

WHY SECULARISM FAILED TO BECOME AN ARAB SOCIO-POLITICAL CULTURE?

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ABSTRACT: *The idea of "secularism" is still rejected within the Arab cognitive structure at the level of intellectual, social and political construction. So far, Arab secularists have failed to find popular acceptance for secularism within the Arab cultural- religious structure and socio political sphere. As a result, traditional religious discourse and values still dominate minds!! The purpose of this study is to discuss, analyze and explain why secularism has not become the culture and political ideology of the Arab peoples and governments. The researcher assumes that the reasons are due to: the neglect of the cultural factor by the Arab secularists, the marriage of Arab nationalism and religion, the emergence of political Islam's movements, and the nature of Islamic religion that rejects reform. Therefore, the researcher recommends that, there is a pressing need for reproducing Arabs prevailing traditional culture by promoting, a civil culture that privatize religion and separates it from politics and state affairs.*

KEYWORDS: Secularism, Religion, Arabs, Reform, History, Islam

INTRODUCTION

Attempts to secularize the Arab world began nearly two centuries ago, when the Arab nationalists, who were demanding the separation of the Arab regions from the Ottoman Empire, pressed for the removal of the Islamic authority that governed perception, thought, behaviors, practices and law throughout the Arab world, to be replaced by a secular vision that removes religion from life in various areas¹.

It is possible to say that secularism as an Arab application, in terms of denying religion to political practice, was introduced into the Arab world precisely as a result of the first shock caused by Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. The Arabs discovered the state of general backwardness on which they are based, compared to the status of progress and superiority on which the European nations are located. From that moment, various and varied projects were presented to lay the foundation for an Arab Renaissance. One of these projects was the adoption of Western / European approach of building the society and the state, so that the religious establishment will not have authority over the state and governing bodies².

Until the beginning of the 19th century, and particularly before the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt, the entire Arab region derived its customs, values and laws from Islam. But as a result of the French campaign - which paved the way for other European campaigns - the Arab region gradually underwent ideological, social and political transformations stemming from the patterns of thought and behavior that the Europeans brought³.

Secularism has entered the forum of thought in the Arab world and began to establish a new cultural style adopted by some enthusiasts and admirers of European enlightenment. They tried to devise new cultural norms that meant to be substitutes for standards emanating from local

cultural heritage. Arab secular thinkers viewed Europe as a beacon and inspiration for those who wanted progress and success.

The influence of European thought, culture and admiration for its achievements was a catalyst for Arab intellectual dialogue and a standard for the reform process. As a result of this influence, the intellectual debate at that time focused on the relationship between religion and state, old and modern, and on the means of achieving progress and development such as those that Europe was able to accomplish⁴.

Two trends of reform, for that era, were appeared; one Islamic, and the other Christian. Both trends believed that it is necessary to strive for modernization, progress and a renaissance that would rid the Arab of backwardness. They stressed that secularization is a prerequisite condition for modernization and that the relationship between them is organic and inseparable. The most famous symbol of the Islamic trend was Rifa' al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), al-Tahtawi was the first to advocate interaction with European civilization.

Al-Tahtawi criticized those who opposed the idea of taking science from Europe. In his view, they are "important" because civilization is a cycle and stages. These sciences were Islamic when Muslims lived in the era of their renaissance, and Europe took them and developed them. It is our duty now to adopt them⁵.

Rifa' Badawi Rafi' al-Tahtawi was found himself pushed by circumstances from the old world into the new. In 1817 the young Tahtawi went to study at Al-Azhar University. There he pursued the normal studies of the ancient curriculum, He was appointed as imam of a regiment in the new Egyptian army and then as imam of the first large student mission sent to study in Paris. He remained there for five years, from 1826 to 1831, and they were the most important of his life. Although sent there as imam and not as student, he threw himself into study with enthusiasm and success. He acquired a precise knowledge of the French language and translated some twenty books into Arabic. The thought of the French Enlightenment left a permanent mark on him and through him on the Arab mind⁶.

