

Secularism's Other "Other": State Atheism in Post-Totalitarian Communist States

This essay makes several proposals: 1. States' policies toward religion exist on a spectrum with three unattainable (or at least unsustainable) extremes: State Atheism, Secularism, and Theocracy. A state's propinquity to an extreme increases the likelihood that it will promote that extreme beyond its own borders. 2. Studies of religion and politics have focused disproportionately on the secularist and theocratic sections of this spectrum. By examining how states on the state atheist end of the spectrum—but which notably declare their citizens to have "freedom of religion"—we can gain greater insight into how a truly secular state might be formed. 3. Communism, a fundamentally materialist and non-spiritual ideology, is nonetheless subject to the same hermeneutical effects of religion, including especially for this essay, whether or not it requires atheism. 4. Belief in a state, leader, or group of people such as a political party may take on supernatural, devotional elements, but these are fundamentally mundane, mostly physical entities, and it is qualitatively different to ascribe supernatural qualities to them (and then believe or not believe them) than it is to believe in an idea. Salvation promised by a political entity will not likely extend beyond the material realm.

Two of the most prominent cases in a small but stable pool of post-totalitarian communist states, the PRC and Cuba, will be used to highlight these points<sup>1</sup>. We begin with definitions of key terms and an insertion of a preferred conception within scholarly literature on secularism. This essay's titular and central term will be defined next, especially with regard to those regimes making claims of secularity while maintaining a negative view of religion. Following this, a spectrum of state policies toward religion will be described, illustrated, and mildly problematized. Two case studies will be given to remind interested scholars that it is a mistake to

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<sup>1</sup>Even as a scholar, it is probably not worth complaining that the pool of potential cases has shrunk; overall, the fall of the Soviet Union was probably not a bad thing for "human flourishing". The onus is, however, now on this essay to show simultaneously that remaining communist states are 1. Likely to remain at least nominally so in the medium term and thus worth studying as a category, 2. Still viable examples of forms of state atheism, 3. Based on the tenability of 1.&2., that the topic still matters for the study of politics and will continue to be influential in international affairs in the foreseeable future.

characterize the spectrum as having only two poles. A third, neglected pole of state atheism is the understudied topic which this essay will attempt to illuminate. Finally, it will be considered briefly whether state atheism inevitably substitutes a political entity such as the state, a party, or leader in theocracy's role of a deity, or communism and nationalism as the state religion.

**The secular as discursive remainder.** This essay treats the secular as a "remainder" of any discourse which the government or population of a state considers to have been secularized. In actuality, any state which considers itself to be secular may fall within a very wide range on a spectrum of state atheism to theocracy. Elizabeth Hurd's recent, practical definitions of Laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism serve as markers on either side of an ideal type secular state, in which all religious references are absent (or in what Charles Taylor calls the "Subtraction Thesis", removed from) from official discourse.<sup>2</sup> Religion is, thus, not the secular's opposite, but its object to be removed from discourse by a process of secularization, favored by secularists, and the secular only exists or is relevant in the presence of religious beliefs which are *not expressed*.

For analytical brevity and inability to consider multiple eras or religious philosophy on nearly the same plane as Charles Taylor, this essay will focus primarily on the effects that contemporary state atheist regimes have on their national discourses<sup>3</sup>. The highest and most consequential level of discourse is taken to be the state/official/legal which includes public statements made by government as well as laws. Below that, and which secularism's many forms take to be the most contestable, is public discourse, taken as that which is in public spaces such as streets and parks and attracts an audience<sup>4</sup>. Below these are two "private" discourses in the

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<sup>2</sup> I define religion as a system of supernatural belief. Hurd and many others criticize secularists for their belief that religion can simply be defined and removed from politics, while Talal Asad does a great scholarly service in tracing the "anthropology of the secular" back to its historical roots, concluding that it too has a mythology, one which takes on inordinate power by claiming variously to be natural, objective, static, just, and the foundation for responsible scholarship, politics, etc. While I agree that any attempt to remove religion from politics is quixotic at best, removal of references to particular ones has advantages for appearing less partial to accommodate religious diversity.

<sup>3</sup> Dividing the analysis into levels of discourse is the best I can do to avoid "dichotomizing" it into relations between the state and everyone else, as warned against in Ashiwa and Wank's critical study of religious politics in China. Were I to attempt similarly in-depth case studies of varied meso- and micro- level actors in coordination with the state, based on very limited exposure to the critical approach, I assure the reader that the results would be ugly.

