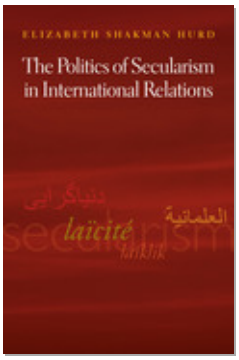
The Politics of Secularism in International Relations

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd



Published by Princeton University Press

CHAPTER THREE

Secularism and Islam

In conflict resistless each toil they endur'd,
Till their foes shrunk dismay'd from the war's desolation:
And pale beam'd the Crescent, its splendor obscured
By the light of the star-spangled flag of our nation
Where each flaming star gleam'd a meteor of war,
And the turban'd head bowed to the terrible glare.
Then mixt with the olive the laurel shall wave,
And form a bright wreath for the brow of the brave.

Our fathers who stand on the summit of fame,
Shall exultingly hear, of their sons, the proud story,
How the young bosoms glow'd with the patriot flame,
How they fought, how they fell, in the midst of their glory,
How triumphant they rode, oe'r the wandering flood,
And stain'd the blue waters with infidel blood;
How mixt with the olive, the laurel did wave,
And form a bright wreath for the brow of the brave.[1]

Written by Maryland lawyer Francis Scott Key in 1805, these two verses of what would in 1814 become the American national anthem celebrate the accomplishments of postrevolutionary American soldiers in the war against Tripoli in the early years of the American republic. The lyrics suggest that early American national identity was composed at least in part of American ("star-spangled flag") opposition to, and victory over, Muslims (the "Crescent," "infidel blood").

There is a multidisciplinary attempt underway to understand how the West has been constituted through interactions with other societies. As Lockman argues, however, "exploration of how the modern West has in crucial ways been shaped, if not constituted, by its interactions with other societies is still at an early stage and remains vastly outweighed by the huge scholarly and popular literature that takes for granted the West's self-conception as a distinct and self-generated civilization and then focuses on the West's impact on the rest of the world."[2] In the field of international relations, Inayatullah and Blaney suggest that "each culture brings to the interactions (changeable) images of itself and others that are prefigured by myths, texts, and traditions. The study of international relations requires comparative and historical analysis of

how cultures conceptualize others."[3] Wendt argues that "managing relationships and determining how we ought to act depend in part on answers to the explanatory question of how certain representations of Self and Other get created. This cannot be answered by unit-level theorizing alone."[4]

This chapter contributes to this effort by analyzing the relationship between secularism, Islam, and European and American national identities. Elements of both laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism compete and coexist in both European and American discourses on religion and politics. Here I trace a series of examples that illustrate the connections between French national identity and laicism and between American national identity and Judeo-Christian secularism. Each trajectory of secularism draws on a different set of historical representations of Islam: laicist assumptions contribute to depictions of Islam as a surmountable though formidable stumbling block to the rationalization and democratization of societies, whereas Judeo-Christian secularist assumptions lead to more ominous conclusions in which Islam is portrayed as a potential threat to the cultural, moral, and religious foundations of Western civilization that must be successfully defused. I conclude that the formations of secularism analyzed in this book, and the national identities in which they are embedded and through which they are expressed, have been generated in part through opposition to Islam.[5]

This argument makes two contributions to international relations theory. First, it challenges Hall's assertion, shared by most realist, liberal, and constructivist international relations theorists and contested throughout this book, that with the Westphalian settlement and the rise of nationalism in Europe "religious identity in the liberal west is thoroughly relegated to the status of a cultural attribute within domestic society, a matter of personal preference no more significant in the civic order than is the individual's taste in music, food, clothing, or any consumer commodity."[6] The norms and forms of secularism analyzed here emerged out of and remain indebted to both Enlightenment and Christian (and later Judeo-Christian) beliefs and practices.[7] These powerful traditions exercise significant influence in international relations such that they cannot be accurately characterized as matters of personal preference.

The argument developed here also contributes in two ways to the literature on "soft power" in international relations.[8] First, forms of secularism represent an important yet understudied part of the culture and values to which Joseph Nye has referred in his numerous discussions of soft power. As Nye suggests, "soft power grows out of a country's culture; it grows out of our values—democracy and human rights, when we live up to them; it grows out of our policies.[9] Second, as Samir Khalaf has suggested, the historical evidence presented here suggests that the United States' global projection of soft power began not after World War II as commonly assumed but much earlier with Protestant missions to the Middle East in the early nineteenth century.[10] Mis-

sionaries were, and remain, important transmitters of various forms of American culture and vehicles of American soft power.[11]

In making the argument that European and American forms of secularism are generated in part through opposition to particular appropriations of Islam, I am not suggesting that forms of secularist authority and the national identities in which they are embedded have been generated exclusively through this opposition. This is clearly not the case. Many factors unrelated to the politics of religion and entirely unrelated to representations of Islam have contributed to the consolidation of modern forms of secularism and modern European and American identities.[12] In addition, other religious traditions including Protestantism and Greek Orthodoxy also contribute in different ways to the consolidation and reproduction of the forms of secularism described in this book.[13] Finally, I do not want to suggest that there exists a direct and unmediated relationship between secularist authoritative traditions, national identities, and foreign policy outcomes. It would be unwise to assume "an easy or transparent relationship between representations of the foreign in cultural production and the world of foreign relations,"[14] as Brian Edwards points out in his analysis of the disjuncture between cultural production and political discourse:

> We are mistaken if we read literary and cultural production as somehow engaging political history on equal grounds—ground made equal by the space of criticism—as has been a common temptation in American studies in the wake of Said's work. Such a temptation, however well intended, is based on a misreading of Said and a failure to attend to his emphasis on questions of institutions rather than on "discourse."[15]

Yet, as Edwards himself demonstrates in his review of Paul Bowles's and General George Patton's writings, examining the overlap between cultural and political discourse also does make it possible to challenge the "perceived chasm separating cultural production from international politics" without equating the two indiscriminately.[16] Mary Ann Heiss bridges this chasm nicely in her analysis of the connection between paternalistic, demeaning, and gendered Anglo-American representations of Muhammad Mossadegh and the justification for the U.S.- and British-engineered coup in 1953 that removed him from power.[17] Heiss argues that representations of Mossadegh as effeminate, fickle, and irrational were significant obstacles in the effort to reach a negotiated resolution of the oil crisis in the wake of Mossadegh's attempted nationalization of the Iranian oil industry.

> Assessing the immediate influence of Western characterizations of Mossadeq on the formulation of Anglo-American policy is tricky because it is not possible to determine a direct causal relationship between Anglo-American perceptions and prejudices and specific events. We cannot say, for example, that Western stereotypes led

> linearly to the coup that removed Mossadeq from office in the summer of 1953. But this does not mean that these stereotypes were unimportant. On the contrary, by shaping the mind-set of Anglo-American officials, they were part of the context within which those officials formulated policy. They buttressed claims of Western superiority over Iranians and other Middle Eastern peoples by perpetuating the idea that those peoples were weak and incapable. And their cumulative effect was to paint Mossadeq and others like him in unfavorable ways that rationalized and justified Western control.[18]

Like Edwards and Heiss, but with a focus on the construction of the political authority of two particular traditions of secularism, this chapter works this connection between cultural discourses, political identities, and forms of authority without assuming an easy or transparent relationship between them. If secularism is a multifaceted authoritative discourse that draws on a deep well of laicist and Judeo-Christian tradition, as argued in chapter 2, it is also the case that this same discourse has a very different yet also significant relationship to Islam. This relationship becomes the focus of this chapter. More than any other single religious or political tradition, Islam has come to represent the "nonsecular" in European and American political thought and practice. Laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism, and the collective identities in which these traditions are embodied and through which they are expressed, have been consolidated in part through opposition to the idea of an antimodern, anti-Christian, and theocratic Islamic Middle East.[19]

Secularist political authority, then, is produced performatively. Representations of Islam as antimodern, anti-Christian, and theocratic are not a coincidental by-product of an inert, pregiven secular political authority—they actually help to constitute it. As Homi Bhabha observes, "terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition."[20] Traditions of secularism, and national identities in which they are embedded and through which they often become manifest, are produced performatively and relationally. As Özkırımlı has argued, "the meanings (and values) attributed to various constituents of the national culture, that is myths, symbols, and traditions, are interminably negotiated, revised and redefined."[21] Through this process of revision and redefinition, an opposition to Islam has been built into the secularist traditions analyzed in this book and has come to constitute part of the national identities with which these traditions are intertwined. Modern Euro-American forms of secular authority are, at least in part, an *effect* of the differentiation of a secular "self" from an Islamic "other." As Michael Dillon has argued,

> how the alien is alien . . . determines how the self-same, in both philosophy and politics, is itself not simply constituted, but continuously re-inaugurated in the process of trying to make the alien proper. There brews, therefore, beneath all identity

> politics and beneath all allied philosophical systems a secret *horror alieni* that insidiously seeks to dispel all aliens—alienness itself—to divest things of everything enigmatic and strange.[22]

This argument about Western forms of secularism and their constitutive relation to particular ways of coming to terms with Islam adds depth and substance to Zachary Lockman's claim that "it was in part by differentiating themselves from Islam . . . that European Christians, and later their nominally secular descendants, defined their own identity."[23] Representations of Islam, the "Islamic Middle East," and Muslim subjects have underwritten the production and legitimization of secularist political authority and have made "various courses of action possible."[24] These representations have been appropriated historically to contribute to the construction of European and American national identities as laicist and Judeo-Christian secularist, respectively.

To develop this argument requires a genealogy of secularist authority in relation to Islam. This involves an attempt to "trace the small, discrete and disconnected beginnings of formations we now take for granted and now treat as if they were natural, given, or established by reason or expressive of an inner telos."[25] My approach to this endeavor, and to the politics and history of representation more generally, draws selectively upon the writings of Michel Foucault, Hayden White, William Connolly, and Talal Asad. Foucault was concerned with the rules governing a particular field of discourse, and sought to "explore scientific discourse not from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal structures of what they are saying, but from the point of view of the rules that come into play in the very existence of such discourse."[26] His approach leads to a concern for the rules, regulations, and enabling conditions that make particular kinds of discourse about Islam possible. White identifies three important political moments in the representational process, including the prefiguration of the historical or representational field, the figuration or writing of the representation, and the refiguration of the narrative as interpreted by different audiences.[27] This calls attention to the multifaceted nature of the representational process and the ways in which a single representation can have multiple and even contradictory political consequences. Connolly draws selectively from the arguments of both Foucault and White to emphasize the political nature of representations and the processes through which they are created and reinstantiated. He insists that representations get caught in a cycle of previous representations, resulting in a "doubling" effect:

> Representation occurs within historically particular contexts that fix both the things to be represented and the terms through which representation occurs. Representation always involves the representation of prior representations. This duality, or doubling, eventually confounds representation, not as an indispensable social practice but as a detached, neutral method of accumulating knowledge.[28]

This approach to the politics of representation directs attention to the changing historical contexts, and evolving philosophical and political terms, through which secularist representations of Islam have developed over time. Finally, in his study of the relationship between representation, knowledge, and religion, Asad underlines the importance of investigating two-way lines of connection between authoritative discourses and the production of knowledge about particular collective subjects. He suggests that "forms of interest in the production of knowledge are intrinsic to various structures of power, and they differ not according to the essential character of Islam or Christianity, but according to historically changing systems of discipline.[29] These four approaches to politics, religion, and representation orient my attempt to understand select aspects of the historical constitution of the forms of secularist authority analyzed in this book, their relation to particular images of Islam, and the political consequences of these relations for the national identities that secularist authority shapes and through which it is legitimized.

Islam and the West

Bunyamin Simsek grew up in Aarhus, Denmark, the son of immigrants from the central Turkish village of Kizilcakisla. Working as a cabin attendant for a Danish charter airline company in the 1990s, he often was asked about his country of origin. His first response of "Aarhus" was usually met with incredulity, so he began asking customers to guess. Greece or Spain, they would venture, but never Turkey. To quote Simsek, "they think I'm nice, so they don't imagine I could be Turkish. Turkey, for them, is Islam, and Islam is fundamentalism."[30]

Oleg Graber argues that European identity is sustained by "a vast fantasy of an Orient that is both a seminal creator (*ex oriente lux*, light comes from the east) and a threat from aliens with an 'oriental' mind."[31] Mohja Kahf suggests that "if there is such a thing as a European outlook on the world, a sense of what is European as distinct from not-European, it began to develop and define itself in opposition to Islamic civilization."[32] Neumann and Welsh agree that "the very idea of what Europe was was from the beginning defined partly in terms of what it was *not* . . . the non-European barbarian or savage played a decisive role in the evolution of the European identity and the maintenance of order among European states."[33] Richard King connects the rise of secular rationality to the subordination of mystical elements of life associated with the Orient, in particular India:

> Since the Enlightenment . . . representations of Western cultures have tended to subordinate what one might call the "Dionysian" (as opposed to the Apollonian) aspects of its own culture and traditions (that is, those trends that have been con-

> ceived as "poetic," "mystical," irrational, uncivilized and feminine). These characteristics represent precisely those qualities that have been "discovered" in the imaginary realm of "the Orient." Of course, this is a grand narrative about a highly complex and contradictory set of cultural processes, but it involves the ascendancy of secular rationality as an ideal within Western intellectual thought, a concomitant marginalization of "the mystical" and the projection of qualities associated with this concept onto a colonized and essentialized India.[34]

Finally, Asad has suggested that:

> The populations designated by the label "Islam" are, in part at least, the physical descendants and cultural heirs of the Hellenic world—the very world in which "Europe" also claims to have its roots. Yet "Islamic civilization" must somehow be denied a vital link to the very properties that define so much of what is essential to "Europe," for otherwise a civilisational difference cannot be postulated between them.[35]

As each of these authors suggests, negative associations of Islam and/or the Orient have played an important role in the establishment of European secular rationality, identity, and culture. Their observations are the starting point for my argument that negative associations of Islam have contributed not only to a general sense of Euro-American culture and civilization but to the elaboration of specific trajectories of secularism. This argument can be situated as part of a broader project described by historian Barbara Metcalf:

> Recent work by Benedict Anderson and others has placed metropolitan and colonized areas into a single historical space where many processes, in fact, have turned out to be simultaneous and the product of complex interactions. The most fundamental institutions of society and economy, even the very concept of nation, along with gender, class, and caste, prove to have been constituted as part of these interactions. One dimension of this is that terms that have been used as scientific categories, not least *modernity* and *secularism* on one side, and *tradition* and *religion* on the other, are increasingly studied as political categories dependent on each other.[36]

Metcalf emphasizes the collective intersubjective constitution of "fundamental institutions of society and economy," including the institutions of secularism. I argue that negative representations of Islam have contributed to the consolidation of French national identity as democratic and *laic*, and American national identity as democratic and Judeo-Christian secular. These representations contribute to the production and reproduction of the traditions of secularism analyzed here and the national identities in which these secularist commitments are embedded and expressed. Ann Laura Stoler makes a similar argument regarding the necessity of thinking through the domestic cultural and political effects of European imperial projects. In *Race and the Education of Desire*, for example, she argues that "the discursive practical field in which nineteenth-century bourgeois sexuality emerged was situated on an imperial

landscape where the cultural accoutrements of bourgeois distinction were partially shaped through contrasts forged in the politics and language of race."[37] Like Stoler, I seek to contribute to a rethinking of the historiographical conventions that bracket histories of the West,[38] focusing on the discursive field in which particular forms of secularism emerged and their relationship to a broader imperial landscape.

The objects of analysis in this chapter are European and early American representations of Islam and their political and cultural effects, and not actual Islamic institutions or their relation to state politics and power in Muslim-majority societies. Mohja Kahf describes this important distinction in her book on Western representations of Muslim women:

> The actual condition of Muslim women is a serious and complex topic. Its study, however, does little to explain the development of the Western narrative. This 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. . . . There is nothing essential or timeless behind Western representations of the Muslim woman; they are products of specific moments and developments in culture.[39]

Similar to Kahf's focus, my subject is not Muslim belief, Islamic tradition, or the relationship between Islam and actual modes of governance in any particular country; it is European and American representations of Islam and how these representations have contributed to the constitution of different forms of secularist authority and the production of particular national identities through which these forms of secularism are expressed and articulated. As Kahf's work illustrates, the ability to represent Islam in a particular way is itself an exercise of power. Edwards makes a similar argument in his discussion of how Western cultural and political representations of the Maghreb have reflected and reinforced a sense that there is no need to engage with actual North Africans.[40] Edwards describes this self-referential American mind-set as "Lucean" after Henry Luce's 1941 essay "The American Century," in which he expounds a "conservative vision of a circular or tautological American understanding of the world—where U.S. global positioning is imagined as supreme within an 'imaginative' American recreation of global power relations."[41] Before examining the American case, however, I turn to French representations of Islam and the construction of the republican ideal of *laïcité*.

Colonialism and the Republican Project: Islam and French *Laïcité*

Laicism is a productive modality of power that organizes itself by establishing particular boundaries and producing particular kinds of collective (theo)political identities.[42] The ambition to realize a pure, universal form of laicism that expels religion from politics is one of the hallmarks of modern French political

order and has been achieved by legislating the relationship between the realm of the sacred and the realm of the profane. Laicism insists upon a singular and universal set of relations between sacred and profane dimensions of existence that holds regardless of cultural or historical circumstances. This is achieved in part through exclusionary practices that represent Islam as antimodern, irrational, and tyrannical. In the political imaginary of laicism, Islam is represented as an impediment to the rationalization and democratization of modern society. Laicism therefore reproduces itself and the national identities with which it is affiliated as legitimate, democratic, and modern by representing Islam as irrational, despotic, and antimodern. As Eugenio Trias has observed, "it is in the struggle against religion that reason has sought to secure its own legitimacy."[43] Negative representations of Islam do not merely reflect the political authority of laicism. They help to constitute it. The following paragraphs document select elements of that process by drawing on historical and postcolonial accounts of French colonial rule and its relationship to the republican laicist project.

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 inaugurated a self-proclaimed French "civilizing mission" to North Africa and the Middle East that was conceived as raising backward peoples to the level of a universal culture and civilization.[44] An alleged deficiency in the civil societies of the colonized created what many Europeans perceived as "a vacuum that was used to justify the moral necessity of western imperialism in North Africa, the Middle East, and the East Indies."[45] The development of a vibrant civil society in the West was cited as a contrast to an Eastern "system of absences" and served as a counterpart to the colonizing mentality that sought to correct those absences through colonial rule. This colonial mentality was fueled in part by a commitment to the theory of "Oriental despotism," a concept originally developed by Montesquieu in *The Spirit of the Laws* that was influential in the writings of Marx, Weber, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, and others.[46] The theory posited that Islamic societies lacked "many of the features and institutions which modern European societies seemed to possess and which had supposedly enabled Europeans to achieve progress, knowledge, wealth and power."[47] The theory of Oriental despotism also served as a means for Europeans to surreptitiously criticize despotic tendencies in their own societies, as in, most famously, Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721).[48]

Oriental despotism fits into a broader tendency identified by Dipesh Chakrabarty as a "stagist theory" of history and by Michael Hanchard as "racial time"[49] through which European political and social thought has made room for what Chakrabarty describes as subaltern classes:[50]

> If "political modernity" was to be a bounded and definable phenomenon, it was not unreasonable to use its definition as a measuring rod for social progress. Within this thought, it could always be said with reason that some people were less modern

than others, and that the former needed a period of preparation and waiting before they could be recognized as full participants in political modernity.[51]

Laicism served as an ideological and practical measuring rod that helped to define and bound political modernity broadly and the European "civilizing mission" specifically. In French interventions in the Middle East and North Africa, the expulsion of religion from politics was identified with progress and civilization, while Islam was associated with Oriental despotism.[52] By appropriating Islam as a regressive and even transgressive nemesis, as a stumbling block to be overcome on the road leading to the French (theoretical though never actual) ideal of assimilation, French thinkers, writers, and colonial administrators contributed to the consolidation of republican identity and state authority as *laic*.[53] The concept and practice of a modern, civilized, and laicist French identity was consolidated, at least in part, through opposition to a series of Muslim colonial "others" that had not yet been, and perhaps never would be, fully civilized.[54] As Todd Shepard argues, "by the late nineteenth century assumptions about the inferiority of Algerian 'Muslims' joined continued assertions that France needed to respect the attachment of 'Muslims' to their Koranic or customary law status as explanations for the continued exclusion of most from full citizenship."[55]

Others have investigated the connections between colonialism and the construction of the domestic institutions of the colonizer. Shepard, for example, underscores the "crucial role that building an overseas empire had in structuring republican institutions in France."[56] Timothy Mitchell developed a similar argument regarding the effects of British colonial power in Egypt. Mitchell argues that one of the political effects of British colonial rule was the sense that the world was divided into two different domains: the colonial self and the colonized other.[57] Paul Silverstein has suggested that the French colonial project in Algeria functioned as an important element in the consolidation of a republican national regime:[58] "The Algerian colony, as a site of innovation and experimentation with the norms and forms of modernity, provided the tools for the French state to monopolize its authority at home, slough off its undesirable masses, and gain a rotating reserve army of laborers necessary for building up the metropole."[59] Laicism was one of the "norms and forms of modernity" identified by Silverstein. Laicism was not a pregiven French standard that was exported to Algeria during the period of French rule between 1830 until the first Algerian war of 1954–62. Instead, *laic* republican collective subjectivity was in part the *effect* of the differentiation of a civilized laicist colonizer from an uncouth, Islamic colonized Algerian. Modern colonialism, as Shepard argues, was a republican project.[60] The process of colonizing Algeria helped to consolidate both the tradition of modern French laicism and French republican ideals with which it was closely intertwined while excluding Muslims from these allegedly universal forms of identification.[61]

There are numerous examples of the consolidation of French republican identity as laicist, scientific, and rational through the representation of Algerian Muslims as overly religious, backward, and irrational. Silverstein argues that "Islam served as the primary trope for explaining two opposed characteristics of the observed Arab personality: on the one hand, their bellicose, hostile nature, attributable to their religious fanaticism; and on the other hand, their inveterate laziness, resulting from their reverent fatalism."[62] Patricia Lorcin notes that "the spectre of Islam as a belligerent religion was ever-present throughout the 130 years of French occupation, and the French invariably imputed to Islam all forms of opposition to their rule."[63] Going back to the original sources, Auguste Pomel, in his 1871 treatise on the "indigenous races of Algeria and the role reserved for them by their aptitudes" wrote that "Mahometism appears specially adapted to societies whose social evolution arrested in the phase of barbarous patriarchy . . . a theocratic status of which absolutism is the pivot and fatalism the measure."[64] Muslims were portrayed by many French writers and administrators as unreceptive to change and hostile to progress. As Silverstein notes, "French administrators perceived this essential religiosity of Arabs as an inherent stumbling block to their administrative and legal incorporation into the French nation."[65]

Nowhere were French representations of Islam as the central impediment to the rationalization and modernization of Algerian society more evident than in the excessive French praise for the Berbers, and in particular the Kabyle minority, who were depicted as more modern and civilized than their Arab counterparts.[66] The French portrayed the Kabyles as only superficially Islamic and in every way the opposite of the Arabs.[67] As one French analyst observed in 1950, "the Berbers are part of the rational West in formal opposition to the Arabs, who are above all of the imaginative Orient."[68] These negative representations of Algerian Muslims did not merely reflect, but actually helped to consolidate and legitimize, the political authority and moral superiority of laicism. As Lorcin argues,

> natural tendencies to view European civilization as universally superior were exacerbated intellectually by three factors, namely, the received ideas that had first been elaborated during the Middle Ages and had undergone little subsequent modification, the commitment to secularization on the part of an essentially anti-clerical officer corps, and the awareness, on the part of Saint-Simonian officers in particular, of the nascent ideas connecting religion to human development.[69]

Depicting Algerian Muslims as tradition-bound, lazy, fatalistic, theocratic, and irrational helped to construct and defend an emergent French ambition to public order that embodied the opposite traits, an objective that was to be achieved at least in part through the exclusion of religion from public life.[70]

The fact that French thinkers and members of the Algerian officer corps had such strong views concerning the connections between religion, politics,

morality, and public order in French Algeria in the mid- to late nineteenth century suggests that these same connections were undergoing revision in France at that time. Indeed, a new legal, institutional and political French commitment to *laïcité* emerged in the late nineteenth century,[71] part of a vast assemblage of modernizing developments that have been traced meticulously in the history of French domestic politics but only rarely explicitly connected to French colonial politics.[72] Although its formal origins can be traced at least to the French Revolution, the nineteenth century witnessed a series of events and reforms that embedded a particular tradition of laicism in French law, including the political victory of the anticlerical movement in the founding of the Third Republic in 1871[73] and legislative acts limiting the role of religion in public education through the institution of *morale laïque* in the 1880s.[74] These developments culminated in the French Law of 1905, which ensured liberty of conscience, guaranteed the free exercise of religion (Article I), and acknowledged that the Republic would not recognize, remunerate, or subsidize any religious denomination (Article II).[75] As Lorcin observes, "from the 1789–99 revolution, when the Church was divested of its territorial wealth, to 1905 when Church and state were finally separated, the tide between clerical and anti-clerical elements in France ebbed and flowed as France was gradually transformed into a secular state."[76]

Conventional accounts of these developments portray them "as part of the constant tug-of-war between the Church and the liberalizing forces of the society over the *pouvoir éducateur.*"[77] As Peter McPhee argues, "central to the Third Republic's educational project was the assumption that republican values could only finally be embedded in French society if the power of the Catholic Church over the minds of the young could be broken."[78] I would argue that in addition to these domestic considerations, the entrenchment of a particular form of laicism in France both contributed to and benefited from specific French colonial policies, in particular a more assertive and deliberate overseas colonial policy that developed after the military defeat of 1870—the same year that France made Algeria an integral part of France with three départements.[79] As McPhee notes, this new policy "united the small but influential colonial lobby" concerning the just nature of the French civilizing mission abroad, assumptions that were "not seriously questioned across the political spectrum."[80] One powerful proponent of this colonial policy was Jules Ferry (mayor of Paris in 1870–71 and prime minister in 1880–81), the leading figure in French secularizing educational reforms of this era.[81] Ferry supported the "obligation and duty that are imposed on all civilized people to make the signature of their representatives respected by all barbarous nations."[82] As McPhee argues, "colonialism took on a rehabilitating, 'civilizing' mission for France as well as for its colonial subjects."[83] French colonial representations of Algerian Muslims as nonsecular, uncivilized, and disorderly contributed to the establishment of French civilization as modern, demo-

cratic, and *laic*. As Lorcin concludes, "allegiance to the nation served to counteract internal political or regional schisms and to unite the country behind a secular banner."[84]

It is difficult and perhaps risky to trace causal connections between the historical constitution and legal instantiations of French *laïcité* and contemporary French politics. However, one possible legacy of these negative representations of Islam in current debates surrounding French identity is the relative lack of toleration in these discussions for the public accommodation of Islamic expression and identification. Up to the present, being a French supporter of laicism has generally meant *not* being Muslim, at least not openly and publicly. One could be Jewish (at times) or Christian, but within the concept of "secular Muslim European" has been lodged an assumption that the "Muslim" part is subordinate to the "secular" and "European" parts. Recent illustrations of this tension between received traditions of French republican identity and the realities of a diversifying theopolitical landscape in contemporary France include support for the legal ban on veiling and other ostensible forms of religious expression in French public spaces enacted in 2004, as well as opposition to Turkish membership in the European Union. The latter is the subject of chapter 4.

"Like Apples and Oranges": Islam and Judeo-Christian Secularism

In March 2000 the Al Salam Mosque Foundation signed a $2.1 million dollar contract to purchase a Reformed Church in Palos Heights, Illinois.[85] When the Mosque Foundation sought the city's assurance that the building could be used as a religious institution, as it had been previously, residents and two city council members protested. In defense of her opposition to the mosque, one alderwoman commented that "what you are proposing is like upside-down . . . yours (referring to the Muslim day of worship) is on Friday, and then you are not going to use it on Sunday. It's kind of like comparing apples and oranges." In a newspaper interview a second alderman (who later apologized) stated, "if someone had intervened early on to stop Adolph Hitler, there might not have been a world war." At public meetings Muslims were told to "go back to their own countries," and one woman described Islam as a "false religion."[86] In an attempt to resolve this conflict, the Palos Heights City Council voted to pay the Al Salam Mosque Foundation $200,000 to walk away from the deal. Although the foundation initially accepted this compromise, the mayor of Palos Heights later vetoed the buyout on the grounds that it was an insult to Muslims. The foundation responded by suing the city in federal civil court for $6.2 million on the grounds that "the city's handling of the situation amounted to religious discrimination, conspiracy, and unwarranted meddling in a private real estate transaction."[87]

This resistance among "average" Americans in Palos Heights to the presence of a mosque in their community reminds me of a billboard that I saw in the early 1990s alongside Route 9 in Connecticut that read, "Exercise your freedom of religion: attend the Church of your choice." Both the Palos Heights controversy and the billboard in Connecticut suggest in differing ways that religious freedom in the United States has on occasion been conflated with the right to practice Christianity. In Palos Heights, the "apples and oranges" defense expressed deep-seated anxieties about the presence of Muslim religious institutions. The residents' discomfort with the idea of a mosque in their community, expressed in one individual's suggestion that allowing Muslims to worship in Palos Heights would be equivalent to accepting Hitler, suggests that the (Judeo)-Christian tradition of secularism that informs American discourse on religion and politics stands in a tense relation with Islam. The practice of Judeo-Christian secularism seems to carry within it a philosophical, historical, visceral, and institutionalized opposition to Islam, as witnessed in Palos Heights. In this instance, as in others,[88] Judeo-Christian secularism fails to provide the ethical resources required for an actual pluralization of public life in suburban Illinois and elsewhere.

Negative representations of Islam have a long and active history in American politics[89] and remain influential in contemporary references to "natural" links between Christianity and American democracy, "natural" links between Islam and theocracy, suggestions that democratic secular order is a unique Western achievement, and the sense that Islam poses a special kind of threat to the cultural, moral, and religious foundations of Western ways of life. This section argues that these unflattering contemporary representations of Islam are the direct descendants of early American attempts to consolidate a democratic, secular national identity that was achieved in part through opposition to particular understandings and representations of Islam.[90] Like republican laic identity in France, the consolidation of early American identity as Christian and democratic was achieved in part through negative appropriations of Islam. (The prefix Judeo was not added to Judeo-Christian until after World War II and is therefore not relevant to this discussion, which focuses on the relationship between Christianity, Islam, and early American national identity.)

In his excellent work on this subject, Timothy Marr has shown that early American identity was constituted as morally righteous, democratic, and modern by representing Islam as the epitome of "antichristian darkness and political tyranny."[91] Marr demonstrates that unfavorable early American representations of Islam by Protestant missionaries contributed to the construction of early American national identity as modern, democratic, and Christian. Drawing on Marr's work, I argue that these representations also laid a template not only for domestic American hostility toward Islam as witnessed on an individual and communal scale in Palos Heights, but also for much larger state-level Euro-American collective approaches to international relations with Muslim-

majority states. Missions abroad, religious in the American case and colonial in the French one, have played a critical role in the construction of domestic forms of identification and the emergence of particular kinds of political institutions and traditions.

Robert Allison notes that "the American encounter with the Muslim world actually began before there was a United States and almost before Europeans became aware that America existed."[92] Early American Protestant missionaries, who saw Islam as the antichrist, were among the earliest actors to frame Islam as the nemesis of American identity, which was construed as Christian and democratic.[93] As one female Protestant missionary to Syria in the early nineteenth century wrote, "what else but evil can be told of the undisputed dominions of the enemy of God?"[94] As Marr chronicles, the missionaries believed that Islam "claimed a direct revelation from God after that of Christ, [and] could not be placed within a Christian world-view. Its very existence shook the foundations of Christian belief, spelling spiritual ruin and a return to moral chaos."[95] In seeking to explain why God would allow the foundations of Christian belief to be shaken, Protestant eschatology placed the blame on Christians themselves, insisting that Islam was "as an enemy whose existence was solely a result of Christian mistakes."[96] According to Martin Luther, the Turkish invasions of Europe were "the rod of punishment of the wrath of God" for their infidelity to the spirit of Christ.[97] John Cotton claimed that "popish idolatry causes Turkish tyrannie."[98]

Many early Americans also believed that the Day of Judgment and the final destruction of the Muslim antichrist would follow the fall of Islam, and religious authorities competed to confirm signs of the coming fall.[99] Protestant biblical commentators in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries established a link between the fall of Islam and the return of Christ by arguing that Islam as a historical phenomenon was expressed by the fifth and sixth trumpets, "whose blasts were called the first two trumpets of woe," described in the ninth chapter of Revelation.[100] They believed that the sixth trumpet was passing and that the Day of Judgment was near. As Marr argues, "it was mainly through the agency of this 'Turkish theory' that the fate of Islam came to be intimately connected with the possibility of Christ's return."[101] The missionaries' religious zeal notwithstanding, they encountered difficulties in their attempts to convert Muslims to Christianity. Within five years of starting their mission to the Middle East in 1820, Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons had both fallen ill and died. To make matters more difficult, Ottoman law punished apostasy from Islam. In addition, as Marr notes, "to this date there has been no large-scale conversion of Muslims to Christianity in large part because the Qur'an acknowledges the divine mission of Christ."[102]

Despite their relatively limited success abroad, the missionaries were extremely influential in the United States itself. Samir Khalaf, for example, argues that between 1820 and 1920 U.S. foreign policy to the Middle East

was based on reports filed by these missionaries.[103] In addition, at home the missionaries inaugurated a tradition of interpreting Islam through a Christian worldview that approached Muslim-Christian relations as part of a divine plan. A powerful interpretive tradition that spanned three centuries and a wide range of thinkers,[104] Protestant eschatology figured prominently in the formation of early American attitudes toward Islam. In part as a result of these representations, American national identity was constructed in terms of Christian superiority over a despotic Islamic infidel. The threat posed by Islam had been repackaged into a confirmation of Christian superiority.[105] As Marr argues, "dehumanizing notions about one of the world's major religions were implanted within the cultural perspective, and even the religious faith, of many educated Americans."[106]

Missionaries Pliny Fisk, Jonas King, and Levi Parsons all contributed to this anti-Islamic mind-set. Convinced of the superiority of Christianity over Islam, Parsons referred to Islam as "this great empire of sin."[107] Colorful biblical interpretations fueled this political and religious imaginary. Biblical commentators attempted to establish links between the "perceived qualities of the Arabian peoples and the behavior of natural locusts" in order to assure readers that Revelation's locusts referred to Saracens from the east.[108] The drying up of the Euphrates, the commentators assured their readers, "signified the declension of the Turkish empire to make room for the restoration of the Jews to Israel and their subsequent conversion to Christianity, a harbinger of the end of the antichristian empire."[109] Marr describes the influence of this discourse upon the American public:

> The combined elements of these theories of the eastern antichrist—which identified the fifth trumpet with the rise of Islam, the sixth trumpet with the establishment of the Turkish empire, and the sixth vial with its imminent demise—was a mainstay of many American biblical commentaries in the first half century after the formation of the United States. The most popular resources—handbooks, dictionaries, family Bible commentaries, and reference compendia—incorporated the Turkish theory in their explanatory notes. . . . These sources spread these views of Islam, while validating them as the authoritative judgments of experts, into the studies of ministers and living rooms of lay people.[110]

This biblical prophecy was interpreted as suggesting that Islam was fated to fall. As Reverend Pliny Fisk argued, "it is not more certain, that the walls of Jericho fell before the ancient people of God, than it is, that the whole Mahommedan world will be subdued by the Gospel."[111]

At the same time, American engagement in the Mediterranean increased dramatically during the early nineteenth century as a result of mounting commercial, missionary, and trade interests. Disputes arose between the United States and Algiers between 1785 and 1815; the United States was involved in the Tripolitan War of 1801–15 and the Greek War of Independence of 1821–

28, and the United States bombed Sumatra in 1831. As the United States became militarily and economically more powerful, Americans worked to legitimize both their foreign policy and their newly established domestic government. Marr notes that "events in the Muslim Mediterranean thereby performed necessary functions in the affirmation of American nationalism and functioned as a stage of legitimization, both historically and rhetorically, upon which Americans could dramatize the humanity and heroism of their own cultural practices and the global relevance of their form of government."[112] Americans consolidated this common national identity against what they represented as the anti-Christian tyranny of Islamic rule. "This orientalist construction of Islam as a cultural enemy, maligned as both antichristian and antidemocratic, served as an idealized antithesis against which Americans of diverse denominational, ethnic, and partisan stripes could unite in defining republican identities from the nation's founding up until the Age of Jackson."[113] The link between the superiority of Christianity and American exceptionalism was strengthened by the widespread belief that the new nation had been created to assist in bringing about the millennium—the thousand-year reign of Christian peace.[114]

Early American democratic nationalism combined Orientalism, ideals of Christian superiority, and the American approach to government.[115] One consequence of the popularization of these connections in the United States was that Americans conceived of Islam as synonymous with despotic rule. "Islam, as the Americans saw it, was against liberty, and being against liberty, it stopped progress."[116] At the same time, commentators interpreted the political disintegration of Mediterranean governments as confirmation of the virtues of American republican government. "The construction of tyranny and despotism was thus an inherent part of the process of reinventing republicanism."[117] Montesquieu and other Enlightenment thinkers were an important source of the idea that American ideals of governance should be posited as the opposite of Islamic political order. According to Allison, "Enlightenment writers created a picture of the Muslim world that served as a sober warning about the dangers of submitting to despotism, about the dangers of suppressing public debate, and about the twin evils of tyranny and anarchy."[118] Montesquieu's writings on the virtues of checks and balances, the separation of powers, and civic virtue were, according to Marr, "only fully understood in dialectic relation to the despotism that arose in their absence."[119] Thus Montesquieu not only contributed to an understanding of republican government but also "helped to form early American views of Islamic government . . . as the oppositional model of the excesses to be avoided in the new American system."[120]

Islamic imagery thus functioned in postrevolutionary America as an "interpretive horizon against which Americans oriented the direction of their national project, the morality of their cultural institutions, and the shape of their romantic imaginations."[121] Even literary productions produced consensus

around the virtues of republicanism, Christianity, and democracy in opposition to Islamic despotism and exploitation. As Allison observes:

> A flood of books on the Muslim world poured from American presses in the 1790s: captivity narratives; histories, including two biographies of Muhammad; novels and poems; and the first American edition of the *Arabian Nights*. This literature conveyed a consistent picture of the Muslim world, an inverted image of the world the Americans were trying to create anew.[122]

Moralizing, fictional oriental tales stood in as the "secular counterpart to eschatological utopianism," "an important cultural enterprise of counterdespotism [that] stimulated the expression of a sublime moral idealism which Americans harnessed for nationalist ends."[123] Themes of these productions included the family as the vehicle of virtue and bedrock of moral democracy, the harem as the seedbed of despotism, and the conversion of the infidel and the naturalization of the despotic (and spying) alien.

The production of early American national identity as Christian, secular, and democratic was at least in part an *effect* of the attempt to differentiate a modern, republican Christian America from an antimodern, despotic Islamic Middle East. Long before any Muslims settled in the United States, Islam played an important role in the construction of American identity as Christian (later Judeo-Christian), secular, and democratic.[124] This process of collective self-identification laid important cultural templates for powerful contemporary connections between American identity, manifest destiny, and Christianity. This is illustrated in a response to a poll given by a forty-six-year-old engineering technician from Ohio, who stated that "this country was set up to lead the rest of the world. God picked this country."[125] These same templates contribute to American constructions of Muslim deviance at home and abroad, including contemporary notions of the "rogue state," the Islamist terrorist, and the portrayal of Islam as a "false religion."[126]

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that French and American national identities and the two traditions of secularism described in this book that are embedded in them have been constituted in part through opposition to particular representations of Islam. These representations are not the by-product of a pregiven form of secularist authority. They are constitutive of it. They help to define, reproduce, elaborate upon, and patrol the boundaries of the authoritative secularist traditions described in chapter 2.

The next chapter bridges the historical and conceptual work accomplished thus far with the more applied arguments that make up the middle chapters of the book, introducing the cases of Turkey and Iran to illustrate how the

"secular" has been constructed, contested, and renegotiated in these countries. Chapters 5 and 6 describe the implications of laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism for international relations through empirical analyses of the cultural and normative foundations of European opposition to Turkish accession to the European Union and American responses to the Iranian revolution of 1978–79, respectively. Neither the controversy over EU enlargement nor ongoing hostility between the United States and Iran may be understood through recourse to the rationalist accounts that dominate contemporary international relations theory and take state interests as objective and pregiven. Understanding these empirical puzzles requires reframing the question to account for the effects of secularist tradition, forms of collective identification, and epistemology upon international politics.