare Party. The ECHR ruled 4–3 that the Turkish action to ban the party did not violate human rights 'because Turkey had legitimate concerns about

the party's threatening its democratic society' (*International Herald Tribune*, 2001, 3). The Court assumed that either a party is laicist *or* it represents a threat to democratic politics.

As Göle (1995, 38–39) has argued, however, RP was a 'religious' party that did not advocate a radical stance against the West, democracy, or even some aspects of secularism. These complexities escaped the laicist categorizations of religion and politics available to both European and Turkish judicial authorities, including those sitting on the ECHR. The only two alternatives for Turkish public order were presumed to be benevolent secular democracy or menacing Islamic theocracy. Kemalism was seen as the closest approximation to the former, while non-Kemalist democratic alternatives were defined out of existence.

Judeo-Christian secularist normative assumptions present a similar yet slightly less optimistic account of the rise of public religion in Turkey. In this view, secular democracy is a unique Western achievement with deep roots in Western culture and civilization that cannot be fully replicated in Muslim-majority societies. The resurgence confirms the incommensurability of different civilizations and the frustrating futility of attempting to 'export' secularism outside historical Latin Christendom and its settler colonies. From this perspective, challenges to Kemalism are throwbacks to pre-modern politics and represent a threat to public and international order to be met with strong opposition both domestically and internationally. As Lewis (2002, 424) has observed, 'the path that the revival will take is still not clear. If simple reaction has its way, much of the work of the last century will be undone, and Turkey will slip back into the darkness from which she so painfully emerged.' In these circumstances, a 'heavy (Kemalist) state' that acts against the ever-present threat of political Islam appears as the optimal solution.

Secularist norms not only circumscribe attempts to theorize the religious resurgence; they also thwart effective political responses to the rise of public religion in non-Judeo-Christian majority settings such as Turkey. Non-laicist and non-Judeo-Christian secularist modes of religious separation and accommodation are quickly dismissed as threats to the foundations of modern politics, backlash against modernization and globalization, or evidence of the clash of civilizations. As Euben (1999, 44) argues:

> Post-Enlightenment thought defines modern politics in terms of a public realm that is or should be…animated either by apparently objective socioeconomic interests or secular ideals, or both; by contrast the very definition of irrationalism is historically and culturally linked with the authority of religion, faith, and tradition. The attempt to remake the public realm in terms of religious imperatives, to (re-) define the boundary between public and private, to (re-) interpret the collective good in terms of a divine

mandate comes to seem no less than an attempt to destroy the foundations of modern politics itself.

Secularist assumptions effectively de-legitimize non-Western approaches to religion and politics, such as RP and the AKP, that endorse different modes of separation and accommodation between religion and politics. Advocates of separation are seen either as imitating the West or giving up their own traditions in the face of Western power and superiority, or both. Democratic alternatives to Western-derived forms of secular democracy either do not exist or pale in comparison to their more robust Western counterparts.

In short, most attempts to explain the Islamic resurgence in Turkey reveal more about secularist epistemology than they do about the revival itself. Rather than a backlash against modernization or a revival of pre-modern Islamic tradition, the Turkish resurgence is more accurately characterized as a modern controversy over the content of and the boundaries between the sacred and the secular, including how each of these categories is defined by and in relation to the state. The rise in religiously inspired political identification in Turkey is a public struggle over the authoritative designation of the secular and the sacred authorized, enforced and modified by state authorities since the founding of the modern Republic. It is a challenge to the Kemalist attempt to create and regulate the division between the secular, the sacred and the political. This debate is not only about how religion relates to the state and to politics, but over how the most fundamental terms of religious and political discourse are defined and practiced in relation to each other. Islam is a discursive framework and set of political traditions that is mobilized in different ways by both the Kemalists *and* their challengers to legitimate their respective political positions (Parla and Davison, 2004).