<sup>4</sup> Note that public media broadcast and public schools are an intermediate between these two highest discourses in that they receive government funding but obviously involve the gathering of audiences in a public setting having little to do with governance. I would argue that both have a secular duty to educate (inform/provide information) about but not promote

forms of everyday conversation, or interpersonal discourse<sup>5</sup>, and finally internal discourse which is primarily concerned with an individual's personal religious beliefs and practice.

I offer that my “remainder” concept has two primary advantages over “standard” discussions of secularism. The first is an admission that no process of secularization will be complete, if only because religion is a highly salient phenomenon in every society and needs to be discussed<sup>6</sup>. Every country which considers itself secular will retain religious references in its various discursive levels, both conscious because useful or too culturally essential to remove and unconscious because of differing conceptions of what is religious. Rather than treating religion as a completely excised and untouchable remainder, as Hurd claims laicists pretend to do, my concept treats the secular itself as what remains after any process of secularization has occurred, moving official discourse closer to an ideal type by removing religious references. To the extent this has occurred, states' official discourses at a given period in an ongoing process of secularization, each exemplifying nuanced “secularisms”, may be placed on a spectrum of normative religious evaluation, with those in the middle aspiring to neutrality, at least compared to those at the extremes of negativity and positivity.

The second advantage is that, as Hurd again notes, most laicist secularists are primarily concerned with something called the “public sphere” which includes both the government and public spaces. My concept gladly concedes the streets to religious festivals, wearers of apocalyptic sandwich boards, and others who wish either to celebrate or spread religion in public. Even to atheists, such displays are often pleasant diversions from the burdens of mundane life, invitations to stimulating debate, and when the volume gets too high, they should be subject to the same laws as any non-religious “disruption of the peace”. What laicists and other public sphere fundamentalist secularists are often insensitive to, however, is that outright bans of public religious displays are reasonably seen by devout and traditional religious believers as restricting their religious practice, which is quite

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religion and topics related to religion. Many accounts of secularism include the government in the public sphere, or in terms of “public religion” for Zhibin Xie, but I insist upon separating the rulers of the country from manic street preachers for reasons which should be more obvious than that comparison, and which bear analytical fruit.

<sup>5</sup> A practical example of this is the oft-given advice not to discuss religion at the dinner table with guests or in-laws. Such a norm creates secular conversations.

<sup>6</sup> A completely secularized discourse would make absolutely no reference to religion, precluding mention of anything remotely tied to all religions. In short, it would stifle communication.

likely to require observance of holidays or proselytization. In my conception, as long as government representatives aren't representing or making official statements while participating, all the better for multiculturalism. As the next section outlines, when representatives or regulators of higher levels of discourse are seen as restricting religious practice or belief at interpersonal and personal levels, despite secularist claims, the threshold has been crossed for the main topic of this essay, state atheism.

**State Atheism behind Secular Façades.** An obvious problem for the study of state atheism is that, unlike religious beliefs which often define nations, no known nations or states have been formed based on atheism itself. Atheism simply does not unite people in the same way as religious beliefs, even when grouped with active laicists and secularists. The closest real-world approximation to atheism being a state's justification for being, rather than an incidental belief of some leaders, came in the 20<sup>th</sup> century's many experiments with totalitarianism, especially its communist form, in which any system of belief which was not official state ideology was deemed as opposed to or a potential threat to it.

An important distinction can be made between communist totalitarianism, accompanied by strong atheist beliefs derived from Marxist materialism, and all other forms of state corporatism, such as the Nazis under Hitler, surely among the most prominent arguments against secularism. It might be mentioned that the Third Reich's version of secularism is very difficult to classify other than as state corporatist and may well confound my spectrum. That Hitler was anti-atheist because Nazi secularism was closer to (decidedly non-Judeo-)Christian than laicist secularism is less convincing than that atheist groups tended also to be communist<sup>7</sup>. But simply to say that religion or atheism is less important to states than political ideology is disingenuous in its secularist bias.

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<sup>7</sup> Also, to conflate Fascism, nationalism, or any primarily race-based, materialist, mundane ideology with religion belies the fact that they are used separately in popular, non-scholarly and non-professional philosophical discourse because they *are* just as separable as the sacred and the profane. This is not to say that ideologies are not faithfully believed or that they cannot take on supernatural qualities—simply that in their formulation they are taken to be thoroughly “disenchanted”, worldly systems of belief, rather than after-worldly or spiritual. Similarly often made inseparable, even conflated for interchangeable denunciation, communism is an ideology, while atheism is fundamentally a negative religious statement. This distinction, still lost for many American commentators, will be discussed further in comparing the salience of both in the PRC and Cuba. Confucianism, fundamentally a prescription for moral order in society, bridges these realms somewhat uncomfortably but is on the whole far more natural than supernatural, aptly given categorized as “quasi-religious” by many scholars.

