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The International Politics of Secularism: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran

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> The Iranian people did not rebel against their own failed rulers but against ours.
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> —Robert J. Allison

In his study of religious nationalism and modern politics, Mark Juergensmeyer describes secular nationalism and religion as two opposing "ideologies of order."[1] These ideologies, he explains, have a great deal in common. They "conceive of the world in coherent, manageable ways; they both suggest that there are levels of meaning beneath the day-to-day world that give coherence to things unseen; and they both provide the authority that gives the social and political order its reason for being." After a lengthy analysis in which he portrays religion and nationalism as opposing ideologies, Juergensmeyer concludes that "there can ultimately be no convergence between religious and secular political ideologies."[2]

Juergensmeyer takes us some distance toward an understanding of the relationship between secular nationalism and religion. However, I want to take his insight into this relationship in a direction that he does not explore. For while he convincingly shows how secular and religious worldviews differ from each other, Juergensmeyer does not explore the extent to which secular order itself is created and maintained through its opposition to religion. Secularism has developed over centuries of experimentation and innovation. A curious relationship exists between this tradition and its religious counterparts. This article explores this relationship in the context of twentieth-century relations between the United States and Iran.

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To understand U.S. foreign policy toward Iran, I believe that we need to shift our attention away from religious threats to secular modernity and toward secular attempts to identify the "religious." There are two varieties of secularism in the West. The first is laicism, or the attempt to expel religion from public life. In this form of secularism, the "sacred" and the "religious" are expelled from public discourse and practice.[3]

The second is what I call Judeo-Christian secularism, in which sacred aspects of Judeo-Christianity quietly inform public discourse and practice. Secularism has a rather cozy relationship with Judeo-Christian tradition. Judeo-Christian secularists believe that their religious tradition has culminated in the unique Western achievement of the separation of church and state. Secularization, then, is understood as the realization of a Western religious tradition. Both of these varieties of secularism are extremely unsympathetic toward the Islamic religion. Both chastise Islamic activists for attempting to import their religion into a would-be secular (either laicist or Judeo-Christian) democratic public sphere.[4] Both, in other words, are sustained through the identification and marginalization of Islam. When I refer to secularism, I am referring to both of these varieties.

The argument is divided into three parts: The first sets out the conceptual framework that underlies my argument, the paradox of identity and difference; the second part applies this framework to relations between the United States and Iran. In particular I explain why the Islamic Revolution was perceived as such a profound threat to the United States. In challenging the automatic linkage between secularism, democracy, and freedom, the revolution threatened U.S. nationalism, in which these ideals are tightly interwoven. To counter this threat, Americans projected all of the negative traits that had been associated with secular modernity under the shah—violence, tyranny, and lack of democracy—onto an Islamic other. This projection served two functions: it exculpated the United States from its association with the shah's regime and it cemented the association of the United States with secular democracy in opposition to its nemesis, religious tyranny. My argument, then, in the third part, is that the very identity of the United States as secular and democratic was at stake in the Iranian Revolution. The need to reclaim this identity, and to reaffirm the link between secularism, democracy and freedom, accounts for the fervor of U.S. opposition to Iran.

One implication of this thesis is that contrary to the "clash of civilizations" argument, animosity between the United States and Iran witnessed over the past three decades is not a function of

immutable cultural difference. It is the result of a series of events in which an imperial form of secular modernity was challenged and replaced by an imperial form of religious modernity, with consequences for both communities involved. Secularists, as I argue in the third part of the article, would do well to come to terms with their mixed role in these events, rather than dismissing the revolution as an irrational embrace of Islamic tradition. As I will demonstrate, the revolution presented a much more profound challenge to secularism, and to the U.S. national identity itself, than is suggested by such accounts.

One caveat is in order. This article analyzes secularist discourse and its relation to religion, and in particular Islam. Not everything associated with secularism is subject to my critique, and I am not suggesting that secularism be discarded or that a common religion be reinstated in public space. Secular theory and practice have made commendable contributions to democratization and liberalization in many contexts. I am suggesting, however, that we examine a neglected dimension of secularism: its aspiration to serve as a universal grammar of public life that defines itself by identifying and marginalizing the religious, and in particular the Islamic.[5] This move carries with it an extraordinary degree of power.[6] This article examines this power and its consequences for international relations.

Secularism and Religion

The philosopher Eugenio Trias has argued that "it is in the struggle against religion that reason has sought to secure its own legitimacy."[7] Sociologist José Casanova observes that "what seems to precipitate the religious response are different types of state intervention and administrative colonization of the lifeworld and the private sphere."[8] Policy analyst Suzanne Maloney notes that "we are defined as much by whom and what we reject as different, as by references that resonate."[9] Each of these statements hints at the relationship between secularism and religion. To explore this relationship more fully, I turn to the paradox of identity and difference, described by William E. Connolly as follows: "In a world without an intrinsic design, every personal, group and collective identity is defined and specified through the way it constitutes difference. Identity . . . requires difference to be, but difference also threatens the security and certainty of self-identity."[10]

The paradox of identity and difference applies to the relation between secularism and religion. Secularism depends upon the religious for its own self-identification.[11] It strives to differentiate

itself vis-à-vis religious others.[12] At the same time, in order to sustain its identity as nonreligious, secularism denies this interdependence with religion. Secular order must be constantly purified. It must repeatedly emphasize the difference between a secular self and a religious other. It does so by defining the religious as a threat to the secular. As Connolly observes, "the strategy that provides the most compelling way to consolidate identity is to define a range of differences as evil, heresy, irrational, irresponsible, abnormal or sick."[13] The result is that secularists project undesirable traits, such as a proclivity toward violence or antidemocratic tendencies, onto a religious other, defined as evil or irrational. Charles Taylor has described this as a "purificatory imaginary."[14] Interestingly, this purificatory process often relies on religiously based language, even in a theoretically secular context.

Secular opposition to religion contributes to the impression that secularism is neutral, nonreligious, or postmetaphysical. This claim to neutrality is a powerful one. It obscures a more fundamental commonality between secularism and the religion that it antagonizes. Like religion, secularism relies upon a particular set of presumptions about the relationship between the sacred and the profane. It aspires to organize this relationship, and, to varying degrees, to universalize it. Secularists deflect attention from these presumptions to cement their claim to represent the rational and the just vis-à-vis their "irrational" religious rivals.