This argument improves upon the existing accounts of the resurgence as a side effect of economic or political woes, a stage in the rocky transition to Western modernity, or evidence of a global clash of civilizations. Challenges to Kemalism are not adequately captured as an irrational backlash against secularization or as evidence of a clash of civilizations spawned by commitments to pre-modern Islamic ideals. Instead, these political developments are part of a series of efforts to grant cultural and historical legitimacy to alternative models of religious separation and accommodation. They are evidence of the multivocality, rather than univocality, of Islamic tradition. As Stepan (2000, 44) argues, 'when we consider the question of non-Western religions and their relationship to democracy, it would seem appropriate not to assume univocality but to explore whether these doctrines contain multivocal components that are *usable* for (or at least *compatible* with) the political construction of the twin tolerations.' The success of Islamic movements in Turkey attests both to the inability of the Kemalists to monopolize divisions

between religion and politics and to the multivocality of Islamic tradition and its potential compatibility with Stepan's 'twin tolerations.' The attempt to remake the Turkish public realm is not a threat to the foundation of modern politics. It is a modern contestation of authoritative division between the secular and the sacred authorized and regulated by state authorities since the founding of the modern Republic in 1923.

Conclusion

Referring to religion in IR, Elshtain (Carlson and Owens, 2003, x) observed recently that, 'no one quite knows how to capture the energies unleashed in our world conceptually.' The confusion identified by Elshtain results from the fact that 'religious' and 'political,' like 'sacred' and 'secular,' are generally presumed to be unchanging categories aligned with familiar modern divisions between public and private. This is a mistaken assumption. Secularism is a social and historical construct. 'Religion' and 'politics' are not well defined and stable sub-categories of a broader set of binary divisions between public and private with their origins in the European Enlightenment, as commonly assumed. They are deeply contested categories. It is misleading to assume that secularist divisions between religion and politics are stable, universal and normative.

This claim is similar to Cutler's (2001) argument concerning the inherently political nature of the 'private' sphere and its implications for the legitimacy of the state, international law and international organization. Claims to 'secular' *vs* 'religious' objects function in a similar way to how Cutler treats public and private. A process of differentiating between subject and object associates the former with 'secular' actors, states and processes, and the latter with 'religious' actors, states and processes, and then objectifies this condition by allowing the secular subject to 'drop out of sight.' In the case of law and the state, Cutler (2001, 133) shows that this process enabled international law 'to stand alone as the embodiment of sovereign will, authority and legitimacy.' In the case of secularism, it enabled particular forms of secular authority (such as laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism) to stand as the fixed and unalterable embodiment of authority and legitimacy. The 'sacred' sphere (as defined by secularists), like Cutler's 'private' sphere, is defined out of existence as a political domain.

However as Cutler, Strange (1994), Helleiner (1996) and others have shown with regard to IPE, and Derrida (1998), Connolly (1999) and King (1999) have shown with regard to secularism, the process through which these spheres are designated as 'sacred' or 'private' is itself highly politicized. Like public and private, the sacred and the secular are constructed, contested and relational political constructs. As Honig (1992, 225) suggests, 'the distinction between

public and private [needs to be] seen as the performative product of political struggle, hard won and always temporary.'

Secularist distinctions between religion and politics are hard won and always temporary. Political scientists have stumbled in the attempt to theorize the return of religion because their concept of authority fails to recognize the politics involved in defining, enforcing and contesting authoritative conceptualizations of the sacred and secular. The discipline has not fully been able to come to terms with the actors, structures and processes that are shaped by and contribute to these conceptualizations. In terms of policy, this also contributes to the tendency to see (benevolent) Western forms of secular democracy and (menacing) religious theocracy as the only two alternative forms of theo-political order.