Both of Cuba and the PRC would likely describe themselves as secular states based on guaranteed freedom of religion, a modern, global norm that derives much of its universality from its susceptibility to distortion. Such secular self-descriptions tie both states conveniently into the discussion of secularism but present problems for my thesis that they represent a category of atheist states. A definition of the term and models of its consequences follow.

State atheism is defined in this essay as a belief held by the regime and individual leaders that atheism is true and should be promoted by the state among its population.<sup>8</sup> This being the belief of state policy-makers, anti-religious policy is the observable and highly consequential result of state atheism.<sup>9</sup> Through analysis of anti-religious statements by government leaders and noting the presence or absence of requirements that all those associated with the government profess their atheism, the extent of state atheism can be measured in terms of how anti-religious the laws are, as well as how rigorously they are enforced. In Taylor's terms of backgrounds and default options, to what extent does the state make it difficult for individuals to be religious? In more extreme terms, how deeply into society do anti-religious policies penetrate, and is atheism assumed among strangers, rather than secularism or religious belief?

These observable concepts allow for comparison of states in terms of both their normative assessment of and involvement in all levels of religious discourse. The extent to and ways in which states control religion can be traced directly to leaders' judgment on the desirability of religion in official and lower levels of discourse. As will be discussed in the closing section, religious devotion to something other than a state in the 0-2 range of

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<sup>8</sup> Atheism itself is here defined as the belief that all religions and other supernatural beliefs are false.

<sup>9</sup> Anti-religious policy is any which discourages the belief in or practice of religion. It is a natural and extreme extension of Taylor's observation that it is much more difficult to be religious in a "disenchanted world" or secular age than in pre-modernity, when virtually everyone was connected by religion to the transcendental. State atheism's anti-religious policies go beyond the difficulty of being religious in the presence of "viable alternatives" to making religious belief unviable out of concern for social status, physical and mental wellbeing. It includes a wide range of phenomena ranging from the obviously oppressive acts of killing, incarcerating, or otherwise punishing believers, wholesale bans on particular rituals or entire faiths, to more subtle ones like forcing places of worship to register themselves, limiting their construction, surveillance of religious services, organizations, and believers, discriminatory use of taxes, etc. It also includes active promotion of atheism by the state. It may have the effect of causing "weak believers" to give up their beliefs, thereby reducing the societal salience of religion, but also likely causing "strong believers" to organize resistance.

the SPECTRAL APPENDIX can be just as difficult as being non-religious, atheist, or a minority believer in a fundamentalist theocracy.

**Toward a Tri-polar Spectrum of State Involvement in Religion.** Elizabeth Shakman Hurd's illuminating book, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, provides two key terms to this comparison of secularism and state atheism: laicism and and Judeo-Christian secularism. The former has strong affinities in European states which favor a two-pronged definition of secularism involving the removal of religious reference from public (including official) discourse while also reducing the prevalence of religious symbols, belief, and practice among the population. The Judeo-Christian version espoused by America and other secular states with highly religious populations advocates freedom of religion, but with added encouragement that everyone believe in *some* religion<sup>10</sup>. This direction toward "the church of one's choice" favors Judeo-Christian forms in a more obvious way than the laicist, whose similar preference bears its supposedly banished, ugly head at inauspicious moments, as when faced with a religious "other". Hurd posits that both exist somewhere on a "spectrum of theological politics" no less than five times in the book, but in critical prudence declines to formalize such a spectrum. As a result, the reader's appetite for theoretical, ideal-type comparisons is whetted, but far from sated. Two main dishes having been cooked, it is left to the brazen scholar in training, in this section, to serve the meal.<sup>11</sup>

The ideal-type secular state is an unattainable/unsustainable extreme not only because religion inevitably finds its way into laws and politics in general, but also because an absolute absence of something resembling "religious policy" would prevent the state from being able to respond to perceived threats to the state from religious groups. It was in the state-atheist, communist bloc where religion was most often seen as such a threat—not only in the extreme and unlikely events of regime overthrow or "state capture" for the establishment of theocratic regimes, but simply in the presence of a popularly salient, alternative mode of

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<sup>10</sup> In this sense, its secular "freedom of religion" tenet may be seen as the opposite of contemporary "soft-atheist states" examined in the case studies, in that the "freedom" they propose includes an endorsement of atheism. The clause "right *not* to believe" is often added shortly after the statement of freedom.