Secularism, then, is an exercise of power. Like foreign policy, it constitutes, produces, and maintains political identities.[15] It legislates the relationship between the sacred and the profane, the religious and the secular. It legislates the relationship between that which it defines as nontransparent, incalculable, and nonrepresentable (the realm of the sacred) and that which it interprets as transparent, calculable, and representable (the realm of the profane). Secularists claim to have left the undesirable aspects of religion behind. These aspects, they claim, have been purged from secular order. They belong to someone else or to some other time.

Yet the irony is that secularists often end up repeating precisely the same pattern from which they have allegedly liberated themselves. As René Girard has convincingly shown, violence cannot be attributed to religion alone.[16] As it defines and excludes its religious others, secularism has the potential to jeopardize democratic politics, especially if secularists feel existentially threatened by the "opposing camp." This dynamic lurks behind state repression in the name of secularism and fuels crackdowns on intellectuals and religious activists who are perceived as threatening secular state power.[17] It contributes to animosity between the communities associated with

secular and religious discourses, both domestically and internationally. An antagonistic interdependence propels relations between secularists and their religious others.[18]

Nowhere has this antagonism become more entrenched than in the opposition between secularists and Islamists. Turkish sociologist Nilüfer Göle argues that Islamist movements can be understood only in terms of their problematic relation to Western modernity.[19] Political scientist Bassam Tibi notes that "the foremost issue related to the pertinence of politicized religion for [international relations] is exactly the 'revolt against the West' directed against the existing secular order."[20] Political Islam is fully comprehensible only in its opposition to secularism. And vice versa. Secularism depends upon its opposition to Islam for its own self-identification, while at the same time distancing itself from any association with it. This distance is achieved by portraying political Islam as a threat to secular democracy, organization of the public/private divide, and the concept and practice of religious freedom. Nowhere have these claims been staked more fervently than in the case of U.S. opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Secular Foreign Policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran

People in the United States saw the Islamic Revolution in Iran as a rejection of modern Western values. In Mrs. Soderlund's fourth-grade class in Minneapolis, this rejection was not addressed. The status of the fifty-two Americans held hostage in the U.S. embassy in Tehran, however, was at the forefront of our attention. On the wall there was an enormous calendar. With each day that passed during the eighteen-month crisis, Mrs. Soderlund took a thick, red marker and crossed out the entire day with a red *X*. I was intrigued. Her red marks instilled a sense of curiosity about those whose actions warranted the symbolic obliteration of an entire day, day after day, month after month. We were told that the Iranians were angry at the United States. They were ill-equipped to make sound political decisions, they were Muslims, and they had taken innocent U.S. hostages.[21] The Iranians were fanatical, very far away, and altogether different from us. They were in fact defined through their opposition to us. We in the United States, in turn, were *not* Iranian, not fanatical and most significantly *not* Muslim. We were rational, secular, Christian, and democratic. The secularist imaginary was at work. This section describes how this powerful secularist grip on the U.S. political imagination shaped Washington's policy toward Iran. I locate the key to the opposition between the

United States and Iran in the demands of secularism and its relationship to religion, and in particular Islam.

Many factors have contributed to U.S. opposition to Iran since the revolution, including the hostage crisis, Cold War geopolitics, concern over the fate of Israel, and personal sympathy for the shah among Americans and their leaders. Each has been discussed in the vast literature on the revolution and the Islamic resurgence.[22] Yet despite this abundant commentary, the Islamic Revolution remains what John Esposito described as "beyond the imagination of experts and rulers alike."[23] I believe that this is because the revolution *is* incomprehensible from within a secularist frame of reference. In order to come to terms with the revolution and its aftermath, it is necessary to evaluate U.S.-Iranian relations from a perspective that achieves a critical distance from the secularist worldview.

There are two important phases in mid-twentieth-century Iranian history: the shah's regime between 1941 and 1979, and the post-1979 Islamic Republic. To understand the logic of secularization behind the first phase, it is necessary to refer back to a much older definition of secularism that has since fallen out of use. In the sixteenth century, *to secularize* meant to make someone or something secular, converting from ecclesiastical to civil use or possession.[24] To secularize meant to take possession of that which had been associated with the ecclesiastical. At the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, for example, secularization referred to the laicization of church lands.[25] It referred to the taking possession of land and people. This meaning of secularization has been obscured because in Western democracies secularism is now predominantly associated with the separation of church and state. This is not the case, however, in other parts of the world. *To secularize,* in many non-Western contexts, has retained the sixteenth-century connotation, "to take possession of." In the Middle East, and in Iran in particular, secularism has served as a legitimizing principle for the suppression of local politics and practices. Understanding secularism in these terms allows us to make sense of U.S. relations with Iran between 1941 and 1979. The United States sought to "take possession of" Iran in the name of a secular, modern, free (meaning anti-Communist) ideal. The result was the Islamic Revolution of 1978–1979.

To elaborate on this chain of events: After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Britain and the USSR demanded the expulsion of German advisers from Iran, seized control of the Trans-Iranian Railway, and forced Reza Shah to abdicate in favor of his son. In 1953, after the shah had been forced into exile by Prime Minister Muhammad Mossadegh's movement that threatened Western oil

interests by nationalizing Iranian oil, the United States and Britain organized a coup to overthrow Mossadegh. Known as Operation Ajax, it was a resounding success for both U.S. and British intelligence.[26] After the coup, the United States escorted the shah from Rome back to Tehran on a U.S. military plane, accompanied by the head of the CIA.[27] This inaugurated a close relationship between the shah and the United States that, as Esposito describes, continued to evolve during the 1960s:

> At a time when the United States was heavily committed in Vietnam and Britain was withdrawing its forces from the Persian Gulf, the Shah's Iran represented policies and interests that coincided with those of the United States, from the Shah's rejection of Nasserism and pragmatic relations with Israel, and his nation's stable presence in the Gulf, to its oil wealth and market for American products. American and European bankers and businessmen along with diplomats and military advisors enjoyed a high-profile presence in Iran.[28]

In the early 1970s, in return for his assurances that he would serve as a proxy of the United States in the Persian Gulf (and in accordance with the Nixon Doctrine of 1969),[29] the shah received access to all nonnuclear hardware in the U.S. arsenal, including F-14 and F-15 supersonic jets.[30] Melani McAlister describes the shah's purchases, which were paid for out of his rising reservoir of petrodollars: "Never known for restraint when it came to shopping lists, during the next five years the shah would shell out $16.2 billion—nearly seven times what he had spent during the preceding two decades—for U.S. planes, tanks, warships, and other sophisticated weapons systems."[31]

The shah used this equipment to assist the sultan of Oman to put down a Soviet-backed uprising in 1973, which delighted his supporters in Washington. In addition to containing the Soviet Union, he advanced two other important goals of U.S. policy in the region: support for Israel and assurance of a continual supply of oil to the West. Iran was one of the few Middle Eastern nations that did not participate in the oil embargo of 1973.[32]

On the home front, Iran under the shah was a case study in forced Westernization. Maloney describes the shah as "defiantly secular and vehemently nationalist."[33] His disdain for local tradition was only thinly disguised: "The Shah was repelled by traditionalism; he swore to raze all of the country's *bazaars* in order to build supermarkets, and he boasted of plans to boost the Iranian economy beyond that of Germany and France by the turn of the

century."[34] To this end, the shah instituted a series of modernizing policies, drawing on oil revenues (the "White Revolution") that benefited elites and led to discontent among the *bazaari* (merchants), the religious classes, and the urban poor, who felt threatened by the influx of Western banks and the rise of a state-supported Western-oriented class.[35] Modernization led to urbanization and a rise in slums. A small minority prospered, yet as a result of the programs a once agriculturally self-sufficient country was spending more than a billion dollars on imports.[36] The deteriorating living conditions of the urban poor contributed to general hostility toward the shah's regime and toward the West. After the CIA-led coup of 1953, however, Colonel H. Norman Schwarzkopf (father of the Desert Storm commander) had aided the shah to organize a brutally effective secret police force known as the SAVAK.[37] As a result, with the exception of a small Shi'a elite, dissenters were silenced.[38]

Despite this repressive environment, a broad coalition of Iranian dissenters arose nonetheless during the 1960s and 1970s to protest the shah's domestic policies and his friendship with the United States. This coalition held together through the revolution. In fact, McAlister observes that initially "the Iranian government under Khomeini's leadership was . . . composed of a complex set of disparate elements that had little in common but their desire to get rid of the shah and a broadly shared hatred of the United States as the shah's backer."[39] Before the revolution, nationalists, leftists, secularists and religionists, merchants, clergy, and modern elites all participated in a growing, broad-based opposition movement.[40] By the late 1970s, the opposition had become politically active in Iran. On January 8, 1978, a group of students and mullahs loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini (who had been exiled in Turkey, France, and Iraq) gathered to protest the shah's regime. Government forces opened fire on the meeting, killing two dozen demonstrators. This sparked a wave of anti-Pahlavi outbursts. The spring and summer of 1978 brought enormous street demonstrations, and in September of that year the shah's troops fired on twenty thousand pro-Khomeini protestors in Tehran, killing four hundred protestors and wounding four thousand. As the protests intensified, it became evident that little could be done to prevent the shah's downfall.

In January 1979, the shah fled to Egypt. Khomeini returned from exile at the end of January, denouncing the United States as a vile traitor and dismissing the "White Revolution" as an affront to Muslim tradition. On February 2, 1979, he told a huge crowd just outside Tehran that the shah had "enacted his so-called reforms in order to create markets for America and to increase our dependence upon America." The U.S.-sponsored attempt to take possession of Iran in

the name of a secular, democratic, and capitalist ideal had failed. The authoritarian nature of the shah's U.S.-backed monarchy led to a backlash against everything that it represented.

Take the veil as an example. It is common knowledge that a strict Islamic dress code was implemented by the Iranian regime that came to power in 1979; what is less-well-known is that Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925–1941) had implemented an equally restrictive code earlier in the twentieth century in the attempt to modernize Iran. Pahlavi, the first shah, mandated "secular" Western dress for men, restricted clerical attire, and banned the veil for women.[41] This incited a strong counterreaction under the regime of the shah's son, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi (r. 1941–1978). According to Esposito, following the violent government repression of public protests on September 8, 1978 (Black Friday), "women who had worn modern attire now joined their more traditional sisters in donning the veil as a symbol of protest against a monarch whose modernization program had once attempted to ban it."[42] This recalls Frantz Fanon's description of the veiling debate in Algeria: "The veil was worn because tradition demanded a rigid separation of the sexes, but also because the occupier *was bent on unveiling Algeria*."[43]

A new Iranian identity, then, was forged around a campaign of antisecularism and "de-Westoxification." It was a response to what one Iranian writer and activist denounced as Westoxification *(gharbzadegi)*: "the profound psychological dislocation produced by an internationally orchestrated economy and a bifurcated culture—which he compared to cholera infecting Iran."[44] Hostility toward foreign interventionism and the repression of domestic dissent contributed to Khomeini's triumph over his moderate competitors and to the ferment of theocracy.[45] As Ali Mirsepassi argues, "one of the reasons why the movement against the shah and his modernization policies was translated into an Islamic discourse was that the only existing sub-culture to survive the political terror of the Pahlavi State were the institutions of Shi'a Islam."[46] In 1953, the returning shah had destroyed all forms of democratic political association. Pre-coup opposition groups, located in unions, parties, and the media, were forced, after the coup, into mosques, seminary schools, bazaars, and universities.[47] Although the shah brutally suppressed secular dissent, he tolerated Shi'i independence. As a compelling alternative discourse to Western-centric modernization, "the hegemony of political Islam was made possible through capturing the 'imaginary' of the Iranians in a way that presented itself as the only desirable answer to the country's dilemmas."[48] The shah's systematic repression of all alternatives, and the secular

opposition itself, contributed to the rise of popular Shi'ism by romanticizing the Islamist movement. Contrary to popular belief, Iran had no direct historical precedent for governance by the clergy: "The basis for Khomeini's theory of Islamic governance—the guardianship of the religious jurist *(post-veliyet-e faqih)*—rests on a novel and almost unprecedented reinterpretation of religious canon that continues to be contested by senior theologians."[49] This was not a "return" to Islamic tradition. An imperial form of secular modernity had been challenged and replaced by an imperial form of religious modernity.

The Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979, then, was the culmination of a gradual yet insistent rejection of Western paradigms of secularization and modernization. As Juergensmeyer asserts, "the goal of the Islamic Revolution in Iran . . . was not only to free Iranians politically from the shah but also to liberate them conceptually from Western ways of thinking."[50] The revolution was a backlash against the attempt to take possession of Iran in the name of a secular and anti-Communist ideal. As Mirsepassi observes, Iranians had rejected the attempt to control their society through a proxy relationship with the shah: "The explicit delegitimizing of local culture by an outside invader, who in turn insisted upon the singular universality of their own culture and practices, is especially relevant for our purposes because such a division led to the complete loss of the shah's state power and the ruling class's legitimacy in pre-revolutionary Iran."[51]

It was in this tumultuous context that a second phase of U.S.-Iranian relations was inaugurated. The hostage crisis, in which Iranian students seized the U.S. embassy in November 1979 and held fifty-two U.S. diplomats hostage for 444 days, was one of the most significant consequences of this rejection of Western influence.[52] This crisis occurred in large part because Iranian revolutionaries believed that the United States was sheltering the shah in exile and preparing to return him to power. After the 1953 coup, in which the CIA toppled Prime Minister Mossadegh, Iranians were skeptical of U.S. claims that the shah was being treated for cancer in the United States. One effect of this crisis, as Maloney has argued, was that it "fused the extremist dimensions of the divergent worldviews remaining within the revolutionary coalition: radical anti-Westernism and vehemently Islamist self-identification."[53] The result, as Jocelyn Cesari has observed, is that "when people think resistance to the West, they think Islam."[54]

Though the revolutionary movement had been gathering momentum for three decades, the events of 1978–1979 baffled Western analysts, who failed to anticipate such a backlash. As Mirsepassi

describes it, "every expectation was defied . . . the media, academia and public were overwhelmed by the vision of a modernizing and pro-Western monarchy being overthrown by a mass movement under the leadership of men whose image matched the most deeply entrenched Orientalist stereotypes."[55] The country that U.S. president Jimmy Carter had described as an "island of stability" had been torn apart by upheaval that just weeks before it occurred had been unimaginable. Secular analysts had failed to recognize that what they saw as the innocent globalization of modern ways could be perceived by Iranians as the "massive expropriation and appropriation" of their culture, society, and politics. Most Iranians, on the other hand, had a different experience of secularization, one that was literally unimaginable to most of the United States.

From 1979 onward, the United States defined itself in opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The politics of secularism explain the extraordinary vehemence of this opposition. In defining that which is mundane, secularists assign a place for that which is *not* mundane: the religious. Secularism defines itself as the starting point in relation to which the "religious" is defined. Or in the words of anthropologist Talal Asad, "'the secular' presents itself as the ground from which theological discourse was generated."[56] Secularism carves out the domain of the secular and declares it the realm of public authority, common sense, rational argument, democracy, and the public good.[57] It denominates the religious as that which it is not. This tendency is particularly pronounced in the case of Islam, in contrast to the relatively cozy relationship between Judeo-Christian tradition and secularism. The contingent nature of these secularist claims to represent neutrality, democracy, and tolerance were made explicit in the Iranian Revolution. This explains why it was "beyond the imagination of [secular] experts and rulers alike." It also explains why the revolution was so profoundly threatening to secularists.

Secularism, contrary to its own self-representation, has been implicated with the undemocratic and the unjust. This was the case in Iran between 1941 and 1979. Rather than come to terms with the violence that accompanied the attempt to modernize Iran, however, it was projected onto the religious. This explains U.S. relations with the Islamic Republic during and after 1978–1979. The United States projected the negative traits that had been associated with secular modernity under the shah—violence, repression, lack of democracy—onto a religious other. This projection served two important functions: It exculpated the United States from its association with the secular yet undemocratic shah, and it

cemented the association of the United States with secular democracy in opposition to its nemesis: Iranian religious tyranny.

This is not to suggest that Iran under Ayatollah Khomeini was a bastion of liberal democracy.[58] Far from it. In fact, Khomeini's regime was what Casanova has aptly described as a mobilizational state religion, in which religion is deprivatized such that it creates "a totalitarian participatory publicness that tends to destroy the very boundaries between the private and the public spheres by infringing upon private rights . . . and destroying public liberties."[59] The horrific implications of these developments have been addressed elsewhere; as Algerian historian Mohammed Arkoun notes, "the tyranny of faith in militant Islam is no more acceptable than the tyranny of reason."[60] The point here is that processes of secular self-identification served to disassociate the United States from the shah's regime, insofar as secularism by definition could not be affiliated with repression and disorder. This explains the sense of disbelief in the United States at the time of the revolution. As Esposito notes, "that such a shah would be overthrown was unthinkable . . . that the Pahlavi dynasty would come crashing down at the hands of a revolution led by a bearded, exiled ayatollah and conducted in the name of Islam was incomprehensible."[61] At the same time, secular self-identification after the revolution solidified U.S. ideals of secular democracy, order, and freedom in distinction to what was represented as "Islamic" theocracy, disorder, and religious tyranny. This process contributed to the consolidation of U.S. identity through the demonization of non-U.S., nonsecular others.

Casanova has remarked that "the secular, as a concept, only makes sense in relation to its counterpart, the religious."[62] A secular United States has been achieved in distinction to a religious Islamic Republic of Iran. A secularist *horror alieni* surfaced in the political imagination of the United States, seeking to disassociate Washington from the injustices of the shah's regime, to divest itself of everything threatening (defined here as Islam), and to shore up U.S. identity as democratic, modern, and secular.[63] More than any other single factor, this secular horror alieni explains the visceral nature of U.S. antipathy toward the Islamic Republic. The revolution certainly threatened U.S. economic and geopolitical interests in the Middle East. Yet it went far beyond this: It threatened the link between secularization, modernization, and democratization, and in doing so threatened the national identity of the United States itself. The revolution made it necessary to secure the status of secularism by reaffirming this link. Secularism is democratic, secularism is just, and secularism is American. This narrative has a

genealogy and logic all its own.[64] It saved the United States from confronting the uncomfortable possibility that secular modernity under the shah was not just, free, or democratic. It fueled U.S. opposition to the Ayatollah Khomeini and his successors. And it defined what it meant to be an American in the late twentieth century.

Washington did not, and arguably could not, interpret the revolution as a rejection of the attempt to "take possession of" Iran. This would have involved admitting some intention to take possession and would have been unacceptable in a world in which colonization had been delegitimized. Instead, the revolution was interpreted as an irrational backlash against a generous attempt to spread modern ways of life and to defend the Iranians from the evils of Communism. It was not that it never occurred to Washington that legitimate reasons might exist for rejecting the shah, the West, and secular modernity. Such a rejection was literally unimaginable from within a secularist worldview. As McAlister confirms, "a determined incomprehension remained the dominant stance."[65] Secularism, it was believed, is irrefutably superior to its rivals. It could not be associated with the SAVAK, with the repression of dissent, with inequality, or with injustice. This view was neither a coincidence nor a conspiracy. It was a consequence of an entrenched belief in the goodness of secular modernity, even in the face of a direct and violent challenge to it.

An episode involving one of the U.S. hostages released in late November 1979 illustrates this mindset.[66] In a press conference after his release, McAlister recounts, Sergeant William Quarles told reporters that he had made friends among his captors and "indicated that he had been receptive to some of the political frameworks the Iranians had presented."[67] Quarles stated, "I've learned a lot from what I've read and what I've seen, and I'm very saddened by some of the things that went on under the Shah's regime."[68] The U.S. media dismissed these statements, attributing Quarles's sympathy for his captors to a "syndrome" common among former hostages. Rather than contemplating the possibility that the shah's regime had been unjust, "Islam" was quickly offered as the explanation for the Iranians' "irrational" actions. As McAlister observes: "'Militant Islam' quickly became the primary narrative device for the U.S. news media; long essays and editorials in many major publications explained 'Islam' as a single, unchanging cultural proclivity to mix faith with politics, and to express both through violence."[69]

This narrative remains influential today. The identity of the United States as secular and democratic remains at stake in contemporary U.S. opposition to an Islamic Iran. In fact, it is quite

possible that the existence of the Islamic Republic since 1979 has actually strengthened (secular) identity in the United States. The Islamic Republic provides the ultimate religious other for secularists to identify themselves against. Iran continues to function as a convenient repository for Western anxieties about religion, violence, and even secularism itself. This explains why contemporary U.S. relations with the Islamic Republic remain so contentious.[70]

Both laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism are active in contemporary U.S. discourse about Iran. Laicism, or the exclusion of religion from politics, is the dominant secularist narrative in contemporary U.S. discourse on the Islamic Republic. According to this account, the Islamic Revolution was unacceptable because it imported religion into public life, compromising the most basic tenet of laicist belief. Judeo-Christian secularism, however, is also active in U.S. discourse and policy toward Iran. In this view, secularism is understood as a unique Western achievement, and the potential for secularization is linked to cultural background and geographic location. For Judeo-Christian secularists, distinctions between religious and political authority are not only historically absent from the Islamic context; they are unthinkable due to the nature of Islam itself.[71] The influence of this narrative is discernible in the many references to the "natural" linkage between Islam and theocracy. McAlister notes for example that at the time of the revolution, "Islam was contrasted explicitly with Christianity, and perhaps in no other political situation in the 1970s did the mainstream media and politicians so insistently present the United States as a 'Christian' nation."[72]

The combination of these two powerful strands of secularist thought account for U.S. relations with Iran since 1979. The process of representing Islam and the Iranians as a threat solidifies U.S. notions of secular democracy, freedom, and righteousness in opposition to Iranian theocracy, tyranny, and falsehood. This opposition explains the fervor with which the Washington attacks Iran. It is not only a question of national interest. It is a question of the identity of the United States as both secular and democratic.

Rethinking Secularism

If secularism aspires to serve as a universal grammar of public life that marginalizes the religious,[73] and in particular the Islamic, then perhaps it needs to be reconsidered. There is no compelling reason for secularists to insist upon an unassailable link between *secular* public order, justice, and democracy. It might actually be more

democratic to question this automatic association every now and again. There is no final justification for the secular vilification of those who are uneasy with secularism. There is no basic secular authority, command, or contract that must be placed above questioning for ethical life to proceed.[74] To escape the cycle of violence spawned by the secular/religious divide, it will be necessary to heed Connolly's suggestion to break "*both* with a secularism that seeks to confine faith to the private realm and with a theo-centered vision that seeks to unite people behind one true faith."[75] The increase in global violence in the name of religion will not abate until this occurs.[76] If it does not occur, religious extremists who see alternatives for public order as limited to either secularism or theocracy will choose the latter out of a sense of pride, frustration, and powerlessness. Secularists who doubt the possibility of a nonhegemonic role for religion in public life will support the repression of public religion simply because it is not secular. These choices contribute to a spiral of hostility within and between states.

The solution is that secularism must be modified. This involves at least two steps. The first is to draw attention to the theological elements of secular discourse itself. Secularists do not like to be reminded that their cherished model of public order is anything but a neutral and superior one. I have argued that to seal their claim to neutrality, secularists denominate religion as the domain of the violent and irrational other. In so doing, they disassociate themselves from the violent and antidemocratic tendencies of secularism by displacing them onto this other domain. Though secularism purports to stand outside the contested domain of religion and politics, it does not. It is a politics of religion. Secularists need to acknowledge that in particular historical circumstances, such as under the shah of Iran, secular modernity has not been associated with justice, democracy, or freedom. Arbitrarily and automatically to link secularism with these ideals is a mistake.

Acknowledging the contingencies of secularism is also likely to lessen secularist apprehensions about religion. For it is only when secularists attempt to legislate the relationship between that which they define as nontransparent, incalculable, and nonrepresentable (the sacred) and that which they interpret as transparent, calculable, and representable (the profane) that difficulties with religion arise. They arise because secular authority makes two forceful demands: first, that nonrational and nonrepresentational aspects of existence be expelled from of public life; and second, that a series of "religious" others be defined as inferior or irrational contributors to public discourse. Absent these insistences, particular interpretations of "the sacred" could be mobilized to legitimize

public order. It strikes me that this is precisely what many religious actors are demanding. Secularist reservations aside, this is not an unreasonable demand.