It should be emphasized that all reformers of the Islamic trend in the nineteenth century, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), Khair al-Din al-Tunisi (1822-1889), Abdul Rahman al-Kawakbi (1854-1902), Muhammad Abdu (1849-1905) (1889-1940) and others who followed Tahtawi's approach, were among the finest scholars (Ulamah) of Islam. They shared the confidence that Muslims could - and should - benefit from European successes without compromising or abusing Islam.

Perhaps the most famous to carry the banner of this trend after Tahtawi was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Mohammed Abdu. Afghani demanded that the people be allowed to exercise their political and social role by participating in government through elections⁷. Mohammed Abdu, who was struggling for reform in various fields, stressed the absence of a conflict between Islam on one hand and mind and science on the other.

Speaking about the backwardness of the Arab societies, Abdu condemned those who insist on the blind imitation of the old while resisting modernization. He considered that Islam's relationship with the modern era is the most important and serious issue that the Islamic societies must deal with⁸.

Abdu denied the existence of a theocracy in Islam and insisted that the authorities of both the ruler and the judge are 'civil' not religious, and that the separation of religion and state is inevitable. Abdu called for revival of 'Ijtihad' (reasoning) in order to address the priorities and the new issues and problems not previously handled by specialists in various fields of Islamic thought⁹.

Mohammed Abdu had left behind him disciples, whose ideas were then crystallized into a school that insisted on the legitimacy of social change and the need to effectively separate the fields of religion and society; Each area has its own customs and traditions. There is evidence that this group - which sought to find a correlation between Islam and secular ideas - was greatly influenced by the achievements of Western civilization, seriously sought to establish the rules of a secular society in which Islam is revered but does not play the role of guide in public life particularly with regard to law, economic and political management.

One of the most famous symbols of this group was Qasim Amin (1865-1908), known for his call to liberate women. Kassem Amin believed that the problem of Muslims lies in their scientific backwardness and that it is not useful to adopt European science without adopting the moral values prevailing in Europe. The two are inseparable. Therefore, the Arabs, if they seek progress and want to catch up with civilization, must prepare themselves for radical change in all aspects of life¹⁰.

Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayyed (1872-1963) was a pioneer of the group of secularists of Abdu's students. Although he was very close to Muhammad Abdu, Islam was not an important part of his thought. Lutfi al-Sayyid has no regard for Religion except in so far as it can be considered as a component of the cultural community and no more¹¹.

The Declaration of the Abolition of the Islamic Caliphate in 1924 raised controversy among the thinkers of that period about the importance of the caliphate and about what Muslims should have reacted to the announcement of its abolition. The controversy centered on the book "Islam and the Origins of Governance: A Study of the Caliphate and the Government in Islam," written by 'Azhari Sheikh' (member of Al Azhar university teaching staff), Ali Abdul Razek (1888-1966) and considered one of the most controversial books in the history of contemporary Islamic thought.

Ali Abdul Razek, who had just returned from Britain after completing his higher education from Oxford, considered it illegal to have Islamic political principles. He denied that the Prophet Muhammad had established an Islamic political system on the grounds that the establishment of the state was not part of the mission for which he was sent for¹².

Perhaps the ideas of Sheikh Abdul Razek provided the ground from which the Arab secularists later embarked on their fierce campaign against Islamic law, especially with regard to the economic, political and criminal rules. The book of Sheikh Abdul Razek is the first explicit invitation by Azhari Sheikh to reject 'accepted' old concepts and interpretations of Islamic religion and history, and replace them with modern interpretations and concepts along the lines suggested by orientalist in their writings on Islam.

The Christian trend consists of a group of Arab Christians; the most prominent of this group were Shibley Shamil (1850-1917), Farah Antoun (1874-1922), George Zidane (1816-1914), Jacob Siroff (1852-1917), Salama Musa (1887-1958), and Nicola Haddad (1878-1954).

The group worked to promote their ideas through two Publications 'almuqtatif' and 'alhilal', founded respectively in 1876 and 1892, in Cairo - Egypt, and used to publish articles promoting national identity over religious identity. They called for the need to love the homeland and the sons of the homeland which should be the basis of social ties, not the association of religious belief¹³.