<sup>11</sup> See the "Spectral Appendix" and its notes for references in this section and elsewhere to the "tri-polar spectrum" or state normative evaluation and/or involvement in religion.

authority. As will be discussed in the case studies, such an outlook persists today in the post-totalitarian communist states.

Choices for cases of state atheism have become few since the end of the Cold War, but this does not explain the minimal scholarly attention they have received.<sup>12</sup> Given the West's questionable but intense motives for interest in Islam, more work has understandably approached the subject of secularization from the normative preference that strongly theocratic states moderate their pro-Islam, even Islamist policies.

For both case studies, it must first be established that a degree of state atheism still exists and surpasses the disdain for religion felt by laicists, who may be atheists but advocate no more than the removal of religion from public spaces and official discourse. Even if this could not be established, the term "state atheism" could still find numerous, actual illustrations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is both more consequential for human rights and the further clarification of what it means to live in a "Secular Age" if clear examples of the phenomenon are shown to be still extant. Special attention will be given to the fact that state atheism, far more than theocracy, is a product of the regime itself, rather than a reflection of the popular will.

Before moving on to the two cases, it is necessary to stake out clearly the spectral territory occupied by state atheism, in discursive terms. It is especially important for its viability as a concept that it be separated from its less activist cousin, Hurd's laicism, which she notes was "influential" in the former Soviet Union, presumably the practical model for both the PRC and Cuba's religious policies.

Laicist secularism, by Hurd's account, stands on several key and related principles. A foundation lies in the privatization of religion, in discursive terms, limited to the internal level of personal belief or nonbelief.

Fitting Taylor's conception of a world of "buffered selves" in a secular West, secularity and non belief are the

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<sup>12</sup> The lack of reliable data, especially due to politicization of it and general isolation of these states (whether by their own design, natural effects of Asian culture differing greatly from the West, or barriers imposed by the West) may be a better explanation. Laos and North Korea would make for far more revealing cases, if more reliable information was available about them and their religious policies. Vietnam would probably be the most likely third case, arguably more important than Cuba for its large population and interesting to compare "allowed religions" with the PRC (despite its smaller size, it recognizes 8 to the PRC's 5, including folk religions), but its inclusion at Cuba's expense might lead to an invalid conclusion that state atheism is an Asian phenomenon. In short, data is most readily available, in languages known by the researcher, for the cases chosen.

“default options”, meaning that we presume strangers don’t want to hear about our religious beliefs, and interpersonal religious discourse should generally be limited to family and close acquaintances. A second laicist principle is that religion should be removed entirely from higher levels of discourse—the official and public.<sup>13</sup> Thirdly, and arguably underlying the first two, is a general disdain for religion, likely stemming from atheist beliefs.

The laicists’ atheism and disdain give rise to condescension toward religious people, undoubtedly disrespectful and annoying to believers. Societies divided by laicists and believers thus take on an air of implicit conflict, but it is presumed not to reach levels of open confrontation. Nor should a state intervene on either side, except when conflicts reach non-religious levels well established standards in secular criminal codes. There must be acceptance by true laicists that to legislate anything which might accomplish their normative preference for lowered religious salience and practice in society would be a contradiction of their claims to separate religion and politics. Bans of headscarves in France, of new minaret construction elsewhere in Europe, are both anti-religious violations of this secular tenet, more apt to be described as state-atheist in nature if advocated by self-described laicists. If justified by the need to protect higher-ordered values such as “gender equality” or “our Christian heritage”, the objective scholar should be able to “sniff out” the difference between anti-religious and anti-Islam policy, as the latter appears to be a common component of Judeo-Christian secularism<sup>14</sup>.

**Cuba.** The Cuban revolutionary state, like most communist states, lost considerable impetus (not to mention billions in Soviet aid) after the Cold War. Even at its height, however, Fidel Castro was less extreme than orthodox Party members in promoting atheism. John Kirk paints the vilified dictator as holding a

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<sup>13</sup> The public level presents serious practical challenges and contradicts my “secular as remainder” prescription that only official discourse be secularized. Churches, mosques, and other places of worship are very much publicly religious, often aesthetically pleasing architecture, and it is simply offensive to suggest that such buildings be demolished, quite silly and not much less offensive to have crosses and crescents removed. Also in contrast with Hurd’s emphasis on laicism’s connection with the modernization thesis, the “secularism as remainder” concept owes more to Philpott’s functional requirements that for people with diverse, even opposing religious beliefs to live closely together in a state or community, there needs to be tolerance, and the state as the highest mundane authority can’t be seen taking sides. I hardly think that tolerance and respect are necessarily modern concepts, as people who believe different things have coexisted for long stretches of time, and it is often the state favoring a particular group which shatters the peace.