Theorizing the religious resurgence brings together concerns that cut across the debates of the last 20 years focused on realism, liberalism and constructivism. Constructivism offers one promising set of theoretical tools for considering how secular and religious identities are constituted and how they inform state interests, institutions and identity. The construction of state identity as secular or theocratic, for example, is the product of specific historical processes. Constructivism also can help to identify how both secular and religiously inspired political movements conceive their identities and interests in specific historical circumstances (author). Theorizing religious resurgence, however, also will require reevaluating the secularist epistemological foundations of the discipline that govern what counts as 'politics' in international politics. Religion and politics do not instinctively sort themselves out into distinct domains of power. Modern forms of secularism, like modern forms of nationalism, are made rather than found. They are continually forged out of political struggles over the division between the sacred and the secular (White, 2003, 9). Religion and politics overlap and intersect, composing enduring political settlements that wax and wane in their influence. Coming to terms with the contingent secularist foundations of modern international politics makes it possible to identify the return of religion not as a 'special atavistic anomaly' (Petito and Hatzopoulos, 2003, 149) but as integral to, and always partially constitutive of, modern politics.

To summarize and conclude, the religious resurgence disables the conceptual apparatus used to interpret it. The two sets of secularist norms described above lead scholars to see religious resurgence as either a backlash against modernization and globalization or as harbingers of cultural conflict. Yet, as the Turkish case demonstrates, religion is neither fading from international life as modernization proceeds nor is it a guarantor of conflict when it makes its way into the public sphere in non-Western contexts. The resurgence must be viewed instead as evidence of a series of challenges to fundamental authoritative settlements involving the line between, and the content of, the

sacred and the secular. The accelerated reconfiguration of these settlements currently taking place on a global scale is evidence that divisions between the sacred and the secular are not given but are socially and historically constructed. The utility of traditional secularist assumptions that assume a fixed and unchanging definition of the 'secular' for understanding these developments is increasingly limited.

Notes

1 A survey of articles in leading IR journals between 1980 and 1996 found that, 'only six or so out of a total of about sixteen hundred featured religion as an important influence' (Philpott, 2002a, 69).

2 This adapts Asad's observation that 'one's conception of religion determines the kinds of questions one thinks are askable and worth asking' (Asad, 1986, 1996, 11).

3 Haynes argues against the idea of a 'resurgence,' arguing instead that what we are witnessing is 'the latest manifestation of *cyclical* religious activity, made highly visible (and hence alarming) by advances in communications technology and availability' (Haynes, 1997, 715; 2004, 457). I believe my conceptual framework also applies to and helps to explain the nature of this 'cyclical activity.'

4 For a different approach to the problematic role of secularist assumptions in IR theory, see Petito and Hatzopoulos (2003) and Thomas (2005).

5 Buruma (2004) traces this idea to the first European Christian democratic party (the Anti-Revolutionary Party) founded in 1879 by Abraham Kuyper, a Calvinist ex-pastor in the Netherlands.

6 Stepan (2000) defines the twin tolerations as 'the minimal boundaries of freedom of action that must somehow be crafted for political institutions *vis-à-vis* religious authorities, and for religious individuals and groups *vis-à-vis* political institutions.'

7 The extent to which the Turkish state exercises hegemony over religion (the 'control account') *vs* the extent to which religious activities and institutions are separated from state activity (the 'separation account') is debated (Cizre, 1996). Davison (1998) argues that there is tension between these dimensions of Turkish laicism and that elements of both are operative.

8 RP received 4.4% of the votes in the March 1984 municipal elections, 7.7% in the November 1987 general elections and 9.8% in the March 1989 municipal elections.

9 As Atatürk famously stated, 'I have no religion, and at times I wish all religions at the bottom of the sea' (Remnick, 2002, 51).

10 RP also faced opposition from the leading Istanbul-based bourgeoisie and media cartel, which was benefiting financially from the privatization of state companies. RP officials had opposed this process on grounds of corruption (Yavuz, 2000, 39).

11 The Turkish military had the full support of Israel and the United States in the 1998 ouster of the Erbakan government (Yavuz, 2003, 254).

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