Through a flood of writings, these thinkers have succeeded in laying the foundations of secularism in the Arab world. The messages addressed by their writings included praise of liberal thought in France and England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, condemnation of the dominance of tradition in the Arab world, the assertion that reason should replace tradition in defining standards of human behavior and that progress requires retaining only those traditions that do not conflict with the modernization project¹⁴.

The goal of these thinkers was to define the characteristics of a secular state that could be co-managed by Muslims and Christians on the basis of equality.

Shibley Shamil, graduated from Protestant College in Syria and then went to Paris to study medicine, was the first to introduce Darwin's theories into the Arab world through his writings in the 'almuqtatif'. His writings indicate that he belonged to a movement active in the late nineteenth century that saw sciences alone as the key to understanding the mystery of the universe, and even considered it a pattern of worship.

Shamil believed that the "religion of science" was a declaration of war on ancient religions. He believed that "social unity", which he considered essential for the realization of the will of the people, required the separation of religion and political life on the grounds that religion was a factor of its difference. Shamil insisted that nations strengthen when the influence of religion weakens. Referring to the European model, where the strength was achieved as a result of the reform movement and the French Revolution which led to liberation of the society from the hegemony of clergy. Therefore, in his writings he denounced 'imams and priests' together, accusing them of resisting progress and development¹⁵.

Farah Anton, who had emigrated from Tripoli - Lebanon to Cairo in 1897, believed that the problem of the clash between science and religion could be resolved only by keeping each of them to the field of its own. Perhaps this is what led Anton to guide his book on 'importance of secularism' to what he described as the new East Buds, "those men who have awareness within every sect and from every religion in the East who have been alerted to the danger of mixing religion and mundane in today's world, and who are demanding to put their religion on the shelf in a sacred and dignified place, so that they can achieve the real unity between them, and start within the stream of modern European civilization¹⁶.

Thus, through his writings, Anton sought to emphasize that there is no need in modern times for what he described as 'the non-essential part of religion', ie, the religious law.

If this is a prerequisite for achieving secularism, his second condition was the separation of worldly authorities and spiritual authorities, arguing that the completion of this chapter in the Christian religion made Christians more tolerant than Muslims. He stressed that if European societies today are more tolerant, it is not because of Christianity but because of the success of science and philosophy in eliminating religious fanaticism and the success of these societies in achieving a complete separation between religious and worldly authorities¹⁷.

Musa Salameh, for his part, called for a separation between the field of science and the field of religion, insisting that religion - because of the influence of religious institutions and clergy - lost its progressive nature and became a heavy burden. Salama sought to emphasize that "society cannot advance or develop unless the role of religion is restricted in the formation of human consciousness. Progress is the new religion of humanity, Salameh believes"¹⁸.

In the Arab world, since the beginning of the twentieth century, there have been three secular trends: the liberals, the nationalists (Arab nationalism), and the leftist (communist and socialist) which was strengthened its presence in the Arab world by the victory of the Bolshevik revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union. However, the three movements failed to make secularism a societal culture and a political ideology.

Prominent reasons that led to the failure of secularism in Arab societies

The idea of "secularism" is still rejected within the Arab cognitive structure at the level of intellectual, social and political construction. So far, Arab secularists have failed to find a popular acceptance or a real foothold for secularism within the cultural and religious structure and within the social and political sphere. As a result, traditional religious discourse and values still dominate minds! The researcher assumes that the reasons lie in the following:

Neglecting cultural factor:

Arab secular elite - Leftist, nationalist and liberals - neglected the cultural aspect of development. They failed to establish an integrated and well-defined community project that centers on secularism as a new socio-political culture that gradually replaces the old. All that it offered was the features of a society in which equality and social justice prevail.

The Arab secular movements did not focus on cultural factor, in societies where ignorance and illiteracy prevails to the core, as much as it focus on politics (their endeavors to capture power or maintain power), which constitute a lame view of reality.

In addition, the Arab secularists transcended the cultural heritage of the Arab peoples and did not rely on it to show secularism as a concept and community program. Indeed, a group of secularists distorted the concept and made it contrary to religion¹⁹.