<sup>14</sup> Casanova might say that such advocates falsely believe they are laicists, when in fact their Judeo-Christian heritage bares itself when confronted by these most salient “others”. A secularist truly concerned about gender equality should probably work to eliminate wage differences and other non-religious gender discrimination instead of religious fashion.

consistent, moderate relationship with the Cuban Catholic church by highlighting such quotations as his finding compatibility of religious figures with revolution, “[A]ll the qualities that make a priest are the qualities needed in a good revolutionary.” Presumably some “qualities” had to be muted to become one, however. The primary crime a religious person could commit was the same as a non-religious person: being counterrevolutionary.

Castro’s speeches in the 1960’s went so far as to claim that it was only the “counterrevolutionaries” who wanted to paint the Cuban communists as enemies of religion. “In the spiritual area, on religious grounds, we do not meddle...Everyone has the right to believe.”<sup>15</sup> Presumably, then, Castro not only saw religion as compatible with revolution; he also saw the revolutionary state as essentially secular. He saw a clear distinction between the materialist arena of the revolution and that of the church, spirituality. From this perspective, the church could simply avoid appearing in opposition if entering worldly political discourse or stay entirely focused in spiritual matters, and the state would not interfere.

Religious advocates, naturally, have viewed the revolutionary era up to the end of the Cold War in a far more oppressive light. A “pastoral letter” issued by Cuban bishops in 1969 on “Contemporary Atheism” stated that the church had to “approach the atheistic man with all the respect and fraternal charity which the human person deserves by the mere fact of being a human.”<sup>16</sup> This included “respecting the honesty of his positions” and looking for areas in which to collaborate “in the practical order of our terrestrial realizations.” A church which makes these kinds of statements is doing so resignedly, in secular language which bears the cautious marks of trying not to fall afoul of state controls while not compromising one’s own beliefs fundamentally. Similarly, Alonso describes a view likely shared by religious emigrants to the U.S. that the Castro regime has been nothing short of a “hegemonía ideológica del ateísmo.”<sup>17</sup>

In the last years of the Cold War, John Kirk describes church-state relations in Cuba as a dialog of convenience, in which each side exploited the other. “Bland encouragement and attempts at rapprochement” from the state were seen by churchgoers as self-serving attempts to improve political relations with the rest of

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<sup>15</sup> See Hageman and Wheaton, pg. 130., also on pg. 132

<sup>16</sup> Hageman & Wheaton, pg. 301.

<sup>17</sup> Alonso, pg. 1.

Latin America, while “[f]or diehards in the PCC, the church’s new interest in social concerns derive[d] simply from its desire to camouflage, temporarily, deeper spiritual goals and a master plan to win souls away from the Cuban revolution.”<sup>18</sup> This hardly sounds like the “Godless Communism” the “free world” was taught to vilify, and by the Cold War’s end, the Cuban regime was well on its way to religious moderation, at least in comparison to the other remaining communist states.

Its regime notwithstanding, Cuba closely resembles other states in Latin America, with a clear Catholic majority likely to push future governments to adopt religious policies more resembling Hurd’s “Judeo-Christian secularism”.<sup>19</sup> Demographics will likely lead to such a push<sup>20</sup>, as Alonso’s religious statistics on Cubans’ 21st century beliefs show, with curious wording, that “aproximadamente 85% de la población cubana experimentaba algún tipo de contacto con lo sobrenatural” (about 85% of the population has experienced some kind of contact with the supernatural) while “en el sentido riguroso solo el 15% de la muestra se revelaba integrada por ateos” (in the rigorous sense, only 15% the sample revealed themselves to be wholly atheists).<sup>21</sup> Any formal change toward actual secularism, while advocated from the bottom up, however, will have to come from the very top, as accounts such as Aguirre’s depict a regime still very active in “social control”.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kirk, pg. 145-6. This effectively led to the exodus of the majority of Catholic priests in the Revolutionary Era, noted unlike elsewhere in Latin America, not to have adopted Liberation Theology, mixed with elements of material salvation seen less threatening, even conducive to leftist politics and revolution. Cuban pre-revolutionary religious figures with political opinions, by and large, tended to be right-wing in nature, and so were inevitably in “counterrevolutionary” conflict with the state.

