REDEFINING SECULARISM IN POSTCOLONIAL CONTEXTS

An Introduction

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ABSTRACT

The article raises the problematic of translation of the political doctrine of secularism in postcolonial contexts and the inherent challenges in articulating secular subjectivities that are trapped in the discourses of modernity, nationalism, fundamentalism and religion. Acknowledging that the diverse interpretations of secularism have produced more debate than consensus in postcolonial nations such as India, the authors seek to interrogate critically the relevance of secularism without sacrificing its long-term value for religiously plural societies that are presently witness to the rise of religious fundamentalism.

Key Words ◇ modernity ◇ nationalism ◇ postcolonial ◇ religion ◇ secularism ◇ state ◇ tradition ◇ translation

The day 15 September 2001 was marked in the USA as a national day of mourning and remembrance for the thousands who had perished in the terrorist assaults on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, four days earlier. What was interesting about this somber occasion was not just that it triggered a groundswell of deep sorrow for those who died tragic deaths in the explosions or that it sparked a resurgence of nationalist spirit and patriotic love for the United States among her citizen-subjects, but rather that the religious service, ecumenical as it was, was personally ordered by the President of United States George W. Bush and was attended by the entire

Cultural Dynamics 14(1): 7–20. [0921–3740 (200203) 14:1; 7–20; 021403]

state apparatus. The attacks by so-called 'Islamic terrorists' on America were officially construed as acts of war and the national day of mourning by the state involved religious services at the National Cathedral in the nation's capital. Bush's decision to call for the religious service and his other legislative actions (such as the decision to enable faith-based organizations to administer welfare programs) point to the blurring of boundaries between church and state in the United States, which prides itself on being an emblem of the doctrine of secularism for the rest of the world. The public policies followed by Bush and his fellow Republicans can be termed as a triumph of identity politics that surprisingly don't seem to have spared the courts, which on their part have been responsible for the erosion of the 'strict' wall of separation between church and state.

Jerry Falwell, the well-known televangelist and conservative Republican, represents the increasingly belligerent attitude of the religious right in America. His reaction to the assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which was telecast on CNN on 14 September 2001, is emblematic of the rise of religion in American politics:

> The ACLU's got to take a lot of blame for this. And, I know that I'll hear from them for this . . . but throwing God out successfully with the help of the federal court system, throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools [sic] . . . the abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say 'You helped this happen.'

Falwell's assignment of blame for the bombings to the American Civil Liberties Union, the gays and lesbians, abortionists, the National Organization of Women, no doubt represents an extreme 'right' ideological position but the fact that many in America share his thoughts is disconcerting to say the least. To denounce the above constituencies for 'secularizing' America underscores the staunchly conservative and intolerant turn in present-day America. Although there have been a few stridently liberal critiques of the ideology of desecularization, an apparent majority of Americans have faithfully supported the policies of Bush, who has played an instrumental role in re-emphasizing 'God's own country' as a Judeo-Christian entity in spite of a secular doctrine inscribed in the Constitution of the United States that calls for a separation between religion and the public sphere. Admittedly Protestantism played an important role in the formation of the American nation, but the politicization of religion—its deprivatization—has raised serious questions about the viability of the category of the 'secular' and, in the process, has focused intense national debate on the relevance of the tradition of liberalism in 'God's own country'.

Our purpose is not to analyze the secular debate that the modern nation of America is presently witness to, but to set it up as a 'modular' example so that our discussion of the category of the 'secular' in postcolonial nations becomes more meaningful. Our objective is to retrieve the meaning and viability of secularism as a political doctrine in postcolonial contexts. In other words, how do we make sense of secularism as a modernist discourse in postcolonial settings where religion is inextricably linked to lived experience, and how do we reconcile this 'everyday' presence of religion, its political role in such societies, with the liberal theory of secularism? How can the universal principle of secularism be applied to the 'particular' and ethical narrations of decolonized subjectivities, especially in light of the rise of religious fundamentalisms, for instance, Islamic in Turkey and Hindu in India? Why is it necessary to accommodate 'religion as faith' in order to grasp the symbolic meanings of secular practice, whereas the very process of secularization implies a strict separation between state and religion? Is such a strict separation possible in both cases? If the concept of secularism is still relevant in India and Turkey, what is involved in the translation of the ethical dimensions of secularism into principles of governance in these nations? The notion that there exists an 'original' definition of secularism should be treated with caution because, while the concept of secularism has its historical roots in the West, its translation into postcolonial contexts has produced completely new *avatars*. Thus, western secularism as represented by the American case is not a transcendental signified that takes 'shape within the horizon of an absolutely pure, transparent, and unequivocal translatability' (Derrida, 1972: 20).

The above questions are meant to raise the problematic of translation of the political doctrine of secularism into non-western contexts and the inherent challenges in articulating secular subjectivities that are very much caught up in the discourses of modernity, nationalism, fundamentalism, and religion. It is also to note the emergence of a secular subject in the West as reflected in a process by which the transcendent authority of religious ideals is replaced by a series of increasingly normative social practices, bound together by the newly formed 'subject' of rational discourse. The equation of secularism, which addresses primarily the character of public discourse, the role of religion and non-religion in public life, with western liberalism which draws our attention to questions of rights, justice, tolerance, and the role of the state has acquired a character that is peculiar to the Indian context. The new meanings of 'secularism' in postcolonial nations such as India have produced more debate than consensus. As Rustom Bharucha (1998: 16) notes:

> . . . the problem of translation which is not merely linguistic but conceptual, is part of the rift that exists between the rhetoric of secularism as it is enunciated in the Indian Constitution, and its insufficiently realized, if not downright distorted, practice in the social and civic domains of everyday life.

Bharucha is acutely aware of the threats posed to secularism in the forms of communalism and globalization, but at the same time is hopeful of its resistance in 'articulating new dimensions in its philosophy and practice' at a time when its political and cultural relevance is being questioned by one and all. Signifying optimism, he claims that secularism is not only in a state of crisis but also in the making (Bharucha, 1998). Questioning the relevance of secularism as a political category, critics like Ashis Nandy state in no uncertain terms that 'the hegemonic language of secularism' is no more than a western import transplanted onto a traditional society and that it has exhausted all its possibilities. Claiming that the western theory of secularism makes the Indian experience 'unintelligible', Dhareshwar (1998: 224) points to the inability of the normativity of western theory 'to say both what secularism in the Indian context would mean and what that "something" is that needs to be secularized'.

Similarly, the problem of the relevance of secularism can also be extrapolated to the case of Turkey which attempted to conform to the image of a modern western nation from the time it secularized itself in 1923 but in the recent past has witnessed the re-establishment of Islam in the political and social affairs of the nation. If the language of secularism in India is seen by the Hindu nationalists as a western import that is totally inappropriate to the Indian context, then the increasing trend in Turkey has been to re-establish a more 'Islamically oriented state' as evinced in the Islamic revivalism in that nation. Such movements, with their rejection of the Enlightenment value of secularism in the name of 'tradition', are perceived to be anti-modern and it is precisely such an understanding of the Hindu or Islamic revivalism that Talal Asad takes issue with. Contesting the description of Islamic movements in Iran and Egypt as only partly modern and therefore 'pathological in character', Asad (1996) notes that, 'this description paints Islamic movements as being somehow inauthentically traditional on the assumption that "real tradition" is unchanging, repetitive, and nonrational'. Such a description according to him, denies us the understanding of those movements 'as being modern and traditional, both authentic and creative at the same time', an understanding that also serves as a critique of 'the uniquely Western model of secular modernity' and makes us more wary of measuring everything against the yardstick of authentic modernity. In determining the problem of whether modernity inhabits a singular trajectory or itself is 'an integrated set of practical knowledges', Asad wants us to interrogate the criteria by which modernity appears 'descriptive' (do they relate to some immutable essence?) or 'normative' (on whose authority do the criteria constitute themselves?). However, this should not deter us from critically challenging the assumptions behind such politico-religious movements, be they Hindu or Islamic, because there are inherent dangers in religion becoming part of modern politics, as the following essays would speak to.

Clearly, tradition is not the sole property of the developing world for, following Asad, one can cogently argue that 'liberalism as a tradition is central to modernity . . . it is a tradition that defines one central aspect of Western modernity [and] it is no less modern by virtue of being a tradition than anything else is modern' (Asad, 1996). That the political philosophy of liberalism has its critics both within and outside the West is obvious, for instance, from the conservative political tone set by the governing Republican Party in America and from the global opposition to what the *New York Times* of 16 September 2001 terms the 'pervasive American popular culture, and its instinct to spread the freewheeling secularist ways of American life'.

Yet, to return to the context of the Third World, it is this very 'real tradition' articulated as authentic and non-rational and in ideological opposition to western secular modernity that informs the resurgent discourses of religious and ethnic nationalisms in most parts of Asia and Africa. To be sure, such an articulation, usually on the part of the religious nationalists, is strongly critiqued from within the nation for its historically unexamined and uncritical nativist tendencies in narrating the mythological origins of the nation, but what such an articulation brings to the fore is the problematic relationship between nationalism and secularism, both being political gifts of modernity.

Is secularism opposed to nationalism or is nationalism inherently secular in nature? Why is it that nationalism, full of psychological meaning, assumes the form of patriotic love for one's nation coupled with the irrational hatred for the enemy within and outside the nation, whereas the politics of secularism in spite of preaching the ethics of tolerance and respect for others' religious and civic rights lacks the same psychological significance as nationalism for the citizen-subjects of a nation? How can the 'secular', given its universal sense of belonging to the world by way of transcending religious, racial, and ethnic identities, coexist with nationalism and its promotion of a 'particularist' sense of belonging to home, to a particular social identity that is couched in the language of religion, race, and ethnicity?

A Brief Look at Nationalism

If 'it is nationalism, more than any other political ideology that has made the personal the political' (Tyrrell, 1996: 237), then does it mean that whenever we talk about ourselves (many selves and many others), we bring the nation into the picture as an object of knowledge and belief, when we no longer imagine it distant from mundane existence, but bring it close to ourselves, so close as to experience love, passion, anxiety, trauma, paranoia, hysteria, rage, pride, fear, and horror—feelings of affectivity, conscious or

unconscious, that either reflect complete alienation from the nation or complete identification with it. When we talk about ourselves, are we necessarily talking about the nation—the unspoken modality of always being national when one speaks—or can our personal talk be grounded only in secular thought—minus the reference to the nation and the performative speech act of belonging to it? On what moral and ethical grounds does it become possible for us to voice our support for Palestinian and Kurdish nationalisms because we think they speak of self-affirmation but oppose Serbian and Hindu nationalisms because they are regressive in character and oppress minority populations? On what basis can some make the assumption that it is 'natural' for them to practice aggression against others in the name of xenophobic nationalism or cultural nationalism in the name of defending their way of life? If the communal or the fundamentalist being is as different from the secular one as is the paranoiac's imagery of the nation from the national imago of the psychotic, then how do singular ways of being exceptional bind the subjects of the nation together in their respective 'ways of life'? Do we treat nationalism as ideology, civic religion, popular sentiment, mass psychosis, or mass hysteria?

The study of nationalism as 'a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty' speaks in the language of *autonomy*, *unity*, and *identity*. Its analysis is further complicated by the fact that it spills over into any number of cognate subjects: race and racism, fascism, language development, modernity, political religion, communalism, ethnic conflict, international law, protectionism, minorities, gender, immigration genocide (Hutchinson and Smith, 1994: 3). In addition, nationalism takes variegated forms such as 'religious, conservative, liberal, fascist, communist, cultural, political, protectionist, integrationist, separatist, irredentist, diaspora, pan, etc' (Hutchinson and Smith, 1994: 3). What can be argued is that the study of nation and nationalism has been beset by the problem of finding appropriate units of analysis to structure the discourses. The contestation over the concept of the *nation* has taken place on two fronts: first, in terms of its multiple interpretations by scholars belonging to different disciplines and, second, 'as a form of identity that competes with other kinds of collective identity' (Hutchinson and Smith, 1994: 4). By acknowledging that 'the concept of nation must be differentiated from other concepts of collective identity like class, race, region, gender, and religious community', Hutchinson and Smith rightly note that there is little agreement if any about the role of ethnicity as opposed to the political factors in the constitution of the nation. There is also disagreement about 'the balance between "subjective" elements like will and memory, and more "objective" elements like territory and language' (Hutchinson and Smith, 1994: 4). With regard to the concept of nationalism, they point to the significant differences that have characterized the definition of the concept,

> . . . some equating with 'national sentiment,' others with 'nationalist ideology,' others with nationalist ideology and language, others again with nationalist movements . . . and those who stress the cultural rather than the political aspects of nationalism. (Hutchinson and Smith, 1994: 4)

What has been confirmed after three decades of empirical studies of national movements across the world is the 'artificial or manufactured character of nineteenth and twentieth century nationalities' which, in spite of having a common consciousness built around common territory, language, or religion, had to develop a consciousness that was *nationalist* in character. This happened only due to some form of creative political action (Gandhi's *satyagraha* or non-violence movement comes to our mind here) that transformed 'a segmented and disunited population into a coherent nationality' (Eley and Suny, 1996: 7). Following on, what is also beyond dispute is that nationalism is a peculiarly modern phenomenon, 'a form of secular millenariarism that has arisen from Kantian conceptions of human beings as autonomous, which, in turn, has led to politics replacing religion as the key to salvation' (Hutchinson and Smith, 1994: 26). Central to the substitution of religion by politics were the processes of secularism and secularization, which instituted a rational and scientific temper in the intellectual sphere that was previously 'dominated by religious assumptions and traditions, and usually by ecclesiastical authority' (Smith, 1981: 90). Even as nationalism became the new civic religion, secularism played an instrumental role in separating religion from politics.

'*In the Name of the Secular*'

In the context of the articulation of anti-colonial nationalism in the Indian context, Chatterjee (1995: 14) writes that, 'The nationalist project of putting an end to colonial rule and inaugurating an independent nation-state became implicated, from its very birth, in a contradictory movement with regard to the modernist mission of secularism.' He underscores the importance of understanding 'the force and internal consistency of the nationalist-modernist project which sought, in one and the same move, to rationalize the domain of religious discourse and to secularize the public domain of personal law' (Chatterjee, 1995: 20). That is, the goals of the nationalist project were seen to be in opposition to the secular principles inscribed in the Constitution due to the differing natures of their civilizing missions; nationalism officially sought to rid the newly born nation of western influences and later on, unofficially, the cultural minorities within, while secularism aspired to recognize equally the nation's plurality of religious and cultural voices through the constitutional adoption of the principles of secularism (the separation between religion and state) and secularization (the progressive decline of religion in civil society) as they developed in the

West. Simply put, nationalism's 'other' became secularism, even though they were derived from a common source, post-Enlightenment thought. Chatterjee argues that the presupposition of the Indian nationalist discourse is fundamentally flawed because the history of its movement is written in Europe, and thus, 'as history, nationalism's autobiography is flawed'. The debacle in representation occurs because in Chatterjee's derivation of the birth of the nation it follows that the 'thematic' language of post-Enlightenment thought dictates the 'problematic' of the nation's emergence.

So, if postcolonial nationalism is flawed because it is derived from the West, then what do we make of the thematic discourse of secularism as a post-Enlightenment derivative that stands problematically in ideological opposition to nationalism in Chatterjee's view? Do we announce the failure of the 'secular' in a postcolonial context because its conceptual origins lie in the West, or do we adopt it, given its 'universal' sense of belonging to the world, 'a world of self-authenticating things in which we really live as social beings', a world 'where humans appear as the self-conscious makers of history' and in which 'the secular presents itself as the ground from which theological discourse was generated as a form of false consciousness and from which it gradually emancipated in its march to freedom' (Asad, 1999: 186–7). Asad argues that, although modern nationalism draws on pre-existing languages and practices—including those that we call, anachronistically, 'religious', it does not follow from this that religion is both a cause and an effect of nationalism. He claims that

> . . . nationalism, with its vision of a universe of national societies, in which individual humans live their worldly existence, requires the concept of the secular to make sense . . . even when the nation is said to be 'under God', because it has its being only in this world. (Asad, 1999: 186)

That is why we have the notion of 'secular nationalism'. According to him, the modern and 'progressive' view of historians generates a separation between the religious and the secular, a separation that is paradoxically based on the latter continually producing the former; they also are of the view that 'in the pre-modern past, secular life created superstitious and oppressive religion, and in the modern present, secularism has produced enlightened and tolerant religion' (Asad, 1999: 186). Rejecting the assumptions that real human life can gradually free itself from the powerful influence of religion, and to think of religious ideas as 'infecting' the secular domain, or as replicating within it the structure of theological concepts, Asad states that one should not think of religious belief and practice being restricted to a space where they cannot threaten political stability or the liberties of 'free thinking' citizens, but to think of secularism as 'a particular conception of the world' ('natural' and 'social') and of the problems generated by that world (Asad, 1999: 185).

Noting the need to 'free the secular from the burden of its "ism" ',

Bharucha bemoans the fact that the politicization of secularism in India has not only turned it into an exclusivist discourse, but has also distanced it from 'the worldliness of secularism in the social and cultural domains of life' (Bharucha, 1998: 13). Being aware that secularism lends itself to multiple interpretations among its many constituencies and of its comparison to 'limp liberalism', he writes that the framework of secularist forums themselves 'vary considerably in their political orientation, economic sustenance, and cultural affinities to different marginalized groups' and that 'the hidden variables of secularism [should] not be dismissed in a glib postmodern idiom as contributing to an endless referral of meanings' (Bharucha, 1998: 14). The political task of naming secularism cannot be postponed indefinitely, because it is neither a matter of 'strategic essentialism', to use Gayatri Spivak's (1995: 168) critical endorsement of the 'subaltern', nor 'is it entirely a matter of arbitrary closure, without which the articulation of politics is possible' (Spivak, 1998: 168). Essaying a need for a 'secular imaginary' that is constituted by multiple visions of coexistence and respect for difference, Bharucha (1998: 2) states that 'the amnesia of "being secular," without feeling any obligation to define its guiding principles and limits, is an ontology that we can longer afford', and it is toward this end that he describes secularism 'in its most ideal formulation, as a respect for differences cutting across class, caste, community and gender, in which religion is a component in the shaping of identity but not the determining criterion' (1998: 6). We strongly agree with him when he states that his concerns lie in the retrieval of secular subjectivity that is ethical in nature, through the critical analysis of the 'contemporary'. In spite of the linguistic and conceptual difficulties that secular ideology poses, he does not abandon it because he sees it as the only way out of the morass created by the intrusion of religious fundamentalism into the public sphere.

If Bharucha, as a modernist, is committed to resuscitating the discourse of secularism, then Ashis Nandy (1997: 157), an anti-modernist, is one among many in India who believe that secularization cleanses the society of 'religion and ideas of transcendence', thus increasing the anxiety of the people who

> . . . become aware that they are living in an increasingly desacralized world, and who start searching for faiths and meanings in their lives . . . to return to forms of traditional moral community that would negate the world which they live in.

Sensing the fear that secularization has gone too far in India, and that it has brought about the decline in public morality, which in turn is due to the all-round decline in religious sensibilities, Nandy (1997: 164) assigns the blame for this state of affairs to the political 'misuse' of religion by those who consider themselves secularist. For him, it is the people affiliated to radical or leftist political doctrines who become secular on ideological grounds, and for whom any attempt to give up their faith in secularism is tantamount to

'disowning an important part of their self-definition'. Employing Tariq Banuri's comparison of the dominant position of the ego in Freudian psychology with the nation state, Nandy sites secularism as a crucial defense of the ego, a move that points to the fanaticism of many secularists in India, and their 'irrational commitment to rationality', which he reads as 'a typical nineteenth and twentieth century pathology in which allegiance to an ideology outweighs the welfare of the targeted beneficiaries of the ideology' (Nandy, 1997: 165). Representing secularism as a 'pathology of rationality than that of irrationality', he bemoans the decline of religious sensibilities and the weakening of cultural foundations in South Asian communities and attributes the rise of fundamentalism, revivalism, and xenophobia to the stifling of religious expression in public life, and squarely blames secular ideology for exacerbating 'ethnocidal and communal violence in India . . . a successful conspiracy against minorities' (Nandy, 1997: 167). He situates religion, which modern Indians seem to fear, as a foundation for the weak and the poor. Consequently, secularism becomes the management of the fear of religion and the religious.

The differences that characterize the respective positions of Bharucha and Nandy, who occupy opposite sides of the secular debate in India, and whose positions, broadly speaking, are symptomatic of pro and anti secular stances in other nations where similar debates take place, only go to show that the secular 'structure of feeling' in a postcolonial context is 'always already' marked by the fault line that runs between the discourses of modernity and tradition within those nations. The fault line is akin to the analogy of the plate used by W.E.B. Du Bois, which, once cracked, seared ever after along the original break. As time passed it became less difficult to believe that the old fracture caused the new damage and to forget that the plate had been repeatedly dropped. Such is the story of the 'fracture' that runs along the 'modernist' affirmation of secular principles despite its origins and the 'traditional' rejection of the discourse of secularism because of its origins.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the outset, secularism in Euro-American forms in spite of its 'reasonably efficacious organization of public space that opened up new possibilities of freedom and action . . . is coming apart at the seams' because it is seen to lead to the 'loss of organic connections that can be sustained only by general participation in a Christian faith' (Connolly, 1999: 19). Jerry Falwell's scathing denouncement of the 'evils' of secularism in the American public sphere brings to the fore such a loss. That being said, what is also being acknowledged is that the theory of secularism, embedded as it is in Christendom, finds itself to be only partly 'intelligible' in postcolonial

settings, as witnessed in the Indian case. The presence of strong religious markers in all their complexities in religiously plural societies makes the 'secular division of labor between "religious faith" and "secular argument" ' a difficult task (Connolly, 1999: 20). Is it because Connolly's reading of de Tocqueville suggests that, 'while politics is located in a secular realm, that realm remains safe for Christianity as long as the unconscious mores that organize public reason, morality, and politics are Christian' (Connolly, 1999: 24)? In other words, some Third World national societies such as India, religiously plural as they are and without a hegemonic, official state religion, have too many forms of the 'unconscious' and hence the problem of a translation of secularism in such a context. Or is it because all significant modern concepts of the theory of the state are secularized theological concepts that stem from Christianity, 'whereby the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver' (Schmitt in Asad, 1999: 185)? To return to Chatterjee (1995: 13), how do we make secularism politically 'intelligible' and relevant in India if 'the more stable and well-defined reference for the concept lies in the Western political discourse of the state . . . [whereby] secularism in India cannot mean the same thing as it does in Europe'? So, given such a genealogy of the ideology of secularism and secularization and the bequeathing of the modern state to 'secular' postcolonial societies, what happens if states in these societies are suddenly to 'Hinduize' or 'Islamicize' themselves, as it is happening in India and Turkey, which are officially 'secular' nations? Do Islam and Hinduism have the political vocabulary to secularize the modern state and 'organize public reason, morality, and politics', as critics of western secularism would claim that they do? How are we to make sense of secularism in Islamic and Hindu contexts if they are divorced from the conventional understanding of the political meaning of Christianity as it is received in the West?

Asking uncomfortable questions of the relevance of secularism in postcolonial nations is not to be construed as a rejection of its basic principles on the part of the authors, but is to be understood as an attempt to critically interrogate it without ultimately sacrificing its long-term value for religiously plural societies that are presently grappling with religious revivalisms. It is to ask questions of secularism without completely discounting the possibility of 'non-rational' discourses in the public sphere through the deployment of 'rational' speech logic, that is, without resorting to any kind of 'secular fundamentalism'. At the same time, following Edward Said's timely advice, our efforts are also aimed at generating a 'secular consciousness' that will help identity the collusion between 'religious and political abstractions and reductive myths that veer away from history and sense' and the practice of terror and aggression, be it against the most powerful as witnessed in the unfortunate bombings of the World Trade Center or against the powerless 'minority' populations who face the might of the religious 'right'. The authors of the essays that follow

in this special issue dedicated to the discussion of secularism bring their own critical perspectives to the analysis of the concept and practice of secularism and its manifestations in various aspects of public life in India, Pakistan and Turkey and in providing answers, even if tentative, to some of the questions that have been raised thus far in the discussion.

Haldun Gülalp's article raises important questions about the classical secularization thesis and, in so doing, addresses the deployment of Islam as political ideology in Turkey by identifying the historical conditions under which this role has undergone changes. Situating his analysis between the interstices of the internal tensions generated by postcolonial nationalism and political and economic challenges thrown up by the projects of modernization and globalization, Gülalp argues that, while Islamism in the 19th century in Turkey preceded the project of westernization, contemporary Islamism is an avatar of the predicament of this project.

In the context of foregrounding the secular and critical traditions within Islam, Saeed Ur-Rehman's essay seeks to problematize the binaristic division of the world into the secular West and Islamized Islam and, in the process, develops an internal critique of Islam. This he does by way of analyzing the work of Ziauddin Sardar, a Pakistani intellectual who is constructed as an example of Occidentalist Islamic thought. Ur-Rehman claims that the very nature of secular and scientific inquiry has been seriously restricted through the imposition of official policies that discourage the discussion of the validity of concepts authorized by Islamic injunctions.

Satish Kolluri's article critiques the ideology of Hindutva—the ideological assertion of the Indian nation as Hindu culture—and its persecution of religious minorities in the name of preventing what the proponents of Hindutva perceive as the forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam and Christianity. Reading religious conversion as 'cultural criticism', he defends the rights of those who seek to convert to Islam and Christianity. In conclusion, he proposes that our secular politics have to represent a 'minimalist morality' in order for it to have a meaningful content.

Charting the new directions and struggles taken by Arab women writers, who have attempted to rewrite Islamic history in response to the Islamic fundamentalist movements throughout the Arab-Muslim world, Meryem Ouedghiri takes a critical look at the works of Fatima Mernissi and Assia Djebar in the context of their 'secular' awareness of the female body's role in writing history and shaping culture, and thus becoming the source of oppositional agency to the dominance of male texts and political empowerment of women's struggles.

Finally, Hussein Ibish interviews Edward Said, Palestinian, professor, and public intellectual, on issues ranging from the profound influence of his seminal text *Orientalism*, which initiated a dramatic shift in the study of the colonial encounter from an economic to a cultural perspective, to his proposal of bi-nationalism in Palestine and the oppression practiced by

Zionism. Said is critical of the anti-democratic nationalisms of some Arab nations but supportive of Palestinian struggles and other nationalist movements of the past which developed the ability to generate internal critiques of their own limits. He remains steadfast in his defense of secularism, which leaves 'no room for revelation, redemption and for a transcendence of origin', and of a universalism which speaks to the struggles for the basic freedoms of human beings.

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