They did not realize that the Arab secular boom is a direct result of the European cultural breakthrough. It is not an expression of a self-transformation in the Arab cultural body, whereby heritage is decomposed and replaced by a new system of knowledge and thought in society.

Peoples in the Arab region are more closely linked to religion than in Europe; If the European peoples are ready to go beyond the past and marginalize religion, the Arab peoples otherwise; because the Arab nation is in a critical historical situation that has nothing to compare to the people of the earth other than its ancient past in which it had empires of great value and stature.

Arab secularists were not based on what the early Arab pioneers of enlightenment produced. The conservative movement (anti-secularism) does not stop exploiting the cultural heritage and employing religion to remain a barrier against the winds of change towards modernity. The secular trend has no choice other than to compete with the conservatives on their ground, and employ the same weapon²⁰.

The political regimes that took power after independence in the Arab countries did not care about the cultural issue and put a break with it. It is for this reason that the Arab world, under these regimes, that claim to be secular or liberal, has not witnessed cultural revolutions that leads to break with the old dogmatic minds, which remains the people's creed²¹.

It is this mentality, that produced by the predecessor, still decide the destiny of peoples and determine their choices and responses to modernity, civil, democracy and all the values and creativity of the modern era. While secularism did not succeed in being the doctrine of the society, it remains confined to the elite whose cultural and political circumstances allow it to adopt and live in its values.

Employment of religion in the service of politics

Arab regimes allied with the fundamentalists Islamic organizations in their struggle against the movements of reform and change, especially the 'nationalists' and the 'communists' trends, which was opposed to those regimes and seeks to topple them. While the regimes used security and law means in facing reform movements, the Islamic organizations used culture and intellectual means in the fight against the secular project, and confronting its leaders by atonement and assassination. In this regard, we mention the Muslim Brotherhood alliance with King Farouk (King of Egypt), who will give Muslim Brotherhood all the political and financial support by simply pledging allegiance to him, so much so that, the Ministry of Muhammad Mahmud Pasha passed a law in 1938 banning paramilitary organizations such as 'alqumsan alkhadra', 'misr alfatat', and 'alwafd' and excluded 'firqat aljawala' of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brothers also supported the government of Ismail Sidqi against reform parties²².

The old alliance between the ruling royal family in Saudi Arabia and the Wahhabi scholars is another alliance between Arab regimes and fundamentalists. This alliance dates back to 1744 between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1704-1792), the founder of the Wahhabi movement (Salafist militant), and the then ruler Muhammad ibn Saud Died in 1765), the alliance that resulted in the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia²³.

Such Islamic organizations gain the ruling regimes a religious legitimacy, and being used as the best mechanism for the regime's government in its struggle against the opposition (Islamic and secular) at the same time.

In Jordan, since the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan by the merchant Sheikh Abdul Latif Abu Qora in 1945, the group received official support and care. It opened its first center in the capital Amman under the patronage of the founding King Abdullah I²⁴.

The revolution of 23 July 1952 in Egypt, which overthrew King Farouk, and brought charismatic Gamal Abdel Nasser to power much contributed to the popularization of leftist (socialist and nationalist) ideologies in the Arab region as a whole.

Leftist ideology, which was hostile to the West, was popular in Jordan. This popularity was crowned by the victory of left-wing forces (communist and socialist nationalism) in a parliamentary majority and formed a government headed by Sulayman al-Nabulsi in 1956. This government did not last more than six months and eleven days. The late King Hussein dissolved the parliament, sacked the government, and opened the gates of 'Jafr' prison to the leftist's persons and leaders, followed by the suffocation of nationalist and leftist thought²⁵.

The Jordanian regime, officially, embraced the Muslim Brotherhood, and turned a blind eye to its activities. The group expanded and spread, especially after the defeat of the Arabs in the war with Israel in June 1967, which witnessed the beginning of the Islamic political tide. The regime was governed by the cold war requirements between the Eastern and Western camps, which the Jordanian regime was counting on the latter. The regime invested the existence of Islamic movements in all its forms in the face of the leftist (communist and nationalists) tide in all its colors and forms²⁶.

This embracement helped in strengthens the Islamic movement and its expansion in the street. The movement won 23 out of 25 seats in the 13th parliament election, while the secular leftist ideology was strangling and withering slowly until it reached the stage of popularly isolated²⁷.

Mating Islamic religion and Arab nationalism

While secularism in the Arab world failed, it succeeded in Turkey with its founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. What is the secret of the success of secularism in Turkey and its failure in the Arab world?

To answer this question, it can be said that one of the reason for the prevention of secularism from success in the Arab world, was not the influence of the clergy alone, but the naive Arab nationalist movement program as well.

The secular ideology, which attracted Ottoman youth, dominated Istanbul's intellectual environment in which many Arab nationalists grew up. Most leaders of the Turkish nationalist movement, who opposed Sultan Abdul Hamid's Islamic policy, were trying to keep the nationalist movement immune to Islamic influences. But most Arab nationalists rejected the neo-Ottoman view of Islam because they (ie, Arab nationalists) regarded Islam as the birthplace of Arab heritage. They did not want to separate from it, while Turkish nationalists considered it a strange element of their cultural heritage. Indeed, most Arab nationalist's thinkers, including Christians, cherished Islam because it emphasized, in particular, the Arabic language and the Arab character of the Koran and Islamic religion²⁸.

It was this dangerous cultural element that led Arab intellectuals to regard Islam as one of the components of Arab nationalism; Islam appeared in the Arabian Peninsula, the cradle of the Arab element, Prophet Muhammad was an Arab and a national hero in the eyes of the Arab nationalists.

Moreover, after the demise of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey went into a series of legal, political and cultural changes. As soon as Ataturk took over the government, he embarked on a great deal of activity in carrying out a broad program of internal reform based on European model. He changed Turkey completely without any opposition; He abolished the Caliphate in 1924, separated the state and religion, replaced the 'letters' of Turkish language from Arabic to Latin, abolished the use of turban and hijab (headwear of Muslim women) and made civil law an alternative to Islamic law²⁹.

Arab thinkers, both Muslim and Christian, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries drew inspiration from Arabic and Arab heritage to develop national consciousness and to call for an Arab identity separate from Turkish identity. These thinkers considered Islam as a fruit of the Arab heritage, a spiritual force and a set of moral values essential to life. But this view of religion, as one of the components of Arab nationalism, copies the traditional concept based on loyalty to religion alone³⁰.

In the early 1920s, secularism terrified the religious community. Nationalist leaders, motivated by their need for support from these circles in their struggle for independence, sought to declare their apparent support for Islam. In addition, the growing interest in Arabic and Islamic studies in the Arab and foreign institutes has led to the realization that religion and culture are intertwined, and that Islam is important in the Arab nationalist movement. As some writers began to publish traces of some aspects of Islam, they were welcomed, encouraging others to follow the same direction rather than continuing to spread secular ideas. In the 1930s, volumes of books were published, with Islam as its main material, ranging from historical stories to textbooks³¹.

The role of political Islam in confronting secularism

The power of Islamic heritage is another factor that has played a major role in defeating Arab secularism. Islamic heritage became the first front in defending traditional identity. Its role was exacerbated after politics turned it into a closed-minded authoritarian ideology.

The fate of religion in history and human society is on the decline, and what has happened in the Western experience of displacement of religion from political and social space is a human and global process not limited to West. The transition of societies from "traditional and religious" to "modern and secular" is almost inevitable³².

However, the rise of political Islam in the Arab region has produced a state of "apostasy" from continuing secularization to the era of "religiosity" and then relegation of religion to the social and political space.

Political Islamists and extremist Muslims have been hard at distorting secularism over the past 100 years, focusing on their criticism that secularism is the product of Western societies that do not apply to Islam, which is religion and state. Secularism is incompatible with cultural formation and moral values of Arab and Islamic societies, they argue³³.

From the point of view of the advocates of political Islam: Secularism is not a sweeping historical phenomenon, but a specific phenomenon, which can be simply identified and consciously adopted or rejected. From the same perspective, secularism discusses the transmission of ideas and influence on foreign civilizations. Secularism is seen as a collection of Western ideas formulated by some Western thinkers, and these ideas originated in Europe because of the nature of Christianity which separate religion from state³⁴. (As if Europe did not witness the phenomenon of overlapping religious and secular!).

Thus, secularism is a Western Christian phenomenon. Therefore, it has nothing to do with Islam and Muslims. According to this partial perception, the spread of secularism is due to the fact that: some Arab thinkers have transferred western secular ideas, adopted by some members of the elite, and then imitated by a broader circle of people. Some even argue that the process of transmitting and applying secular ideas into the Arab and Islamic societies takes place through a global conspiracy) that is sometimes called "Crusader" or "Jewish" or "Western"³⁵.

The radical application of secularism in Turkey has also made its opponents call it anti-religion. This has generated considerable opposition among the general public in the Arab world, where illiteracy has been rampant. The antagonistic points focused on secularism was that; when Ataturk's applied secularism in Turkey he prevented women from wearing headscarves in state institutions and prevented men from wearing red hats or turban. He also refused to apply

Islamic law and replaced it with civil laws, mostly from France, Switzerland and England³⁶. This helped the conservative and Islamists to promote hostility to secularism.

Islamists have been able to distort the image of secularism in the collective consciousness of Arab societies. They have created a psychological complex rooted in the subconscious thinking that secularism is infidel, atheist and that it fights Islam and Muslims. They also managed to make many people not distinguish between secularism as a method of tolerance and coexistence, and the ideological and intellectual position in rejecting or accepting religion (any religion). Secularism is not only necessary for the coexistence of faith and atheism but also in the coexistence of religions with one another.

The spread of the ideology of political Islam in the Arab countries makes the chances of achieving secularism slim. The followers of this tide reject diversity explain the world, in traditional ways that may have succeeded in the seventh century, but time has passed now. This old traditional style cannot accept the cultural, ethnic and ideological diversity of all members of the society. They do not believe in equality among citizens of the state because they do not consider citizenship to be the basis of national affiliation.

Islamists are saying that secularism may suit the West as the solution to the Church's clash with politics and reason, a clash that is absent from Islamic culture and history. This is historically untrue, and it's a selective reading of history by Muslim extremists. The political and social history of Islam since the time of the orthodox Caliphs had been secularized gradually and strongly. The fierce struggle over the caliphate and the leadership was a political struggle, not a religious one. Political and leadership practice has been secular almost entirely in the three historical periods in which the strength and civilization of the Muslims reached its peak; the Umayyad, Abbasid, and the Andalusian eras. Islam was at the heart of the general form and identity of the state. However, the essence of politicization, state administration and social life was largely secular. Because of secularism alone, science, progress and excellence have been achieved during those eras³⁷.

Thus, when the Islamists refer to "Islamic civilization" or "Islamic golden age," they refer to different versions of secularism applied by Muslim leaders in one way or another without the term "secularism" being known. If, for example, the brotherhood or Salafism version of Islam, with its closed understanding of politics, state and society was applied during the 'golden age of Islamic history', Muslims would not have reached what they had reached.

Arab Muslims hate secularism. This hostile attitude has taken place since the beginning of the Arab renaissance, which tried to transfer secular thought, freedoms and human rights to the Arab knowledge structure. Secularism is still presented; by anti secularism in the Arab world, as an atheistic idea or an ideology that does not weigh ethics, values and principles.

The result has been the failure of modernists to reform or renew Islam, although they have made great efforts to educate and enlighten the Arab peoples. Reformists may not have been able to present secularism in the correct way that Arab societies can accept.

The 'historical blockage' of religious thought in Islam

One of the reasons for the failure to achieve secularism in a society such as the Arab society now comes from the closing of the doors of ijihad, where Islamists say that "what is closed by the salaf (ancestor) is not opened by the successor." And that the texts of the Qur'an and the

Sunnah (in their old interpretations) are present and contain all that we want and need. So, there is no necessity to import Western ideas that are not of our intellectual and religious heritage³⁸.

The cling to the old interpretations made the nature of Islamic religion narrow and arbitrary in a sense that it does not accept debates, questions, doubts, validities, usefulness and value of the texts. This nature deprived Muslims in general the task and opportunity to reform, modernize, change and seriously develop their societies.

For this reason, Islamic thought suffers from a "historical blockage" that stands in the face of real questions and a radical review process. But what caused this blockage? It is because of "the absolute contradiction between texts and reality, between the texts and all the scientific, political and philosophical developments of modern times".

The commitment to "literalism" leads the Muslim either to deny the achievements of modernity and hate them, and then declare war on the modern times, as the followers of al-Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram, and other terrorist and fundamentalist organizations do, or to deny the texts itself and then feel the terrible sense of sin and guilt. Thus, Muslims fall into a deadly contradiction with no way out. The solution will only be through the 'metaphorical interpretation' and recognition of the 'historical conditionality' of the texts as did the Christians in Europe after the Enlightenment³⁹.

Europe's experience in this context teaches that the departure from fundamentalist understanding of religion is a prerequisite for advancement, evolution and modernity. The fundamentalist understanding of religion, in short, stands an obstacle to man creativity and advancement, because fundamentalist understanding has a solid position in opposing freedom of all kinds and freedom of thought in particular⁴⁰.

Fundamentalism means that a person believes that his or her religion has the absolute transcendent truth and that there is no truth after it, and all other religions and isms are misleading. In the Islamic world, religion is still understood in the traditional, fundamentalist sense. (Elites, whose in minority, are excluded).

DISCUSSION

Muslim world did not witness the enlightenment stage that took place in Europe. Therefore, the clash between religion and state in the Arab world will continue as long as the system of higher values and the source of state's authorities are not secular. In the West, the modern philosophical and political references, which separate religion from politics, are in control. On the Islamic side, this chapter is still impossible. For this reason fundamentalist movements are very popular in the Islamic world.

Thus, in light of the failure of secularism, Arab world witness a resurgent return to heritage and fundamentalist Islam and a sweeping upsurge of Islamic movements. It is possible to say that this shift in the religious-political scene and the trend towards integrating religion with politics was the most prominent phenomenon, especially in the second half of the twentieth century.

Arab world are in dire need, now, for a modern liberal "thought revolution" that target the general public to achieve cultural and educational transformation that is capable of liberating

Arabs and Muslims from the domination of traditional way of thinking to progressive way of thinking.

Secularism grants freedom of belief to all people and allow pluralism in all sectors of the society. It does not mean anti-religion; it is the guarantor of everyone's freedom, while the authority of religion and the clergy remains limited to the peculiarities of spiritual matters.

Only 'secular state' can be the project for the modern nation- state in the Arab world, not the 'imagined state' of the Islamists - the religious state - which imposes religion on all individuals and adopts one interpretation of the religion. It is impossible to talk about democracy, constitution, institutions of governance, rule of law, legitimacy and other concepts that are associated with the existing nation –state without secularism being present in its spirit and institutions.

Secularism has become a common product of the experiences of dozens of nations and civilizations, not just a thought, or ideology imported from the West or the East. There is no single secular model, comprehensive and closed, either adopting it or rejecting it. The national state in the Arab world can create its own model, which is appropriate to the Arab Islamic culture; in a way that preserves the characteristic of the modern nation- state and its institutions, and at the same time preserves respect for the private sphere of Islam and its religious institutions away from politicization.

CONCLUSION

Achievement of secularism, in the Arab world, who is still dominated by a cloudy ideology and extremist Islamic political groups, will take a long time. Secularism will not accomplish as long as, the cultural aspect of developments still neglected, the use of religion to serve political ambitions still standing, and fearing, extremists reaction, to breakthrough, "politically and intellectually", into the modern era.

Therefore, the researcher recommends that, there is a pressing need for reproducing Arab's prevailing traditional culture by promoting, through educational, media and religious institutions, a civil culture that privatize religion and separates it from politics and state affairs.

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