<sup>19</sup> Not only Castro himself, but also McGuinness’ 1996 article on the Pope’s visit to Cuba begins the discussion of religion in Cuba by noting that “relative to the rest of Latin America, the church has traditionally been weak in Latin America.” His short summary of revolutionary era anti-religious acts is punchier and pithier than I can attempt.

<sup>20</sup> On the opposite end of the spectrum, it is hard to imagine a theocracy functioning without a preponderant majority of the state’s population believing in one religion, or even more likely, a particular sect. It takes a highly charismatic or foolhardy leader to legislate religious policy, such as declaring a theocracy, against the beliefs of the majority of a population. To establish an atheistic state, however, it is almost presumed that the population is much more religious than the leadership. Communist and/or atheist convictions among leadership given single-party control of the state have been known to produce many odd, unpopular policies.

<sup>21</sup> Alonso, pg. 3. I fear that what this section has revealed most convincingly is that I’m no Cuban expert.

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Aguirre’s 2002 account even contradicts the evidence of progress on religious matters, concluding that “we can expect the regime in the near term to increase formal social controls.” He also uses the word “totalitarian” more than once to describe the contemporary state. Perhaps the Castro brothers will live to be 100, or 150 with their fabulous health care system, and nothing will ever change.

In closing this section, the conclusion of a 1993 book published in Cuba by its Center for Sociological and Psychological studies on religion and social relations suggests that post-totalitarian Cuban society can reconcile Marx, religion, and humanism, in accordance with analysts and my assertion that state atheism is only a common *option* within communist states, not an essential component:

La concepción marxista de la religión, en una teoría específica, aceptada por estudiosos desde diferentes tendencias y enriquecida por aportes de otras corrientes teóricas, se inscribe dentro del sistema teórico que abarca la realidad (natural, social y el pensamiento) en su totalidad... El análisis de la religión desde esta óptica es entonces holístico, dialéctico y crítico. A partir de sus manifestaciones concretas, este modo de enfocar la realidad social sitúa teóricamente al fenómeno en una relación de relativa subordinación con otros factores que en última instancia lo condicionan, a los que de modo determinante intervienen en la vida social...No es entonces una concepción invariable, unilateral ni tampoco antirreligiosa, y el ateísmo no es centro en lo teórico ni en lo práctico...La sociedad revolucionaria debe trabajar por crear condiciones sociales de vida más humanas, porque ello responde al humanismo que en esencia persigue ideales más altos.<sup>23</sup>

**The People's Republic of China.** Two simple identifiers of state atheist regimes are the presence of government offices of religious affairs and the treatment of religion as a “problem” to be controlled. Both conditions remain present in the PRC, even after decades of reform and numerous constitutional guarantees of religious freedom. The same assumptions Hurd ascribes to laicism<sup>24</sup> animate the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) religious policies, most notably in defining the key term. Religion continues to be defined *only* as the five “major religions”: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism<sup>25</sup>. The PRC's frequent and loud proclamations of freedom, then, are highly qualified—one is only “free” to believe if one shares the state's

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<sup>23</sup> Calzadilla, pg. 166, 175: The Marxist conception of religion, in a specific theory accepted by scholars of all kinds and enriched by the support of other current theories, is found within the theoretical system which encompasses reality (natural, social, and thought) in its entirety. Analysis of religion through this lens is then holistic, dialectic, and critical. Beginning with its concrete manifestations, this way of sizing up social reality situates the phenomenon in a relatively subordinate relationship to other factors which ultimately condition it, to those which intervene more determinatively in social life. It is, then, not an invariable, unilateral, or anti-religious conception, and atheism is not central to theory or practice. Revolutionary society must work to create more humane social living conditions, because that corresponds with a humanism which in its essence aspires to the highest ideals.

<sup>24</sup> Especially that non-religious is a natural, neutral state of being, that religion can be defined and separated from politics, that it should be pursued for modernization.

<sup>25</sup> One may wonder why Confucianism is not included. The problem may be twofold: 1. Chinese people do not see it as a religion in the Western sense, but as mentioned previously, a prescription for moral order in society (see Miller's last chapter on the “contemporary invention of Confucian spirituality”). 2. The word for religion in Chinese, 宗教 *zong jiao*, translated literally means “teachings of the ancestors”. This literal translation likely stems from the fact that early Chinese religion's central ritual was ancestor worship. While its contemporary usage aligns more closely with the spiritual/supernatural concept with which we're familiar, a secular, mundane religion (like Confucianism!) is by no means a contradiction in Chinese terms. Additionally, each of Buddhism and Daoism are given by the distinguishing characters 佛 *fo* and 道 *dao* followed by same second character 教 *jiao*. As in English, “teaching” is used most often in regard to the mundane sense, as in “education” 教育 *jiao yu*. Chinese religion class dismissed!

extremely narrow definition. Everything else is superstition, and a significant portion of both the government and the population will gladly share their opinion that even these five are nothing more than “well-organized superstitions”<sup>26</sup>.

