Week four: What is Secularism?
Secularism vs. Laicism
Murat Somer
• Distinguish secularism and secularization

• Secularization: a process involving changes such as the decline of religion, privatization of religion, functional separation of religion and other spheres of life (such as economic, politics etc), and religion becoming more worldly (ie. secular, temporal).

• Secularism: a condition, ideology or legal-institutional or political principle

• Secularism as ideology defends/promotes secularism as a form of government as well as philosophy and promotes secularization
Distinguish secularism and laicism

• Both secularism and laicism argue to harbor institutional separation of religion and state (SRAS) and freedom of religion.

• But they have
  (1) different emphases
  (2) Ideologically, they have different assumptions about religion and different goals
• In **secularism**, religion and state are more equal.
  
  • Less government involvement in religion and more space for religion in government and public
  • Goal is to protect both from each other
  • Public institutionalized religion seen as less dangerous

• In **laicism**, state is in control.
  
  • More government involvement in religion and less space for religion in government and public
  • Goal is to control and often *reform*/*rationalize* religion.
  • More fear of public, institutional religion (or of religion seen as irrational, superstitious or against modernity)
Etymologies

- **Laicite**
  - Comes from the Latin laicus and Greek laikos (laymen).
  - Implies religion interpreted by lay people as opposed to the clergy, institutionalized religion): hence the inclination to “reform,” rationalize religion
  - Laicite coined in 1871 during a dispute over the removal of religious teachers from public schools in France.
  - Solidified in 1905 in the form of the ‘Law of Separation of Church and State:
    - No longer funding of religious groups by the state. (Before that the state used to fund religion as compensation for the Revolution's confiscation of Church properties)
    - All religious land and buildings property of the state
    - Church can use property for worship only.
    - No religious symbols on public buildings
    - State doesn’t appoint archbishops or bishops
• Secularism
  • from Latin *saecularis* meaning "worldly" or "temporal."

• Hence the inclination to separate the temporal sphere of the state from the sphere of religion.
A complex relationship

- Hard to quantify them in different contexts. (e.g. public vs. private distinction different in different religions)
- Can separation of Church and state exist where there is government involvement in religion (regulation or control)?
  - Yes: Government control of religious activities exhibits a strong tendency to prevent the interference of religion with government and to protect secular and minority religious liberties
  - No: Government restriction of majority often violates religious freedoms. Regulation of minority religions is often a sign of the dominant religions influence on the state (Turkey and the Alevi sect).
- So each case must be evaluated differently
Secularism and Laicite: institutional definition, SRAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>France</th>
<th>USA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• SRAS. But:</td>
<td>• SRAS. But:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• No religious symbols in politics</td>
<td>• Religion major part of religious discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No religious symbols in government</td>
<td>• $$: “In God We Trust.” Pledge of Allegiance says “Under God”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No conspicuous religious symbols in public schools</td>
<td>• Students can organize prayer groups but cannot compel others to join</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Church property belongs to state</td>
<td>• Church private property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• GIR (Government involvement in religion index): 23 (Comparison, Italy: 13, Germany: 27, Turkey: 47)</td>
<td>• GIR: 0 (Comparison: Australia: 2.5, Canada: 3.25, Netherlands: 1.25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SRAS** refers to the separation of religion and state, while **Laicite** refers to the neutrality of the state towards religious matters. The GIR index measures government involvement in religion.
How can we explain these different levels of GIR?

- USA (and other western democracies with low GIR) was established after Westphalia, after which SRAS became the norm.

- A lot of GIR in Europe legacy of past involvements of the states in religion to construct SRAS.

- USA land of religious pilgrims escaping religious persecution.

- More religious diversity in the USA than Europe? Europe was homogenized through wars and ethnic cleansings.
Understanding Laïcité in the French context

- Excludes religion from the public space
- Promote the supremacy of state over religion
- Laicité instrumental to national identity
- Historical context: relationship between French monarchy and Catholic Church
- Funds and controls religious institutions

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Separations</td>
<td>Legal limitations</td>
<td>22.92</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- France has a “moderate” restriction on minorities, much higher than the USA, Canada or Italy
- Ban on head coverings
- Defines citizenship apart from cultural identity and sectarian affiliation
- 1904, Catholic nuns expelled from schools over head covering issue
- Laicité as a philosophy versus Secularism as a model of distinction and separation
Maybe the Distinction is Political?

- Hostility versus Accommodation
- Conflict versus cooperation
- Control versus negotiation
Twin Tolerations (Stepan)

- Rather than a wall of separation between church and state: ‘constant political construction and reconstruction of the twin tolerations between state and religion’.

- He doesn’t call it secularism but it can be interpreted as a political definition of secularism
Twin Tolerations (Stepan)

- Freedom for government from religious groups and for religious individuals and groups from government”

- Three freedoms:
  I. the freedom of governments from any ‘constitutionally privileged’ influence by religious institutions (A religious council or “majlis” that sanctions new legislations violates this principle)

  II. complete freedom of worship

  III. the freedom of the pious to express their values in civil society and politics unless these limit other people’s liberties. (Banning religious political groups or preventing public religious expressions not okay).
USA and Twin Tolerations?

- Tax Exemptions for religious institutions
- Compassionate conservatism
  - “The government gave more than $1 billion in 2003 to organizations it considered ‘faith-based’ with some going to programs where prayer and spiritual guidance are central…” - AP
- Abortion Legislation
- “In God We Trust” as national motto
USA: SRAS or Twin Tolerations?

- Arkansas:
  "No person who denies the being of a God shall hold any office in the civil departments of this State, nor be competent to testify as a witness in any Court."

- Maryland:
  "That no religious test ought ever to be required as a qualification for any office of profit or trust in this State, other than a declaration of belief in the existence of God; nor shall the Legislature prescribe any other oath of office than the oath prescribed by this Constitution."

- Mississippi:
  "No person who denies the existence of a Supreme Being shall hold any office in this state."

- South Carolina:
  "No person who denies the existence of a Supreme Being shall hold any office under this Constitution."

- Tennessee:
  "No person who denies the being of God, or a future state of rewards and punishments, shall hold any office in the civil department of this state."

- Texas:
  "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office, or public trust, in this State; nor shall any one be excluded from holding office on account of his religious sentiments, provided he acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being."
Other secular cases: SRAS or Twin Tolerations?

- Denmark, Finland, Greece, Sweden (now removed) and the UK all have established churches
- In the Netherlands communities can have state funded religious public schools
- Germany and Austria have similar provisions
- Religious organizations in the USA are eligible for federal funding
Important terms for government intervention in religion (GIR)

- **Accommodation** - official separation of church and state (SRAS), neutral attitude toward religion (Australia, Canada, USA, South Korea)
- **Cooperation** - the state falls short of endorsing a particular religion but certain religions benefit from the state more than others (Germany, Austria)
- **Civil religion** - although the state does not endorse a religion, one state serves unofficially as the state’s civil religion (Turkey, Greece, Spain)
- **Multiple official religions** - the state has more than one official religion (UK, Finland)
- **Supportive** - the state supports all religions more or less equally (Philipinnes)
- **Separationist** - there is official SRAS, and the state displays hostility toward religion (France)
- **Inadvertent sensitivity** - there is little distinction between regulation of religious and other types of institutions (China, North Korea)
- **One official religion** - the state has one official religion (i.e. Saudi Arabia, Morocco)
- **Hostile** - hostility and overt persecution of religions (i.e. USSR)
Confucianism: The Case for Asia

- while both South Korea and Singapore have a Confucian cultural component, it is significantly more pronounced in Korea.
- South Korea democracy but Singapore no
- Confucianism is cited as valuing collective over the individual and advocating authoritarian leadership, yet the statistics below do not corroborate this theory
- Restrictions on minorities:
  - South Korea: none
  - Singapore: moderate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Maj. Religion</th>
<th>Official GIR</th>
<th>Regulation</th>
<th>General GIR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Seperationist</td>
<td>Some Illegal</td>
<td>29.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>No limitations</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jonathan Fox
Singapore

- Why does an officially “separationist” state have such a high GIR?

- Religious Courts
- Registration of religion
- Censorship of religious publica
- Unification Church and other sects are banned
- Restrictions on religious schools and mosques
- Fines for possession of banned religious tracts

Source: 2010 International Religious Freedom Report
A comparison of government in religion (GIR) in the Middle East and the Western Democracies (pre Arab Spring)  Source, Jonathan Fox

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Sunni Islam</td>
<td>One official religion</td>
<td>Legal limitations</td>
<td>53.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Sunni Islam</td>
<td>One official religion</td>
<td>Some illegal</td>
<td>62.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>One official religion</td>
<td>Practical limitations</td>
<td>36.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>Sunni Islam</td>
<td>One official religion</td>
<td>Legal limitations</td>
<td>53.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average GIR:</strong> 51.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>No limitations</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Practical limitations</td>
<td>19.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>One official religion</td>
<td>Practical limitations</td>
<td>33.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>No limitations</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td><strong>Average GIR:</strong> 14.18</td>
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Implications:

• GIR is the norm regardless of geographic location or religious affiliations
• So maybe the (political) nature of GIR matters for secularism more than institutional SRAS
• Muslim states have a significantly higher levels of GIR
  • Possible explanations; Authoritarian states, religion and cultural
• Christian states have a significantly lower GIR level
  • Possible explanations; Enlightenment philosophies, economic development and higher democratic consolidation
• Religion has not disappeared in modern times according to survey
• “…in those states where modernity has most undermined the traditional community, religious elements within the state are most likely to try and legislate religious morals and traditions that were previously enforced at a social level.” – Fox
• Democracies do not necessarily exhibit strict SRAS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Islamic States (11)</th>
<th>States with Islam as the Established Religion (15)</th>
<th>Secular States (20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Afghanistan</td>
<td>1. Algeria</td>
<td>1. Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Iran</td>
<td>4. Djibouti</td>
<td>4. Chad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Maldives</td>
<td>5. Egypt</td>
<td>5. Gambia</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. United Arab E.</td>
<td>15. Sierra Leone</td>
<td>15. Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>16. Syria</td>
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<td>17. Tajikistan</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>18. Turkey</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>19. Turkmenistan</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>20. Uzbekistan</td>
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### Case Studies: Turkey

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Sunni Islam</td>
<td>Civil Religion</td>
<td>Some illegal</td>
<td>47.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How does Turkey earn this GIR rating?

- Religious Parties
- Arrest, detention and harassment
- Organizations *(see Diyanet)*
- Restriction of public gatherings
- Restriction of public display
- Religious Legislation
  - Public Dress (head covering)
  - Blasphemy *(banning of sacrilegious publications)*
  - Censorship
  - Compulsory religion courses *(religious track)*
  - Funding of religious education and clergy
### Case Studies: Comparison of Egypt (religious) and China (secular)

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<td>Other</td>
<td>Inadvertent Sensitivity</td>
<td>Some Illegal</td>
<td>48.19</td>
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**Constitution Based on the Koran**
- Muslim majority, Coptic Minority
- Active state religion (control over religious activities)

**Based on Confucian philosophy**
- Agnostic/Atheist majority, Shenist, Taoist, Buddhist, Christian and Muslim minorities
- Hostile towards religion

**Both have high General GIR**
- Both have Government religion departments
- Both Governments fund religious institutions
- Both Governments are heavily restrictive of religious minority activities
Global Comparison

- Separation of Religion and State in GIR:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Average General GIR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Democracies</td>
<td>19.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>30.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>53.6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Important caveat: All of the data used in this presentation is from 2002. What direction will the recent changes in the region push the numbers?
Some Conclusions

- Very wide variety of different models of secularism (SRAS and freedom of religion)
- Official GIR often misleading
- Nature of GIR may matter more
- Secularism is not simply strict legal-institutional separation of religion and state. It is a political rather than institutional principle
- Laicism has different ideological and political emphasis than secularism. Involves more government involvement in religion to both control and reform (tame?) it
- Muslim countries stand out with their high GIR (why? both democracy and Islam might be the reason)