



Rethinking Postsecularism in Islamic Contexts: A Critical Assessment of Habermas's Perspective

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Abstract

Secularism as an important concept shaped modern society. It emphasized on the separation of religion and state. The resurgence of religion in public sphere has sparked scholarly interest in the idea of postsecularism. Habermas' works will provide definitional clarity for this essay. Postsecularism and Islam has been studied from diverse perspectives by scholars like Pasha (2012), Mavelli (2012) and Byrd (2017). This essay asserts that 'postsecularism' cannot be applied to Islam, because of the inherent nature of the religion which cannot distinguish between sacred and profane. Core values of secularism such as pluralism and religious freedom may align with Islam but the practice of secularism in Islamic countries (Muslim majority, not necessarily following Shariah) is varied and inconsistent. After defining secular, secularization and secularism, works of Muslim intellectuals are discussed. Then the compatibility of Islam with postsecularism is studied by comparing Habermas's idea of postsecularism with practices in Islamic countries. Whether Islam can fulfil the expectations Habermas has from religions by using the Quranic text will be analysed. Four countries and three key principles of Habermas have been employed here.

Keywords: Habermas; Islam; Pluralism; Postsecularism; Secularism.

Abstrak

Sekularisme sebagai konsep penting telah membentuk masyarakat modern. Konsep ini menekankan pemisahan antara agama dan negara. Kembalinya agama ke ranah publik telah memicu minat akademis terhadap gagasan posekularisme. Karya-karya Habermas akan memberikan kejelasan definisi untuk esai ini. Posekularisme dan Islam telah diteliti dari berbagai perspektif oleh para akademisi seperti Pasha (2012), Mavelli (2012), dan Byrd (2017). Esai ini menegaskan bahwa 'postsekularisme' tidak dapat diterapkan pada Islam, karena sifat inheren agama yang tidak dapat membedakan antara yang suci dan yang profan. Nilai-nilai inti sekularisme seperti pluralisme dan kebebasan beragama mungkin sejalan dengan Islam, tetapi praktik sekularisme di negara-negara Islam (mayoritas Muslim, tidak selalu mengikuti Syariah) bervariasi dan tidak konsisten. Setelah mendefinisikan sekuler, sekularisasi, dan sekularisme, karya-karya intelektual Muslim dibahas. Kemudian, kesesuaian Islam dengan postsekularisme diteliti dengan membandingkan gagasan Habermas tentang postsekularisme dengan praktik di negara-negara Islam. Apakah Islam dapat memenuhi harapan Habermas terhadap agama-agama dengan menggunakan teks Al-Quran akan dianalisis. Empat negara dan tiga prinsip utama Habermas digunakan dalam analisis ini.

Kata Kunci: Habermas; Islam; Pluralisme; Postsekularisme; Sekularisme.

Introduction

Secularism as an important concept shaped modern society. It emphasized on the separation of religion and state. The terms secular, secularism, secularization are all linked but differ in meanings. These terms with varied understandings are dependent on the context and usage. Secularism is also perceived differently each by the state, society and individuals. The resurgence of religion in public sphere has sparked scholarly interest in the idea of postsecularism. Habermas' works will provide definitional clarity for this essay. In recent times, study of relationship between postsecular and religion has gravitated attention of scholars of theology such as Smith (2004), literature such as Mclure (2007), philosophy such as Devries and Sullivan (2006) and sociology such as Rosati and Stoekli (2012).