An important alternative to state atheism as a motivator for anti-religious policy is a perception that religion, especially when its institutions and believers are well organized, constitutes a threat to the authority of the state. Indeed, as recently as 2003, a special issue on religion in the *China Quarterly* still claims that “religious traditions with completely non-Marxist ideologies...amount to a challenge to the authority of the Party and state.”<sup>27</sup> The most extreme current example of anti-religious policy in the PRC is inseparable from what most analysts see, in directly challenging the state’s definition of religion, as an implicit threat to overall state authority. The ongoing ban on the *Falun Gong* sect, a widespread folk religion tied loosely to Buddhism, is publicly justified because it is a “harmful cult” not recognized among the five accepted religions. Such a rationale is clearly in state-atheistic terms, and given the CCP’s atheistic membership requirement, one needn’t doubt that this pronouncement is sincere. That the ban was initiated after *Falun Gong* adherents camped en masse outside CCP headquarters in *Zhongnanhai* would appear to support the state-threat thesis. However, I maintain that in the case of the PRC, sincere atheistic belief undergirds both the official and extremely limited definition of religion and anti-religious policies. *Falun Gong* didn’t become a threat to the state until it organized to protest the Party’s insensitive categorization and other restrictive policies.<sup>28</sup>

Given its religious diversity and more severe bouts of state atheism, the PRC’s progression toward a secular extreme is likely to go no further than what Hurd labels laicism in the French and Turkish cases. Similar

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<sup>26</sup> For more positive empirical assessments, see Zhai, pg. 103, for survey results that while 80% of the PRC remains non-religious, only 20% of say that “religion has no positive impact on society.” Moreover, the Mainland is a growth market for Christianity, while it is “stagnant” in Taiwan. Yang’s economic approach concurs, noting that the growing demand for religion in the PRC’s population cannot be met as long as the government continues to restrict its “suppliers”, resulting in only 6.5 religious establishments per 100,000 people in the PRC (compared to 117 in the USA). The 2000 World Values Survey showed that 24% of Chinese are “convinced atheists”.

<sup>27</sup> Overmyer, pg. 1, and the theme of threat to the state is central to Potter’s following article, “Belief in Control”.

<sup>28</sup> With more space, I’d consider the most controversial, probably more consequential use of anti-religious policies in the PRC’s periphery of Tibet and Xinjiang. While religious restrictions are likely more strict there than in the interior, it is also embroiled in countless political issues. While it’s easy to say there’s not a lot of good data about these areas, that space is too limited to consider the issues thoroughly and fairly, the most important reason not to address them is that they fairly conclusively support a “state threat” → anti-religious policies thesis over my state atheism story.

to the Judeo-Christian form, however, the often explicit preference for Chinese characteristics is likely to yield a situational preference for the “Three Teachings” of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism over religions which lack either a strong tradition in Chinese culture or Chinese origins. Restriction of each of the five allowed religions is well-documented by *Human Rights Watch*<sup>29</sup>, though certainly not without bias. As most recent Western scholarship and other attention to the PRC’s religious policy focuses, not surprisingly, on Christianity, a likely distorted picture arises in which Christianity is disproportionately restricted and Christians more often, more egregiously harassed or punished by the state. Nonetheless, the presence of so many illegal underground and “house” churches, partially a product of strict limits on building new churches, suggests that more Christians may indeed worship illegally and in secret. The work of Fenggang Yang to frame the retarded pace of church-building as a supply and demand problem, of vastly government-restricted supply, may actually undercut the claims that Christian believers are targeted disproportionately: it may simply be that a quota has been set for the ratio of places of worship. Building more, larger churches might be seen as favoring Christianity over the more Chinese “Three Teachings”, whose temples need only be renovated rather than built “from scratch”.<sup>30</sup>

In direct conflict with Taylor’s claim that unbelief only became possible in the modern era, Donald McInnis cites a Chinese book published in 1982—the same year a new constitution was released for the post-totalitarian reform era and which included explicit “freedom of religion” guarantees—which “traces the history of atheistic theory and practice back to the Zhou Dynasty,” approximately 1150-221 B.C.<sup>31</sup>. One might be forgiven

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<sup>29</sup> The “laundry lists” of state abuse of religious believers published periodically by *Human Rights Watch* and the U.S. State Dept. for China and Cuba offer opportunity for comparison in terms of the severity of anti-religious policies, and on a cursory level they do inform my placement of each on the all-important tripolar spectrum.