In a second step, I would challenge the secularist claim that a final solution to the question of religion in public life is a requirement for democratization. Quite to the contrary, the case of Iran both before and after the revolution suggests that attempts to legislate solutions to questions involving ethics, politics, and metaphysics are bound to fail. This acknowledgment amounts to an endorsement of what some political theorists call agonistic democracy.[77] Agonistic democracy is uniquely suited to the challenge of incorporating contending views on religion in public life. It does not seek rational consensus, but advocates "agonistic respect between interlocking and contending constituencies."[78] It favors "multiple lines of connection through which governing assemblages can be constructed from a variety of intersecting constituencies."[79] Public religiosity, agonistic democrats would argue, should be accepted in the public sphere as long as it is accompanied by respect for competing perspectives. Absolutist solutions to the question of religion and politics that are imposed from above, whether in the name of secularism or any other doctrine, are unviable. Democratic potential lies not in the imposition of secularism, but in the cultivation of an ongoing debate among both civil and religious leaders concerning the constantly evolving place of religion in public life.

The prospects for agonistic democracy are relatively positive, as the shortcomings of both religious *and* secular absolutism become evident. The debate in the United States, for instance, is moving beyond a standoff between religious conservatives and liberal secularists toward an acknowledgment that "what is problematic is not vibrant religious activism in the public sphere, but the consistent association of religious devotion with a particular set of dogmatic political opinions."[80] At the same time, in the United States intolerance of a marriage between a single religious perspective and the state was confirmed by the recent decision in the case of the 5,300-pound monument to the Ten Commandments that stood in the Alabama Supreme Court. Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, who personally placed the monument in the courthouse, argued that his intent was to remind citizens of the "sovereignty of God over the affairs of men." When pushed further, Moore admitted that he was referring to Jesus Christ, and that in his view other deities would deny our freedoms and specifically would "not allow for freedom of conscience."[81] A federal court ordered the removal of the monument, noting that Moore's views came "uncomfortably . . . close to . . . a theocracy."[82]

The prospects for agonistic democracy abroad are also cautiously optimistic. With the election of the neo-Islamist Justice and Development (AK) party in Turkey in November 2002, for example, the debate over religion in public life has moved toward tolerating a broader range of perspectives in public life. Despite concern on the part of the Turkish military and its Western allies, AK has proceeded democratically and shows no signs of imposing a strict interpretation of Islamic law. According to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, given the chance to join the European Union Turkey "will emerge as a model showing how the culture of Islam and democracy can live together."[83]

* * *

William Graham Sumner observed that "if you want a war, nourish a doctrine. Doctrines are the most fearful tyrants to which men ever are subject, because doctrines get inside a man's own reason and betray him against himself. Civilized men have done their fiercest fighting for doctrines."[84] Secularism has doctrinal qualities. It defines itself by marginalizing the religious. Due to its cozy historical relationship with Judeo-Christianity, it defines itself most stridently in opposition to Islam. There is a productive relationship between secularism and the religious others that it identifies, and sometimes vilifies. In order to sustain its identity as democratic, secularism projects its own undemocratic, violent tendencies onto a religious other. In order to sustain its identity as nonreligious, secularism must deny or suppress this productive interdependence with the religious other. Secular order must be constantly purified. It is in the struggle against religion that secularism secures its own legitimacy.

These observations grant new insight into relations between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In Iran under the shah, secularism served as a legitimizing principle for the suppression of local Iranian politics and practices. It symbolized the attempt to take possession of Iran in the name of a modern Western ideal. Resistance to this attempt explains much of the impetus for the 1978–1979 revolution. The latter was the culmination of a gradual rejection of the U.S. attempt to occupy Iran in the name of a modern secular ideal. Yet even after this rejection had become apparent, secularists in the West failed to acknowledge the legitimacy of the challenge posed by the Iranians. Rather than confront the violence that accompanied secularization in Iran, they quickly projected these negative traits onto Islam. Consequently, all of the negative traits that had been associated with secular modernity

under the shah—violence, tyranny, and lack of democracy—were projected onto a religious other. This move both exculpated the United States from its association with the shah and cemented its association with secular democracy in opposition to Iranian religious tyranny. From 1979 onward, to stand for a secular and democratic United States was to oppose the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Secularism is a powerful ideology, series of social movements, and set of political ambitions. It makes persuasive normative claims. Like their religious counterparts, secularists feel strongly about the moral foundations of their position, and it will be difficult to challenge such closely held beliefs. As Martha Nussbaum warns us, however, "one of the greatest barriers to rational deliberation in politics is the unexamined feeling that one's own preferences and ways are neutral and natural."[85] Secularists have become overconfident in their claim to represent neutrality, justice, and democracy, both inside and outside the West. They need to confront the urge to "purify" secular order. They need to come to terms with the mixed legacy of secularization, especially insofar as it has been associated with the repression of non-Western and/or religious authorities and practices. They need to ensure that they do not repeat the mistakes of their Jacobin predecessors by identifying their own security with the elimination of their religious others.

Fortunately, secularists have always debated the proper foundation of their beliefs. Some are atheists, while others insist upon the necessary role of Judeo-Christianity within secularism itself. Some insist upon the need for universal morality in public life, while others reject the idea of a universal moral law. As Mehrzad Boroujerdi has noted with reference to political Islam, it is "only by recognizing the existence of contradictory philosophical worldviews and political tendencies within the contours of each of these broadly defined categories are we able to have any realistic hope of promoting pluralism and tolerance."[86] The same applies to secularism. The persistent disagreements among secularists suggest that, unlike Justice Moore's Ten Commandments in Alabama, the terms of the secularist settlement are not set in stone.

Notes

The epigraph to this article is from Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776–1815* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, 2d ed.), p. xiii.

1. Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 31.

See also Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

2. Juergensmeyer, note 1, *New Cold War?* p. 197.

3. Iranian intellectuals have criticized laicism for its association with Enlightenment presumptions such as "the stripping of nature's divine essence, the advocacy of science and secular knowledge, and the priviledging *[sic]* of mind and body over soul": Mehrzad Boroujerdi, "Iranian Islam and the Faustian Bargain of Western Modernity," *Journal of Peace Research* 34, no. 1 (1997): 2.

4. For a recent example, see Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

5. On secular nationalism as a "universal political grammar of public life," see Mark Juergensmeyer, "The New Religious State," *Comparative Politics* 27, no. 4 (1995): 380–381.

6. Ibid., p. 381.

7. Eugenio Trias, "Thinking Religion: the Symbol and the Sacred," in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, eds., *Religion* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 96.

8. José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 227.

9. Suzanne Maloney, "Identity and Change in Iran's Foreign Policy," in Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, eds. *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 93.

10. William E. Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 190. The dynamics of identity/difference have been explored by Immanuel Levinas and Mikhail Bakhtin. For an application of Levinas to international relations, see David Campbell's *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), esp. pp. 171–181. On Bakhtin, see Campbell, "Political Prosaics, Transversal Politics, and the Anarchical World," in Michael J. Shapiro and Hayward R. Alker, eds., *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 20–24.

11. Theologian and social theorist John Milbank makes a related argument, though Milbank believes that secularism is constituted through its opposition to orthodox Christianity, rather than religion in its entirety. "Secular discourse does not just 'borrow' inherently inappropriate modes of expression from religion as the only discourse to hand (this is Hans Blumenberg's interpretation) but is actually *constituted* in its secularity by 'heresy' in relation to orthodox Christianity, or else a rejection of Christianity that is more 'neo-pagan' than simply anti-religious": John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, 1993).

12. This argument follows Levinas's "ethics as first philosophy," in which "being is a radically interdependent condition, a condition made possible only because of my responsibility to the Other": Campbell, note 10, *National Deconstruction,* p. 173. See also David Campbell, "The Deterritorialization of Responsibility: Levinas, Derrida, and Ethics after the End of Philosophy," *Alternatives* 19, no. 4 (1994): 455–484; Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Benasconi, eds., *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence,* trans. Alphonso Lingis (The

Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981); and Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

13. Connolly, note 10, pp. 190–191.

14. I am grateful to Charles Taylor for the concept of a purificatory imaginary. Taylor cites Robespierre's drive violently to purify the French republic after the revolution as an example of this tendency to seek purification and virtue in an allegedly secular context.

For Taylor's most recent commentary on secularism, see his *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 185–194.

15. On the role of foreign policy in serving these objectives, see David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

16. In *Violence and the Sacred,* René Girard describes how primal religions use violence against scapegoats to found, preserve, and unify their cultures. He argues that in modern times we must resist treating religion as our scapegoat by approaching it "as an isolated, wholly fictitious phenomenon cherished only by a few backward people": Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 317. On the relationship between violence, religion, and collective identity, see also Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), and Sudhir Kakar, *The Colors of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Kakar argues that "the self-assertion of the 'We are,' with its potential for confrontation with the 'We are' of other groups, is inherently a carrier of aggression, together with the consequent fears of persecution, and is thus always attended by a sense of risk and potential for violence": ibid., p. 189.

17. See John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* 3d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). An example is the arrest and imprisonment in 2000 of Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a prominent Egyptian American social scientist and advocate of civil rights. Ibrahim was released from prison in December 2002.

18. On the perils and pitfalls of secularism more generally, see Juergensmeyer, note 1, *New Cold War?* Casanova, note 8; Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Ethics and Public Policy Center and Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999); John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, 1993); William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); John Keane, "Secularism?" in David Marquand and Ronald L. Nettler, eds., *Religion and Democracy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003); and Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," in Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

19. Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 4.

20. Bassam Tibi, "Post-Bipolar Order in Crisis: The Challenge of Politicised Islam," *Millennium* 29, no. 3 (2000): 845.

21. On the motives of the hostage takers, see David Patrick Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Hostage Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. chap. 3, "The Origins of the Crisis."

22. Ervand Abrahamian's *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982) is the landmark study of the revolution, along with Nikki Keddie's *Roots of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). Other notable books include Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran* (New York: Random House, 1985); Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* (Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1993); Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (London: Tauris, 1996); Nikki Keddi, *Iran and the Muslim World, Resistance and Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1995); Robin Wright, *The Last Great Revolution: Turmoil and Transformation* (New York: Knopf, 2000); Dariush Zahedi, *Iranian Revolution Then and Now: Indicators of Regime Instability* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000); and Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Khomeini's main writings can be found in *Islam and Revolution*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley, Calif.: Mizan Press, 1981).

23. John L. Esposito, "Islam and Secularism in the Twenty-First Century," in John L. Esposito and Azzam Tamimi, eds., *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 3.

24. Keane, note 18, p. 6.

25. Casanova, note 8, p. 13.

26. See Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "Chain Reactions: U.S. and Britain Got What They Wanted in Iran in 1953, But Where Did It Lead?" *Chicago Tribune*, March 9, 2003. For a recent popular account of the coup, see Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 2003).

27. Esposito, *Islamic Threat*, note 17, p. 108. On the 1953 coup, see Mark J. Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup d'Etat in Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (August 1987): 261–286; and David Painter, "The United States, Great Britain, and Mossadegh," *Pew Case Studies in International Affairs* #332 (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University, 1993).

28. Esposito, *Islamic Threat*, note 17, p. 108.

29. The Nixon Doctrine, which was a response to U.S. involvement in Vietnam, declared that the United States would ensure the realization of its foreign-policy objectives by supporting regional allies rather than through direct intervention.

30. Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 145.

31. Ibid.

32. Iraq also did not participate in the embargo due to its rivalry with Saudi Arabia and other conservative oil-producing states.

33. Maloney, note 9, p. 96.

34. Ibid.

35. Esposito, *Islamic Threat*, note 17, p. 107.

36. Ibid.

37. Gary A. Donaldson, *America at War Since 1945: Politics and Diplomacy in Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996), pp. 84–85. Melani McAlister notes that "the internal security police in Iran, SAVAK, were known for torture and murder; they were also known to be trained and funded by the CIA": McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 203.

38. "Mosques served as centers for dissent, political organization, agitation and sanctuary. The government could ban and limit political meetings and gatherings, but it could not close the mosques or ban prayer": John L. Esposito, *Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, 2d ed.), p. 110.

39. McAlister, note 37, p. 204. Esposito confirms that "the Revolutionary coalition comprised a diverse assortment of liberal, leftist, and religious groups that agreed on little other than their antipathy for the shah and the institution of absolute monarchy. Their negative consensus and the sheer breadth of their ideological and socioeconomic agendas set the stage for a bitter feud after the coup": Esposito, *Islamic Threat*, note 17, p. 102.

40. Esposito, *Islamic Threat*, note 17, p. 109.

41. Ibid., p. 103.

42. Ibid., p. 115.

43. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (London: Writers and Readers Press, 1967), p. 65 (emph. in orig.).

44. Maloney, note 9, p. 101.

45. In his illuminating study of twentieth-century Iranian politics, Ali Mirsepassi attributes the rise of clerical hardliners and the eclipse of moderates such as Mehdi Barzargan and Abolhassan Bani-Sadr to three factors: (1) the formation of an autocratic state in post-1953 Iran; (2) a sense of social alienation due to modernization processes during the 1960s and 1970s; and (3) the transformation of the Shi'a hierarchy and construction of a new political Islamic ideology: Mirsepassi, note 22, pp. 65–66.

46. Ibid., p. 76. "The ascent of political Islam owes much to the fragile foundations of secular politics and to the political vacuum that the Shah's regime effectively created in the 1960s and 1970s": ibid., p. 73. Dissenting Iranian intellectuals such as Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shari'ati proposed alternatives to the shah's politics, which attempted to reconcile modernity with Islamic tradition, rather than rejecting the latter entirely in favor of the former: ibid., p. 77.

47. Ibid., pp. 70–71.

48. Ibid., pp. 94.

49. Maloney, note 9, p. 98.

50. Juergensmeyer, note 1, *New Cold War?* p. 19.

51. Mirsepassi, note 22, p. 11.

52. See Melani McAlister, "Iran, Islam and the Terrorist Threat, 1979–1989," in McAlister, note 37, pp. 198–234.

53. Ibid., pp. 105.

54. Jocelyne Cesari, "Islam in Europe: Modernity and Globalization Revisited," lecture, University of Wisconsin–Madison, May 3, 2001.

55. Mirsepassi, note 22, p. 17.

56. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 192.

57. See Connolly, note 18, p. 21.

58. On the cruelties of daily life as a woman in Iran during the 1980s and 1990s, see Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (New York: Random House, 2003).

59. Casanova, note 8, pp. 219–220. On Khomeini's ambitious and ambiguous political agenda, see Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). As Brumberg argues persuasively, "behind his charisma, and woven into its very fabric, was a contradiction between Khomeini's belief that the people should play a role in choosing their government, and his strong commitment to revolutionary action and clerical rule under the leadership of a quasi-infallible, charismatic Supreme Leader": ibid., p. 3.

60. Robert D. Lee, introduction to Mohammed Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers* (ed. and trans. Robert D. Lee (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. x.

61. Esposito, *Islamic Threat,* note 38, p. 101. Esposito writes that "the Pahlavis, like the Sadats, spoke English, dressed in well-tailored Western clothes, and appeared on U.S. television, interviewed by the likes of Barbara Walters. (They were like 'us')": ibid., p. 105.

62. Casanova, note 8, p. 20.

63. On the concept of horror alieni, see Michael Dillon, "The Scandal of the Refugee: Some Reflections on the 'Inter' of International Relations and Continental Thought," in David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro, eds., *Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999), p. 104.

64. This phrase is borrowed from Mohja Kahf's book about the Western narrative of Muslim women. She notes that "this [Western] narrative has a genealogy and logic of its own, emerging from developments in Western representations of gender, of the self, and of the foreign or Other": Kahf, *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), p. 2.

65. McAlister, note 37, p. 209.

66. On November 18, 1979, Yassir Arafat negotiated the release of thirteen female and African American hostages who were not being held as suspected spies, on the grounds that "neither of these groups was as central as white men to the dominant power structure of the United States": McAlister, note 37, p. 210; see also Charles W. Kegley, Jr., "Hard Choices: The Carter Administration's Hostage Rescue Mission in Iran," *Pew Case Studies in International Affairs* #360 (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University, 1994).

67. McAlister, note 37, p. 210.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., p. 211.

70. Despite overtures to the United States from the Iranians since 1997, President George W. Bush designated the Islamic Republic as part of a tripartite "axis of evil" that included North Korea and Iraq under Saddam Hussein.

71. Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington are examples of this perspective.

72. McAlister, note 37, p. 211.

73. See Juergensmeyer, note 5, pp. 380–381.

74. See, further, William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (expanded ed.), p. xix.

75. Ibid., p. 16. Those interested in Derrida might want to consider his description of deconstruction in light of Connolly's suggestion: "An opposition of metaphysical concepts . . . is never the face-to-face of two terms, but a hierarchy and an order of subordination. Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to a neutralization: it must . . . practice an *overturning* of the classical opposition and a general *displacement* of the system. It is only on this condition that deconstruction will provide itself with the means with which to intervene in the field of oppositions that it criticizes": Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 329.

76. On this subject, see Juergensmeyer, note 1, *Terror in the Mind of God*.

77. For more on the concept and practice of agonistic democracy, see William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid., p. xx.

80. Eleanor Brown, "Lieberman's Revival of the Religious Left," *New York Times*, August 30, 2000, p. A27.

81. Jonathan Turley, "We Wish You a Merry Lawsuit: Santa Brings Lots of Litigation on Religious Symbols," *Los Angeles Times*, December 16, 2002.

82. Ibid. The Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals upheld this decision in July 2003; the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case in August 2003. Moore is appealing again to the Supreme Court.

83. Quoted in David Gardner and Leyla Boulton, "An Islamist Seeking to be Europe's New Face," *Financial Times*, December 7, 2002.

84. Sumner is cited in Little, note 30, p. 117.

85. Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," in Joshua Cohen, ed., *For Love of Country?* 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), p. 11.

86. Boroujerdi, note 3, p. 5.