Studies on Islam's relationship with politics, governance and society have been undertaken by many scholars. Postsecularism and Islam has been studied from diverse perspectives by scholars like Pasha (2012), Mavelli (2012) and Byrd (2017). This research asserts that 'postsecularism' cannot be applied to Islam, because of the inherent nature of the religion which cannot distinguish between sacred and profane and inability of these terms to fit in an Islamic frame due to their origin and development in the Western context. Core values of secularism such as pluralism and religious freedom may align with Islam but the practice of secularism in Islamic countries (Muslim majority, not necessarily or fully following Shariah) is varied and

inconsistent. The first section will define the terms, secular, secularization and secularism. This will be followed by assessing Islam's 'compatibility' with secularism through analysing works of Muslim intellectuals. Finally, this essay will attempt to understand the compatibility of Islam with postsecularism by comparing Habermas's idea of postsecularism with the practice in Islamic countries. This will be followed with analysing whether Islam can fulfil the expectations Habermas has from religions by using the Quranic text.

Analysing all the Muslim majority countries with all the different aspects of Habermas' theory is beyond the scope of this essay which is why four countries and three key principles of Habermas have been employed. The implications of postsecularism in the Islamic world as those discussed by Byrd (2017) will not be discussed, as our focus is on determining the existence of postsecularity. Though the essay has employed Asad's differentiation of the terms secular and secularism but postsecular/postsecularism/postsecularist have been used synonymously.

Method/ Research Method

This essay employs a qualitative, conceptual research methodology grounded in theoretical analysis and textual interpretation. It draws on key scholarly works in sociology, political theory, and Islamic studies to critically examine the applicability of postsecularism to Islam. Central to the analysis is Jürgen Habermas's postsecular framework, which is assessed in relation to Islamic thought using both secondary literature and primary religious texts, particularly the Qur'an.

The study adopts an interpretive approach, evaluating whether core principles of secularism and postsecularism—such as pluralism and religious autonomy—align with Islamic values and practices. A comparative lens is applied to four Muslim-majority countries to illustrate variations in the implementation of secularism and explore potential expressions of postsecularity. However, this comparison remains illustrative rather than empirical. The essay ultimately aims to assess conceptual compatibility rather than establish causal relationships, contributing to broader theoretical debates on the intersection of religion, secularism, and modernity.

Results and Discussion

Secular, Secularization and Secularism

Delineating the words secular, secularism and secularization is important before proceeding to understand their relation with Islam. The term secular comes from the Latin word, *saeculum*, which means age in a temporal sense (Masud: 2005). It was commonly referred to worldly matters theologically and was used as a shift from monastic life to the life of canons. But after Reformation, it signified the transfer of property from church to laypersons (Asad:2003). The term in English and French

(latice) thus denoted, this world and not the afterlife and common people and not the clergy respectively.

The word originated in the European context, which marked the steady separation of religion from different aspects of life (Smith:1995) manifested in the transfer of political power from Church to the state in England in 16th century and increase in use of secular courts instead of religious ones. Religion was perceived as an obstacle to modernity which is why modernization aimed at displacing religion. This was apparent in Auguste Comte's theory of society's rise from primitive to modernity and replacement of religion by science and Nietzsche's famous statement that God is dead. Thinkers such as Karl Barth, Friedrich Gogarten, Harvey Cox suggested reinterpretations of Gospel not only according to current times, but also keeping the interests of a secular western man in mind and how he perceives the world, which Mascall described as a way of converting Christianity to the world instead of the world to Christianity (Mascall:1966).

Secularization as a broader term is described as patterns of transformations and clear demarcations between religious institutions such as church and secular such as state, economy etc. since early modern period till the present (Casanova:2009). According to Cox, it is an irreversible historical process which delivers society and culture free from religion, and is a liberating development. Conversely, For Turner it is the framework which eroded the communal relations which tied individuals as a social group (Turner:2011). It is understood as a defining characteristic of modernization (Casanova:2009) but that of European history for Turner (Turner: 2011). For Martin, secularization is majorly related to Christianity, though it may be used in other contexts (Martin:2011). Thus, the universality of this term is also arguable since it is embedded in Western European history.

Secularism can refer to different things, and is dynamic and deeply contextual. It is described as the indifference or/and rejection of religion and religious considerations. As a wide term, for Shiner, it is the decline of religion, conformity to the norms of the present world, disengagement and differentiation of society from religion, transposition of religious beliefs and institutions, and the desacralization of the world and the sacralization of rationality (Shiner:1967). Thus, it primarily determines the relationship between state, citizens and religion, which can be disparate in terms of the extent of separation (no establishment) and degree of state regulation of religion. For example, secularism in USA, UK and India is guaranteed by the constitution but are differently exercised. Secularism is also considered as an ideology.

It becomes one, when the state has a particular stand on religion, or it tends to determine what religion is or how does it impact or function in the society. (Casanova:

2009, Asad:1993). Asad argued that true separation of religion from state has never happened because state continues to play an influential role in religious affairs. This leads to politicization of religion and instead of harbouring peace, it leads to violence and intolerance. (Asad:2003). Mahmood (2015) too observed this in case of Egypt, where secular governance has only hardened interfaith boundaries and deepened religious differences. Secularism thus was viewed as a theory that antagonized the divide between religious and secular. But this demarcation is heavily ambiguous (Beckford, 2003).

It was believed that religion's impact on social organization would ultimately lead to its death, as it would concomitantly accompany a decline in personal religious practices (Habermas:2006), which can now be seen as anything but an overstatement. As Asad has explained that moving on from a religious to secular narrative is erroneous (Asad:2003 p.1), as the process is complex and multifaceted with varied experiences. The omnipresence of effective religious movements and commentaries by scholars indicate that religion cannot be easily dismissed and it still is very much a part of politics, society and individual practices. These problems were addressed by the concept of 'postsecularism'. Asad's indication that incommensurate usage of terms like secular or religious produces analytical and political problems has been well highlighted in Anidjar's criticism of secularism, which depends on Said's work. He suggests that terms such as religious and secular over time have only masked the co-dependence to Christianity, and have in turn produced either love or hate for religion. Demarcation between religion and secular was invented by Christianity, thus making the concept of religion according to its needs and history.

Use of 'religion' became synonymous with Western Christianity, and the problems of Christianity were guised as problems of religion in general. Through colonialism, this approach proliferated across the globe where all religions, were perceived to be incompatible with modern world just because of the experience of colonial masters with Christianity was such. Anidjar's evaluation of Said's work concludes that Islam is to Europe what religious criticism is to secular criticism, what religion is to secularism. If these definitions are taken, then the compatibility of Islam and secularism would be very difficult to prove. Since secularism (Christianity in its secular form) historically served a particular religion and classified Islam as a paradigmatic religion of fascism because it perceived it as the major other civilization in the orient, it still continues to look after the interests of it those who earlier spread their civilization.

Islam and Secularism

Before looking into the various understandings of Islam and secularism it is important to note that the study of Islam and secularism should not be undertaken

with a colonial mindset, that Islam is lagging behind the West. It is important to realize that West's culture and civilization should not be equated with the ideal that human beings must follow, on the probable pretext that west is the most evolved species (Attas:1978 p.25). Thus, universalization of secularism in lieu with modernity's notion of global diffusion marginalizes alternative histories (Trouillot:1995), such as that of Islam. Secondly, coerced attempts to bring Islam to western standards are preposterous as are biased interpretations of Islam misleading.

Naim posits that secularism in Muslim societies will be unsuccessful and continue to be considered as an imposition as long as it rests on preconceived Western notions of the concept (Naim: 2005). For Asad, secular is both formative of and consequent on Western historical narratives of collective being, which cannot be applied to Islam wholly. Attas extends that secularization is neither inherent in Christianity, but only aligns with a particular interpretation of the Bible by the Western man (Attas:1978). Secularism in Islam is difficult to perceive as compared to Christianity due to the unique experiences and perspectives of both religions.

Islam stresses upon an omnipotent and transcendent God, Quran and a Shariah law, and has a history of active involvement in establishment of state and society inevitably alluding to the fact that it is distinct from Christianity, which believed and incorporated Aristotle's ideas of God, abandonment of Christians of their place of origin and heavy Latinization under the influence of Romans. The conceptualization of nature as a mere thing with no sacred significance and the prohibition of clergy to engage in scientific endeavours furthered the need and embracement of secularist ideas in the West. This was accompanied with the popularized concept of celibacy in Christianity which laid the foundations of separation of sacred and profane. Contrarily, Islam does not encourage humans from staying away from the material world (Qur'an: 28:77) rather motivates human beings to grapple with nature and contemplate on all the creations of the universe.

The intellectual advancement in the 'Islamic' world in the medieval ages is a testimony to Islam's positive relation with science and human development which did not require a strict separation of state and religion. In Islam, use of the word *din* makes it difficult to fathom its separation from social, economic or political domains of life. Use of the word *duniya* (world) is to refer to mundane matters of everyday life, but that does not render it outside the jurisdiction of God. Even the categorization of *ibadat* and *muamalat* and rights of God and rights of people are both understood as areas for which man is accountable to God. Thus, secular in Islam does not fall under the Belief but under faith (Pasha:2012 p.1044).

The closest distinction similar to Christianity in Islam can only be found amongst Sufis who distinguished between *din* and *duniya* and believed in completely

renouncing this life, for the hereafter and refrained from fulfilling personal, social, financial needs and politics. Attempting to equate Islam with other religions is erroneous because according to Esposito, categorization of Islam as a religion abnormalizes it because it does not confine faith to the private sphere for its adherents (Esposito:2010).

In the Muslim world, secularism is still perceived disparately, proving Islam to be a discursive tradition. Muslim thinkers have not only diverged on the relationship between state and religion but with their interpretations of Islam itself which has resulted in this diversity (Pasha:2012). There has been an emphasis of secularism as an ideology in the Muslim world according to Masud. This is because of the presentation of Islam as an ideology by Muslim thinkers, the term was most appropriate for gaining independence and political autonomy in the past, and after the collapse of Soviet Union, secularism was considered as an important indicator of democracy and modernity by the West. As a corollary, this Western liberal ideology, opposing religion had to be combated by an Islamic ideology. It has been rejected by Muslim thinkers such as Mawdudi, owing to secularism's interpretation as *la diniyyat* or absence of religion, going to the extent of describing it as atheistic.

Though calling it atheism would be wrong as Berlinerblau (2021) has explained that political secularism has been developed by religious thinkers while contemplating upon religious problems by using religious terms to provide religious solutions. Mawdudi's definition of Islam being a *nizam* (systemic order) based on solid principles determined by God leaves no room for secularism which depends on man to act on his authority ungoverned by God's legislations in the political domain. For Qardawi too, secularism is antithetical to Islam and has failed in Muslim societies, as we shall prelude to later. Similarly, Iqbal contended that spiritual and temporal domains are not two separate ones, but the same from an Islamic perspective. For him, in Islam there is a separation of religious and political functions of the state but that cannot be equated with the separation of church and state as in Christianity. He clearly holds the state responsible for *Ijtihad* and interpreting God's law.

Some also seem to accept the self-sufficiency of Islam while acknowledging the advancement of the West (Masud:2005). For such thinkers, borrowing concepts from the West is harmless. Ghannushi emphasized that secularism can be applied carefully without suppressing or marginalizing religion (Esposito: 2001 p.117). Naim provides a distinct idea, whereby he asserts that Islam is not just compatible with secularism, but it is an essential component as nothing can be forced in Islam. He emphasizes on the need to separate religion and state, while allowing the former to influence politics as a complete separation or total union of religion and politics is impossible

(Naim:2008). But is a mere advisory role of religion enough to exert a proper society as Islam aims to create still remains a question.

His claim that religious compliance must be voluntary and thus state cannot enforce laws, and if it does it falls under the category of nifaq is a misunderstanding of the functions of a state in Islam, which is responsible for undertaking actions for the betterment of state, religion and society. Opposing Islamists' claim, he argues that secularism was the model of governance in the early Islamic period by giving examples of Abu Bakr's power as a political leader over the people which allowed him to fight apostasy wars despite the objections of companions, Umar and Ali.

The varied understandings referred to above only necessitate the distinction proposed by Waardenburg to comprehend Islam's relationship with secularism and even postsecularism. He categorizes Islam as normative/official and actual/popular Islam (Pasha, 2012). The normative is dependent on scriptures and rests on the idea of Tawhid, while actual captures all the forms, movements, ideas amongst Muslim communities and expresses the heterogeneity of Islam. The former outrightly rejects the possibility of secularism and hence postsecularism, while the latter allows us to trace secular and postsecular practices of state and society.

Postsecularism

Postsecularism allows to engage in questions of religion and politics without taking a narrow secularist stand and not shunning every religious discourse as extremist, backward or incompatible in current times. It is a paradigm that challenges the concept of religion being incompatible, unnecessary or completely displaced from political and social spheres of life. Beckford (2012) has explained six different clusters of scholarly ideas associated with the term, postsecular. It can be perceived as a critique of secularism, since it challenges its claims and provides solutions through religion.

Conversely, it is also seen as an advancement of the secularism model, which is why it is confined to 'affluent' countries of the West (Konuralp:2016). Thus, it does not completely disengage with secular, but just adds a religious flavour to public sphere. The acknowledgement of religion's existence, change in mindset with regards to religion which was hitherto perceived to have died and a change in consciousness manifested in the decline of ideological secularism sets the stage for a postsecular world (Mavelli and Petito: 2014). But For Habermas, the questionable secularization thesis, religion's assertive presence in politics and public sphere, the inability of states to face challenges after globalization and the incapability of secular consciousness to address ethical and political quandaries leads us to accept a postsecular.

In postsecularist societies, he suggests that both religious and secular must engage in public sphere and respect each other's opinions. He thinks that religious

people can be accommodated in public discourse if they and the liberal democracies have the desire to critically analyze their own perspectives. Habermas restricts religious views to be presented in the public sphere without being translated into neutral language in order to achieve ideal postsecularism (Habermas:2008). But this quite rightly has been regarded as an inadequate acknowledgment of religion while still prioritizing secular notions (Mavelli:2012). The insistence on using religion to provide reasonable solutions to problems unanswered by secular reason limits the scope of religion. Since religion can be described as a historical tradition, practice and lived experience.

This is accompanied with the critiques on the use of 'post' secularism, which suggests that the stage of secularism has passed, which is debatable. Postsecularism can still not be considered a fixed theory since it rests on fluid terms such as religious, secular and others, with varied meanings across time and place that only make a heterodox and dynamic postsecularism possible (Furani:2015). Thus, postsecularism is considered as an analytical tool without aiming to provide a homogeneous or comprehensive, strictly defined doctrine it can be traced in non-Western countries to different extents.

Postsecularism and Islam

It is important to realize that the point of departure for postsecularism is secularism, which as has been shown above is either merely influenced or is just another manifestation of Christianity. This reliance makes it difficult to apply it to a new and distinct religion as is the case with secularism. For Pasha (2012), only a provincialization of postsecularity can thus prove to be effective in cultural Islamic zones. Did religion ever take a backseat in Islamic countries for it to return is another question. Nevertheless, to understand postsecularism and Islam, the following section will undertake various arguments of Habermas' postsecularism and check its applicability to Islamic countries (countries with a majority Muslim population). This will be followed by analysing the compatibility of Islam with Habermas' expectations from religion.

For comprehending the existence of postsecularism in Islamic countries, it is important to extract three essential characteristics of postsecularism from Habermas' argument, previously used by Altınordu (2021) which are-

- **Secular differentiation:** There should be a clear division between secular and religious spheres institutionally. Religious notions sponsored by the state, or intertwining religious identity with citizenship does not lead to secular differentiation.
- **Committed pluralism:** A postsecularist society along with acknowledging coexistence of secular and religious notions, requires a commitment from both

proponents to engage in respectful interactions. Secularists must not view religious as archaic or backward while the latter must cooperate and flexible to accept pluralism.

- Complimentary learning process: This requires both religious and secularists must not merely tolerate one another, but actively move forward together to address common affairs of the society.

Thus, all three conditions have to be successfully applied to countries in the Islamic world to prove the existence of postsecularism in Islam, which is not easy. Amongst the fifty-six countries in the world with an inherently diverse majority Muslim population but varied political systems, history, culture and society, either one or all of the points are unapplicable. For example, Iran and Saudi Arabia both lack separation of state and religion. Both states sponsor a particular faction of Islam. As far as institutions are concerned, judiciary is based on Shariah law, though with different interpretations and so are the educational institutions dominated by Islamic scriptures or particular schools of thought. In South Asia, Pakistan is the largest Muslim majority country. But it too cannot be considered for our analysis because Islam became the state religion of the country in 1956.

The country has been influenced by ulamas under both General Ziaul Haq and Bhutto and partial application of Islamic judicial system makes it ineligible (Engineer:1996). Turkey though has been regarded as a postsecularist state by scholars such as Rosati and Göle. It has been known for its secularization in 1920s under Ataturk, and successive decisions to limit religion by the state, but an increasing bent towards Islam and religion in current times cannot be disregarded. Return of religion in educational institutions resonated in Imam Hatips and mosque building seem to allude that. But AKP's failure to consider demands of Alevi minority to benefit Sunni majority problematizes the notion of pluralism.

According to Gökarıksel and Secor (2015: 28) religious ways of participating in pluralistic public life is not visible on ground. Hence Turkey, for failing to accept or welcome plurality, cannot be considered postsecular according to Habermas' argument. As a quintessential borderland country, which historically witnessed Persian, Ottoman and Russian power struggles, Haberman's postsecularist idea will now be applied to Azerbaijan. This is primarily because of its extremely secularised society and state under the Soviet rule. The decline of Islam was manifested in desecration of mosques and discarding of veil. The institutional divide between religious and secular was too observable after the dissolution of Soviet Union in Azerbaijan in Article 18 of the constitution of 1995. Azerbaijan was founded as a secular state. But after independence, religiosity has significantly increased in the country.

State has sponsored a distinct Azerbaijani Islam, which is Traditional Islam. It is neither political nor radical, with predominantly harmonious relations between Shi'a majority and Sunni minority and emphasizes on the shared culture and history of the country. But all other forms of Islam are seen as bad or dangerous as they may question the state (Bedford, Mahmudlu & Abilov 2021). The state is increasingly dealing with religion in fear of a rising political Islam and to enhance its own power. The inability of the state to engage with other variants of Islam respectfully makes application of Habermas's argument difficult. These examples prove that either Islamic countries have still not secularized enough to reach the stage of postsecular or those where secularism has predominated state and society, fail to regard religion as important in public sphere or if they do it is only one understanding of religion which is beneficial for balancing power.

This leads us to compare the compatibility of Islam with Habermas' expectations with religion. While explaining the essential characteristics of postsecularism, Habermas has placed cognitive burden on both religious and secular circles. His expectations from religion too cannot be straightforwardly accepted by Islam. For example, Habermas proposes to delete all religious content from parliamentary documents in order to remain impartial, but suggests religious citizen to relativize cognitions. The eradication of Islamic texts from legislations would be unacceptable both by Islamists and moderates, since Quran upholds that law of God and Prophet should be followed.

In a society which is dependent on scriptural sources for personal, civil and other matters, it is difficult to apply this. Nevertheless, Habermas advocates religious citizens to engage in political sphere by conveying their message in a language which is understandable to all, irrespective of their religious beliefs (Habermas, 2008). He contends that the language religion must use to address the public sphere should focus on a discursive translation (Tahrus:2022). This has received dual criticisms. One, on the pretext that religion will have to screen or hide certain presuppositions of religious epistemology to deliver it to the secular audiences (Byrd: 2016:116), and second being the impossibility of translating every element of religion in the modern world (Harrington: 2007:551).

In the Islamic context both these criticisms hold true, as both Islamists and liberalists interpret the scripture in different ways, selectively choosing verses according to the audiences while terms like *din*, *dunyawiyah*, *alamiyah* etc. difficult to explain in a non-Islamic context. But Habermas does not aim to eliminate religious identity or expression but would make it easier for society to comprehend religious perspective. He presents three challenges to religion- religious pluralism, modern science and institutionality of positive law and secular morality, which he thinks

religious communities can overcome via reflecting upon their religious views and interacting with other religious views, not contradicting modern science and believing in equality of individualism and upholding morals to allow religious citizens to exist in a society along with secular citizens. If all three suggestions are applied to Islam, it seems that it is ready to adopt a postsecular challenge.

Pluralism rests on the idea of tolerance and Quran does not coerce people to accept its message (Quran 2:256). It acknowledges diversity amongst people (Quran 30:22, 5:48, 49:13) and encourages all human beings to reflect. Also, studies on Islam's relationship with science have argued that science is not only compatible with, but encourages scientific inquiry (Nasr:1968). Quran also does not discourage discussions with people on religion, rather motivates its adherents to spread Islam's teachings as much as possible (Quran 3:64, 5:2). Throughout the text, universal moral values such as kindness, generosity, humility, honesty etc. are encouraged. Besides, Quran claims to be for the entire humanity and hence, cannot restrict its readers from engaging in dialogue with others. As far as modern science is concerned, Quran asks humans to reflect on various signs of God in the universe.

Though Habermas makes room for religion in public sphere and dialogue, but expects religion to accept secular reason since religious reasons cannot be accepted for formal legislations. For him, religion is private and reason is public and hence both are precluded from mutual learning. But his argument of bifurcation of reason and faith is based on Western Christianity since use of reason is prominently visible in various Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence, philosophy, theology though the degree of use of reason is varied and contested. This suggests that Islam meets only some expectations of Habermas from religion. Other expectations are either currently impossible to trace in Islam or are in a response to Western Christianity, thus inapplicable owing to the differences between the two. As Rathore (Mahadevan:2018) puts it, Habermas' revivalist endeavour retains the Western dichotomy between religion and politics which neglects Islam or other religions.

Conclusion

Study of secularism and Islam highlights the divergent views of religion and politics amongst Muslim thinkers, which leads us to comprehend Islam as a discursive tradition, hence propounding Islamic exceptionalism although in a different way as proposed by Weber or Lewis. The inherent Eurocentricity of the dynamic and noninterchangeable terms, secular, secularization and secularism makes it difficult to apply them in an Islamic context, thus tracing postsecularism in Islamic countries too becomes difficult.

The exploration of secularism, secularization, and postsecularism in relation to Islam reveals both conceptual tensions and areas of potential alignment. Through the

examination of key theoretical frameworks—most notably those proposed by Jürgen Habermas—and the analysis of Islamic thought and practice, this essay has argued that the concept of the postsecular cannot be seamlessly applied to Islam. This is not simply due to theological differences, but because the epistemological foundations and historical development of secularism and postsecularism are deeply embedded in the Western socio-political experience, which differs markedly from Islamic contexts. Study of postsecularism and Islam reveals the need of dechristianization and internal dialogues (Pasha, 2012) in Islamic countries, which have still not experienced secularism as the West, thus Habermas' theory cannot be applied.

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