<sup>30</sup> A more appropriate and illuminating comparison, which Yang unfortunately does not consider, would be to compare the construction of new churches and new mosques, especially since Han in the cities are often heard to comment on the highly visible mosque-building boom (often with “welfare funds” to Muslim minorities who are generally poorer than Han and especially urban Christians). Such statistics would, however, likely fuel many a polemic argument, raising the status and number of religious conversations, which the PRC above all hopes to avoid. It may also be worth noting that many of the grand, new mosques are built in a highly ornamental style of Chinese architecture, while the majority of Christian churches I have noticed are often virtually indistinguishable from the non-descript, boxy office-building style of the communist era. The crescent, in Western China at least, is more visible than the cross.

<sup>31</sup> McInnis, pg. 411, notes *Zhongguo wushenlun shigang* (*Outline of the History of Atheism in China*) and an earlier book, *Wushenlun he zongjiao wenti* (*Questions of Religion and Atheism*) as foundational texts, though more undoubtedly exist. Unfortunately, I was unable to find these likely fascinating page-turners at the UCI library. A Youth Atheist Education volume and a Marxist Atheist Materialism handbook are available in Chinese via Worldcat, though I suspect these are more inculcation tools than historical compendia. I’ll be sure to read them cover to cover for the follow-up to this essay.

for questioning the scholarly evenhandedness of such a book published in an atheist state known for heavy use of propaganda. In the same vein, from the presumably more reliable University of Chicago, Anthony C. Yu's study of religion and the Chinese state finds remarkable continuity from antiquity to the present, noting that "The People's Republic is using [political] religion to police and regulate religion, just as the imperial state had done for more than two millennia."<sup>32</sup>

Post-totalitarian China and Cuba are both undeniably affected, however, by the secular humanist shift Taylor describes, though from the opposite direction as "Latin Christendom". Given their Marxist histories of materialistic values coupled with state-imposed atheism, even as the leaders' own reactionary unbelief has not faltered, the post-Cold War communist state exists in a global community which is decidedly pro-human rights, pro-religion (except for Europe), and requiring states to cloak whatever oppressive state functions remain. In effect, post-communist and post-totalitarian communist states are both affected by an "addition thesis" in which religious belief, practice, and reference in rising levels of discourse becomes first allowed (by the lifting or lightening of atheistic/anti-religious restrictions and propaganda), more and more possible and prevalent in society, and finally accepted by the government as having some positive effects<sup>33</sup>. Discursive additions partially explain the popular revival or resurgence of popular religious belief across the post-communist and post-totalitarian communist world.

I find fault in the many analyses which continue to explain the prevalence of atheism in the PRC with "atheistic communism", such as those in the *Journal of Church and State*. In terms of communist rhetoric and institutions, most notably the economy, Cuba is by far the more communist state, while this analysis has shown atheism to be stronger both among the government and population of China<sup>34</sup>. The ongoing requirement of

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<sup>32</sup> Yu, pg. 145. And further in the mode of contradicting Taylor, I would argue that even under state atheism, the Chinese world remains very much "enchanted" by folk beliefs and "porous selves" susceptible especially to bad luck-causing ghosts and spirits.

<sup>33</sup> As in *The Economist's* article on the CCP's increasing religious tolerance, entitled "When Opium Can Be Benign", most of the acknowledged benefits are nonetheless given in materialist, social-harmonizing, or state-serving terms. In the minds of state leaders, religion and spirituality are still far from goods in and of themselves, still frequently disparaged in public.

<sup>34</sup> The PRC, having split with the USSR under Mao, also broke from totalitarianism ten years earlier than Cuba, so while it has had a longer time to break with communist economic orthodoxy, its leaders have not seen fit to reconcile with religion to nearly the same extent. Letting non-atheists into the Party is surely more permissible than allowing capitalist

atheism for CCP members, a restriction lifted by the Cuban Party in 1992, has ensured that more anti-religious policies have remained in place in the PRC. Religious restrictions were officially restated in 2004 and while enforcement of them is, like many laws in China, selective, there is little sign that necessarily top-down reforms are in the works. