Secular State, Citizenship and the Matrix of Globalized Religious Identity

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No man has a right … to treat any other man "tolerantly",
for tolerance is the assumption of superiority[1].

Evolution of Secularism and Secular State

There seems to be a general consensus that Islamic/Muslim values are incompatible with secular/western values. Before delving into further details, this paper would revisit the developments and characteristics associated with secularism and secular state. The concept of secular state emanated from the idea of secularism and secularisation of society and state, following the revolutionary developments particularly in Europe and North American. The multiplicity attached to these concepts has given them different meanings and understandings; having negative and positive connotations; exposing the diversity and complexity of these ideas. However, in general, 'secular' is understood as the belief that religious influence should be restricted; and that education, morality, and the state (etc.) should be particularly independent of religious influence.

Social analysts (Weber, Comte, Marx, Spencer, Durkheim & Lenski) view secularism as a defining character of modern society; diversion from faith based to scientific, knowledge and human self-regulation (Dallmayr: 1999, 715), a shift from religion to the glorification of the nation (Gottfried: 1999). Early proponents envisioned separation of state and church, (Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, & Rousseau) yet refrained from total rejection of faith in the divine, recognising

the need of faith as an instrument for the proper functioning of the state. However, later scholars (Kant) inadvertently marginalised the divine religion, and even (Marx) considered it an obstacle to achieve universal equality, declaring it (Nietzsche) against democracy and egalitarianism and promoter of a hierarchical social order intrinsic to humanity (Louay: 2001).

Religion has been considered useful (Voltaire- during French revolution) to keep lower classes peaceful though revolution was primarily against the Catholic Church not Christianity; intending to separate the state from the church structure and to separate religious and political authorities. It does not necessarily mean that religion will disappear from the official rhetoric or daily functioning of state, it only regulates the separation of religion from state (McClay: 2000). Earlier, religion denied moral authority to secular politicians, while in modern times the political authorities have attempted to monopolized the authority to sanction violence, albeit for limited purposes: military defence, police protection, and capital punishment. Later, religion was viewed as conflicting with citizen's priorities with the rise of nation-state and nationalism, therefore necessitated further weakening of religious loyalty by extending equal rights to all European citizens irrespective of religious beliefs (Keddie: 2003). The origins of secularism in the west owe a lot to the struggles between Protestants and Catholics that deprived religious institutions of coercive power and restrained the murderous intolerance and persecution. Muslims experienced no such struggle therefore evolved no such doctrine to give equal citizenship irrespective of faith; rather endorsed special status to religious minorities and accorded a degree of practical as well as theoretical tolerance to the people belonging to other faith.

In 19th century US, equal treatment of various churches by the state gave people more freedom, however religious minded scholars and reformists struggled with the idea of secularization of behavior, belief, and public schooling. Globally there is resurgence of religious right and many societies are experiencing renewal of political claims on behalf of religious values and institutions. This trend partly owes to the mixed success of economic systems, poverty, armed conflicts, ethnic and racial tensions, immigration and refugee issues, and human rights concerns. It seems that the paradigm of the privatisation of religion has eroded the state's ability to monitor an elusive object (belief) than it has weakened religious authority (Asad: 2004). Asad believes that secularism does not insist on religion being confined to the privacy of conscience; rather equal religious freedom as an integral part of the liberty of the individual; and that right are inalienable, held by each citizen regardless of the wishes of the majority or representative

government. He argues that, secularism has become a political doctrine making it essential for the secular state to define and redefine religion, its boundaries, and acceptable public face (Reflections).

The "secular state" discourse is not detached from conflict as it has failed to solve ethnic conflict and economic crisis. On the global scale, the global secular system has trapped the third world through political and economic hegemony (Misrawi: 2002). Though ideally meant to promote religious liberty, not become its own form of state-sponsored atheism, or its own form of intolerance. Asad asserts that religion was generated by the secular as an oppositional discourse, something distinct from the secular, arguing that nationalism, with its vision of a universe of national *societies* in which individuals exist, requires the concept of the secular to make sense. He emphasizes that "Islamism's preoccupation with state power is not the result of its commitment to nationalist ideas but of the modern nation-state's enforced claim to constitute legitimate social identities and arenas" therefore, secular can neither be understood as a successor to religion nor can it be viewed as the rational. It is a concept with a multi-layered history related to modernity, democracy and human rights (2003, 193-4, 200). Keane insightfully suggests that:

> Does this law of Never-Ending Argument compel us to see that the secularist view that religious believers are like Ixion copulating with clouds and breeding monsters applies equally to secularists, and that therefore new desecularised compromises between non-believers and believers are now required? Are we thus left with no other political option but to seek new ways of maximising the freedom and equality and mutual respect of non-believers and believers alike- with special emphasis given to those who currently suffer the injustices produced by the 19th century doctrine whose universalist pretensions are no longer credible? (2000, 18)

Contrary to these views, Flew states that Islam is not a religion in the Western sense, it is engaged as a faith, way of life, a social order, a doctrine and a code of conduct; suggesting that such predispositions create an inability among Muslims to come to terms with secularism, religious pluralism, and universal adult suffrage. He argues that religious belief within the limits of a personal and not impinging unduly upon those who do not share those beliefs are tolerated however, religious institutions in conflict with the law or constitution of the State cannot be. He argues that Islamists want to impose Islam and overthrow regimes to pave way for an Islamic

state (2002). Gellner is of the view that Islam/ Muslims are incompatible with secular nation-state and with civil society since they identify with divinely ordained Law, rather than with the nation-state and its rule of law (Turam: 2004). Lewis suggests that in Islam, the notion of a secular authority is viewed as an impiety and ultimate betrayal of Islam, therefore revolutionaries attempt to rid their societies of the "corrosive influence of Western secular institutions" (1990).

As opposed to Western secular states, Islamic states have an overt religious basis and are governed by religiously sanctioned laws, defending a particular belief, codified or embodied in time-honoured customs, rituals and traditions. While secular state is believed to be established for the welfare of its subjects. It does not derive laws or sanctions from religion, not discriminating the citizens on the basis of race or religious convictions, being indifferent to religion, ensuring more religious freedom. (Farrow: 2003) Legally secular state does not enforce any religion yet the social predominance of a particular group generally leads to cultural practices belonging to the religion of the majority, such legal moralism can take the form of intolerance (Scanlon: 1998, 60). In the United States and Europe, attempts have been made to assimilate some aspects of religion into the national consensus, to weaken the power of religion to build its own antinational power base, gain religious legitimacy for the state and give nationalism a religious aura. These attempts to accommodate religion have shown that religion cannot be easily placated, even if it remains at the periphery of political order. Many demands for regulation governing secular life have origins in religions, e.g. abortion, homosexuality, gays and lesbian marriages, adoption by same sex couples, public funding for faith-based schools, exemption from voting on religious grounds, religious symbolism in official public practices, and appointment of religious figures to public office. Idris asserts this view further by stating that:

> Western politicians…. decided to include some of the values of their religion - Christianity- in the making of the rules of the state….No Muslim could become president in a secular regime, for in order to pledge loyalty to the constitution, a Muslim would have to abandon part of his belief and embrace the belief of secularism-which is practically another religion. For Muslims, the word 'religion' does not only refer to a collection of beliefs and rituals, it refers to a way of life which includes all values, behaviours, and details of living….Secularism … requires people to replace their God-given beliefs with an entirely different set of man-made beliefs. Separation of religion and

state is not an option for Muslims because is requires us to abandon Allah's decree for that of a man.

Religious rhetoric used by political elite has been effectively employed to assert the need for the resurgence of religious identity, stating that current political rhetoric symbolises the assertion of Christian religious identity and commitment to Christianity. For Islamists, secularism has symbolically emerged as "a core value of resistance against radical and political Islam (Emerson, 1960, 96).

Muslim religious elite construct secularism with a perception of deprivation, striking at the heart of issues with a tone of religious zeal, generating popular apprehensions that "state has meanings for the Christian majority while Muslims as a community are steadily losing its relevance". Emerson (1960, 96) believes that, Muslim community misunderstood the basic principles of a secular state by identifying it with Christian West, imagining the citizenship of Islamic Ummah, which proved "a self-defeating concept" for the community. Juergensmeyer supports this, stating that it is not uniquely Christian, as in ancient India and Bhuddist countries a similar disctinction had been drawn between priestly and secular authority (1993, 17). Muslims apprehend that secularism would strip them of Islamic identity and submerge them in Christian domination.

Muslims rendezvous with Secularism

Religious and political elite in previously colonised countries view secular nationalism of the West as a mask for a certain form of "European Christian culture"- essentializing secular nationalism as a form of neo-colonialism. Post-colonial experiences furthered Muslim grievances as a loss of connection with their past. The experience of colonised world is poles apart from European experience in home countries, the colonizers propagated secularism in Europe while encouraged and even subsidised Christian missionaries in their colonies as part of a wider "civilising project". When Europeans colonized the rest of the world, they were often sustained by a desire to make the rest of the world like themselves. When the colonial powers retreated, they left behind the controversial geographical boundaries, and new political institutions that lack European political and intellectual traditions. (Juergensmeyer, 1993, 29, 33-37)

The introduction of Western commercial, financial, and industrial system in the Muslim world did indeed bring great wealth, yet largely for the corrupt and autocrat rulers. In their rejection to these rulers, people also discredited the political institutions that were based on Western models of secularism and democracy. For Muslims, "Western-style economic system brought poverty, Western-style political institutions brought tyranny, and even Western-style warfare brought defeat." These concerns enabled conservative elements to appeal frustrated masses, suggesting that reviving past Islamic practices was the only way to salvation, urging to "throw aside the pagan innovations of the reformers and return to the True Path that God had prescribed for his people" (Lewis, 1990, 47-60). Islam is invoked by critics of the secular state, for the incorporation of religion into the state, to legitimize their regime and also to define the limits of religious authority (Lapidus, 1998).

In Muslim countries, Islam was employed to the extent that suited the needs and interest of a particular regime, though religion played a significant role in the civil society However, it lacked a central body to decide religious dogma; even the central institution of Islamic law has never been universally applied. Under the Ottoman Empire, the state exercised extraordinary control over its religious institutions. Around the middle of the 19th century, under western pressure, it introduced various secularizing measures. Muslim experience during this period of lethal association of secularism with autocratic rule and Western influence resulted in abhorrence for secular west as well as with the local autocratic regimes. Even in current global trends of modernisation, Muslims suspect the historical relationship between autocrats and the West. As a reaction to this suspicion, Muslim world is witnessing integration of religion and politics. The idea of codified Islamic laws through elected bodies and political parties is however a new phenomenon, giving new meanings to democracy and religion based nationalism.

Juergensmeyer views the quandary of Muslims' conflict with a secular State in the context of globalisation, he observes that, globalization weakened the sense of secular nation state, through the global reach of trans-national businesses and financial instruments, eroding a sense of national identity and unity through telecommunication revolution and unrivalled military power of the United States. He suggests that it "supersedes the idea of a national social contract" merging the boundaries, asserting the need to define particular "people" and communities, making space for "religion and ethnicity" to redefine public communities. He states that,

> What is significant about these ethno-religious movements is their creativity- not just their use of technology and mass media, but also their appropriation of the nation-state and global networks. Although many of the framers of the new nationalisms have reached back in history for ancient images and concepts that will give them credibility, theirs are not simply efforts to resuscitate old ideas from the past. These are contemporary ideologies that meet present-day social and political needs. (2004, 40)

Ethno-religious nationalism rejects the intervention of outsiders and their ideologies, and is mutually in conflict; yet remains ambivalent about western modernity and globalisation. On the one hand it claims to be a response to the failure of western secular system yet have an international and supernational dimension to its own existence. The identity crisis and loss of a sense of belonging to one's own roots leads to powerlessness and to reclaim power, religious and ethnic identities are reasserted.

Muslim Understanding of Secularism and Secular State

Unlike Europe, Muslims have not experienced 16th and 17th century 'wars of religion, therefore the mechanism to deal with adherents of rival factions has never been debated within Islam. "For Muslims, the state was God's State, the army God's army and …the enemy was God's enemy" therefore the question of separation of religion from state remained irrelevant and such division alien to Islam (Ferjani: 2005, 75–83). An-Na'im analyses that for Muslims "The Renaissance, the Reformation, even the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment passed unnoticed" (1999, 182-3). The lack of a strong tradition of separation of religious and civil authority led to extreme intolerance for any religious or secular expression that conflict with the proper expression of Islam (Eby: 1998).

There exists a wide gap in the understandings of the meanings of secular state amongst Muslims as well as between the world of Islam and the West. Contrary to the understanding of Islamists, secularization is not atheism, or unabated materialism as propagated by many Muslims who wish and predict for the subordination of Christianity to Islam. Among Muslims there is lot of misunderstanding regarding what is secular and secularism, there is no appropriate word in Arabic, Turkish or Persian, initially it was translated as "dahriyan" (atheists), subsequently

replaced by "almaniyyah" because its literal translation would have been outrightly rejected {which would be "la diniyah" (non-religious)} in response to French word laicisme. Muslims responded to secularism and secular state in diverse ways:

- Complete disengagement with any Islamic discourse
- Reform- Embracing modernity with religious, spiritual and cultural identity intact
- Revive- return to the early purity of Islam (An-Na'im: 1994, 8, 18-19)

Muslim secularists are frustratingly restrained regarding the evolution of the process in the absence of the church-state dichotomy and the mechanism of the legal and political appropriation of ecclesiastical property for 'worldly' uses. They find the whole debate revolving around religion as pointless and refrain from any engagement with religious discourses. Talbi views religion as secular and apolitical, for him the merging religion and politics is ill-conceived and misbegotten as there is no Islamic governmental form, further elaborating that "Quran is not a constitution"(Nettler: 2000). Ghannushi, argues for the political institutionalization of multiple interpretations of the founding texts, involving the electorate to vote for or against the policies that flow from given interpretations- the political implications of an interpretation (not all "the meanings" of the text itself) would be open to acceptance or rejection like any other proposed legislation or project (Mahmood: 1996).

Reformists acknowledge that some Islamic ideas such as Ummah (transcending national borders), jihad (struggle, the need to fight for a just and correct order), and calls for a Muslim parliament, place Muslims and the non-Muslim majority on a confrontation course. Such attempts or even suggestions reinforce the existing stereotypes and creates a sense of contempt and revulsion. Largely Muslims appear to be unaware of this aspect of their relationship with the majority community and that the notions of cultural superiority, language differences and arguments about religious identity widened the gap between the minority and the majority (Ahmed: 1993). Esposito has a different view and suggests that modernization has provided, perhaps unwittingly, a major impetus for this global religious resurgence." He elaborates that,

> The eradication of poverty and illiteracy might address some of the causes of religious and political extremism, but it would not fully respond to the deeper religio-cultural issues of identity, authenticity, culture and values that are of equal importance. Addressing the

difficult issues of religion and modernity will require new theoretical and conceptual perspectives. (1996)

Tibi, has commented that fundamentalism has become an issue affecting Western societies in search for models for the Islamic communities: communitarianism or integration as individual citizens/citoyens" (Rubenstein: 2005). Reformists argue for reconsideration of the role of religion in world politics, and the need to distinguish between movements inspired by religion and movements using religion to legitimise political agendas based on non-religious interests (Berger: 1999, 7-8, 15). Todd believes that, a "significant section of the Muslim world (which has achieved its transition) is already in the process of conciliation" adding that, it is easy to demonise Islam based on current crisis as it is going through a crisis of modernization. Other societies have undergone through violent and critical transition stages and developed new functional societal model (Todd: 002, 52–53).

Reformists assert that Muslims need to embark on programs of democratic renewal while West needs to overcome its insistence that the nation-state must be secular to be legitimate. They argue that religion can play an important role in public life, enabling Muslims to engage with the West without endorsing secularism and that specific cultural values and political policies may intersect without threatening civil liberties (Sanneh: 2001). They even suggest that until a consensual Islamic system of government is established, the best alternative is a secular democratic state, respecting fundamental rights without discrimination and without commitment to a religious frame of reference. However, the moderate voices generally fail to get the attention of mainstream media, though emphasize the need to remain loyal to the countries of residence and play their part in national services.[2]

Muslim revivalists (Qaradawi, Ayoub, Ghanuchi) often make claims regarding the resurgence of Islam in Europe and America, suggesting that the acceptance of secularism means abandonment of Shari`ah; a denial of the divine guidance and a rejection of Allah's injunctions. Sharing such beliefs, Ghanuchi (2003) states that secular state has lost its legitimacy and rather than popular support, it is based on international support and violence. Al-Attas elaborates that secularization as a whole is the expression of an utterly unislamic world view, set against Islam and Muslims must; therefore repulsive, elaborating that the there is no equivalent to secular in the Islamic world view, "the term secularism is meant to denote not merely secular ideologies….but

encompasses also all the expressions of the secular world view including …secular historical relativism" (1985, 38-39, 45). Renowned revivalist, Mawdudi appealed to the old notion of the universal Muslim community - *Ummah* - essentially undifferentiated except by gender; is supposed to transcend tribal, national, regional, and local ties - principal source of identity and loyalty (Kuran: 1997). For an Islamic regime, Muslims constitute one community and the state boundaries within the Islamic world are superfluous and remnants of colonial era, requiring Muslims to make efforts to establish an Islamic state (Karabel: 1996).

Siddiqui asserts that the western democratic political party framework is divisive of the society and does not suit the Ummah" concluding that "one Ummah must mean one Islamic movement, leading to one global Islamic State under one Imam/Khalifa [Caliph]" (Flew: 2002). He further believes that Muslims living in Non-Muslim states are also obliged to abide by the laws of that state as long as such obedience does not conflict with their loyalty to Islam and the Ummah and that the duty of jihad remains valid, and may result in active service in an armed conflict abroad and/or to the lending of material or moral assistance to those who are engaged in such a struggle for Islam, around the world (Shadid: 1996, 84-115).

Hosein laments that secular state has legitimized everything that is prohibited in Islam and has been the root cause of economic, racial and ethnic oppression. He insists that participation in electoral politics is sinful for Muslims and suggests an alternative path, "struggle for recognition of Allah's authority as supreme authority, - and to struggle for recognition of Allah's law as the supreme law." Contradicting these assertions, he advises Muslims to service public interest through serious participation in public life and work hard towards building a coherent, stable and flourishing Islamic community capable of properly representing Islam, building bridges with other faith communities and engage in discussion of the place of faith within secular society (2000). Islamists believe that, "participation of Muslims in a Western political system is not an acceptance of the secular status quo. Positive participation is what showcases Islamic values and morals to civil society (Hoffmann). Islamists claim that Muslims are unequal in secular state as the categories of majority and minority only relate to electoral politics and are used to deny them rights to live in accordance with their religious traditions. However, conservatives fail to recognise that, these changes have facilitated Muslims to settle in the West and freely practice their faith.

The emergence of fundamentalist movements can be seen as an outgrowth of deeper societal crises as secular regimes and ideologies have also caused serious problems for societies and regions. They believe that secularism is untenable in Islamic societies as it does not represent the experiential and emotional ties of Muslim societies to their religious and cultural values, and has come in the dubious company of western colonialism and postcolonial hegemony. The Islamists have a deep interest in international politics- to them, Afghanistan is a success story. The idea that the Christian West is panicked by Islam's revival therefore plays into the Islamists' hands. Often Islamists simply subscribe to the parameters of the modern nation- state, adding only that it be controlled by a virtuous body of Muslims. Islamic fundamentalism's response to Westernization is conflicting, while modernization is embraced, the West is vilified, Western technology is utilized yet ideas originating in the west are out rightly rejected. Scientific knowledge is subjugated to, and explained in the context of the Quran. Islamic fundamentalists deplore Western society and culture, and aspire to purify Muslim society through the forceful implementation of Islamic law. The Islamic revival is not restricted to the less modernized or "backward" sectors of the society. On the contrary, it is strong in cities with a high degree of modernization and particularly visible among people educated in liberal traditions.

Challenge of Identity and Citizenship

Religion like secularism plays a considerable role in shaping the identities of communities, though currently these ideologies are viewed as potential rivals, both claiming to be the guarantor of orderliness in a society. Marginalized group get a sense of empowerment through identifying with a minority and efforts to assert maintaining that "imagined" uniqueness (Borren: 2003, 85). The power of identity remains strong - sometimes pertinent while at others divisive, whether it is the power of belonging to a minority group to demand one's rights, or challenge the majority in its exclusive, insensitive and discriminatory practices. The discourse of identity is a concern for ethno-religious communities, not just a demand for the reformulation of legal rights and obligations; it revolves around exclusion, and the fear and anxieties of the excluded. At times the reaction is more a matter of a cultural minority's sense of discrimination leading to a search for rallying points rather than an Islamic practice. However this religious and cultural blend has

strengthened the cause of extremists who claim to be the sole spokesmen of Islam, muting and undermining the credibility of the voices of moderate Muslims. It has been suggested that:

> In the past, when religion and government were usually intertwined, it was easy for dissidents to see the weakening of religious powers and the creation of secular states as major steps to solving social problems. Similarly, today, when secularism and government are usually intertwined, it is easy for dissidents to react against secular states and call for an obvious alternative--renewed political power for religion. (Keddie: 2003)

The questions of citizenship, and the relationship between religion and state, has long been debated and settled in the Secular States yet the cultural and religious integration of Muslim minority communities has not happened along the same lines. The emerging friction, conflict and disagreement between host societies and Muslim communities have brought back this issue. Asad claims that the notion of minority itself is the product of a specific European history of religious conflict and has never been successfully reabsorbed by the secular idea of citizenship. Citizenship always relies on the essential characteristics of a majority culture or cultural-linguistic unit –and therefore determines cultural closure at least as much as it promises to integrate newcomers. Therefore, Muslim immigrants are included and excluded at one and the same time in a special way, and this has less to do with the 'absolutist Faith' of Muslims living in a secular environment and more with notions of 'culture' and 'civilization' and the secular state (Asad: 2003, 159). He argues that in the West, the law's publicity and universality are regarded as a guarantee of freedom as citizens and right to privacy. Liberal state created tension between abstract ideal of equality under the law and its application. Citizens have a right to religion and its public expression, public and private simultaneously, however, certain published beliefs cen be banned, condemned and penalized (Asad, 2003). He then brings another dimension into ethno-religious identity debate, arguing that there is less direct link between the electorate and representatives in liberal democracies, therefore less representation of socio-economic interests, identities and needs of culturally different and economically polarised electorate, this gap is not "compensated through extra-parliamentary institutions connected to governance" further elaborating that;

> there is no space in which all citizens can negotiate freely and equally with one another. The existence of negotiation in public life is confined to such elites as party bosses,

bureaucratic administration, parliamentary legislatures, and business leaders. The ordinary citizen does not participate in formulating policy options as these elites do-his or her participation in periodic elections does not even guarantee that the policies voted for will be adhered to. (Asad: 2003, 4)

His argues that, it is difficult if not impossible to "represent Muslims as Muslims" in liberal democracies, because citizens constituting democratic state belong to a class defined in terms of existing commonalities among them "the abstract equality" which gives an edge to the voice of majority over a minority, thereby making them unequal. Having made the powerful assertion that European democracy is constructed in a way that precludes accurate representation of Muslim immigrants, Asad implies that "secularism" involves particular visions of the abstract citizen and the separation between private, religious belief and public participation. This separation renders religious minorities in European democracies invisible in the political process; and for religious minorities to be represented adequately, their cultural memories and traditions must be integrated into political institutions. He notes that "…religion in the 'private' spaces of home and school is crucial to the formation of subjects who will eventually inhabit a particular public culture". Highlighting the importance of religious experience in the formation of political subjectivity, drawing attention to how different practices of religion not only influence individual speech performance in the public sphere, but also affect the ability of listeners to be publicly responsive (2003, 185).

Muslim migrants view the displacement of an ethnic identity by a nationalist one as the `cost' of citizenship. On the one hand, as the descendants of immigrants, people's ethnic, religious and kin ties with their `ancestral' lands have been separated by a new national identity, while on the other they are denied full citizenship being the "other" and feel that various government policies affect them unequally. They see multiculturalism as a kind of indifference that silences open discussion and negotiations on racial discrimination in the job market, structural inequalities inherited from the past and the sentiments felt towards each other by the different groups. Increasingly, they do not ask to be recognized as Muslims but as citizens or residents with normal rights, including the fruition of autonomous spaces for practicing religion and fulfilling its imperatives of service and justice. (Asad: Reflections) They assert that multiculturalism "never goes beyond visual familiarity and overtly recognizable differences, one maintained by tolerance of difference without any substantive cultural exchange, deep understanding and even less

cultural crossing of boundaries" though there is demand for continuously agitating old issues to be negotiated.

The current context of Muslim political activism in the West means Muslims will demand "rights" that are not simply religious, narrowly defined, but educational, legal, political, economic, social, and, medical, including public health, matters otherwise left in the hands of state and secular institutions. West is facing a dilemma of religious toleration, its logic demands making concessions to Muslims, while the logic of privatizing Christianity - of taking religion out of the public arena, disqualifies them from effective tackling religious demands. Muslim minorities are encountering the West, not as subjugated people of a colonial empire but as migrants and citizens demanding rights. Despite ethnic difference religious groups are bound together by the common tie of Islam. (Levinson, 1994)

> The demands of immigrants and disadvantaged groups for polyethnic rights and representation rights are primarily demands for inclusion ... People from different national groups will only share an allegiance to the larger polity if they see it as the context within which their ... identity is nurtured, rather than subordinated. (Kymlicka: 1995, 189-190)

Western democracies face a new cultural, social and political challenge as Muslims comprise its largest religious minority, bringing back the relationship between state and religion as a subject of public debate. The space between the majority society and Islamic minorities is growing, and it strengthens the tendency toward social marginalization. Muslim minorities in the west experience integration, multiculturalism and religious particularism in diverse ways, depending on the historical experiences of host countries in dealing with cultural minorities and specific traditions of citizenship. With the significant demographic change which has taken place within the Muslim communities in Europe, namely a shift from first generation migrants towards second and third generation Europe-born citizens, the question of identity is now part of an ongoing discussion within the Muslim communities. Sense of exclusion is strong among Muslim youth who feel that same education and training cannot guarantee equality and that previous generations have tolerated "prejudice, discrimination and harassment, perhaps as the price of" citizenship (Emerson: 1960, 96). The emergence of minority youth (born again-new Muslims) are rediscovering their religious identity as way to express social, political and economic exclusion, ignoring the fact that assimilation, integration and inclusion works both ways. "New Muslims"

attempt to separate ethnic and religious identity and anchor their identity within the transnational concept of the *Ummah* rather than in national culture. They express solidarity as "brothers" in faith and openly support for the cause of Muslims around the globe. Consequently, identities that are integrated elements in Muslim countries are automatically deconstructed into their religious, social and ethnic components when transposed to a Western context. Another contributing factor is weakening of ethnic identity over generations due to the lack ancestral language skills, knowledge about ethnic traditions, and loss of cultural practices yet the practice of religious rituals helps them to identify with Muslim identity, based on a fundamentalist attitude that demands respect for Islamic tradition in its totality. Socio-economically disadvantaged or marginalized youth embrace Islam as a means to salvation, as for these "alienated groups, Islam "facilitates integration into mainstream society" (Cesari: 2003, 158-162). These groups can be a moderating effect on Islamic discourse and break up the monopoly of traditional religious authorities over the management of the sacred and also facilitate the growth of conservative tendencies through modern technology. There is a belief that electronic religiosity is expanding Islam transnationally through internet, cable networks, enabling Muslims to collectively raise larger claims for justice and representation rather than just being sum of a number of fractured diasporas. It has been suggested that:

> "religiously-inspired action thematises the relationship of the subject to different levels of otherness and tries to regulate the relationship in the name of the imperatives of service. In this sense, religious discourse helps transcend primordial community allegiances and structures the building blocks of social ties. (Salvatore: 2004)

The highly secularised cultural context in which the debate about religion takes place can have various consequences as religious elements in a tradition are either ignored or subsumed as 'culture' or 'custom'. The secular outlook may pressure citizens to see religion as exotic, irrational or eccentric, while a significant proportion of the population has residual connections to the religion of their ancestors and Christianity remains the dominant tradition.

The absence of much public discourse about religion means that the society may have only limited conceptual resources for addressing dilemmas about the proper relation between state and religion. The Muslim population of Australia is relatively small and ethnically diverse yet they "inevitably had to negotiate their 'Muslimness' within the wider social, legal and

political environment". Humphrey argues that the negotiation of Muslimness in multicultural societies simplifies and homogenizes Muslim culture and identity, producing Muslim as the 'other'. Multicultural politics produce an ethicized Muslim identity "as a shared immigrant experience and as a representational identity'. Not only is the Muslim Australian minority in the process of finding its voice and establishing its identity along an ethnic model, but such process is being sped up in response to the current wave of Islamophobia. Various incidents (mosque burning for example, attacks on women wearing the hijab) have been documented but Islamophobia is particularly worrying in the coverage in national media, (Bloul: 2003) sedition laws and calls to ban Hijab and significance to learn Aussie values.

In the absence of a candid discussion, religious experience outside the private sphere becomes a "conversation stopper" and "communication among citizens is threatened by the silence, antagonism, bigotry and threats of violence nurtured by the dogmatic reference to religious fundamentals." Critics of secularism state that it fails to provide a democratic understanding of religion and politics. Muslim experience of secularism (in home countries) has produced dictatorships, state enforced religion, violation of human and civil rights and weakening or outright destruction of civil society. The word secular brings back those shocking memories therefore it became an insult to many Muslims because of their colonial and oppressive experiences. Keane is of the view that, secularity has a reputation for humiliating Muslims, through the exercise of Western double standards and hegemonic designs in neo-colonial fashion. (Keane: 2000, 17)

A minority group can feel their way of seeing things different from the majority, not understood and recognized, even unwillingness of the majority group to alter the terms of debate to accommodate the difference, such systematic silencing and exclusion deligitimises the political society in view of the minority and the minority will tend to follow the logic of popular sovereignty itself. (Taylot: 1998, 45-6) Immigrations of Islamic faith are often constructed as a fifth column, because they live in the west yet carry these threatening values and alien ways of life, therefore the debate continues to identify those belief and practices that conflict democratic values and limit its capacity to continue as a cultural or religious practice. (Carens: 1998, 138) Religious communities seek to reshape the public sphere in their own image and at the expense of other religious and moral conceptions. On the other hand deliberative democracy demands people to respect each other not by abstracting themselves from their identities. Culture provides context

of meaningful choices which majority takes for granted yet the minority has to struggle to maintain and access these choices. Majority sees that immigrants have relinquished some of the rights to cultural protection. Host countries relinquish the responsibility for the social consequences of their immigration policies. It is irrational to expect that a substantial influx of a culturally diverse group will place no transformative pressure on the majority's way of doing things. (Carens: 1998, 163)

The perceived threat of "losing religious identity and freedom to practice religion" as propagated by the conservatives, perhaps at a psychological sphere, precipitated an identity vigorously emphasizing a religious orientation. In the context of Muslim minority communities the question of religious identity had become synonymous with denial of identity, which was narrowly interpreted that the Muslims will have to lose their religious identity or remain excluded from the project of nationhood. With or without secularism the dominant feeling is that the country 'belongs' to the majority community. Whereas to the Australian born Muslims, Australia is the only country they know. The uneasiness can also be attributed to the politicization of secularism, its connotation in the context of both its domestic relevance and the terrorism factor.

The nation-state requires clearly demarcated spaces to regulate: religion, education, health, leisure, work, income, justice, and war. The space that religion may properly occupy in society has to be continually redefined by the law because the reproduction of secular life within and beyond the nation-state continually affects the discursive clarity of that space. Militant Islam is a tragic attempt to regain social control through acts of violence. Terrorism is a tactic, not a belief and the real threat is resurgence of religious right (across religions) and those who owe allegiance and identity to a higher authority rather than equality amongst believers of diverse religious ideologies. There is a lack of open debate among communities and both sides need to come out of their comfort zone to openly discuss their fears and apprehensions.

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NOTES

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[1] Wendell L. Willkie, quoted in Flynn, Thomas W, "The case for affirmative secularism" Free Inquiry, Spring 1996 v16 n2 p12(7)

[2] A fatwa (religious edict) in response to a U.S Muslim marine, "it is acceptable—God willing—for Muslim American military personnel to participate in the fighting in the upcoming battles, against whomever their country decides has perpetrated terrorism against them, keeping in mind to have the proper intention, as explained earlier, so that no doubts will be raised about their loyalty to their country, or to prevent harm from befalling them, as might be expected. This is in accordance with the Islamic jurisprudential rules which state that necessities dictate exceptions, as well as the rule that says that one may endure a small harm to avoid a much greater harm. And God the Most High is Most Knowledgeable and Most Wise (Nafi: 2004)."

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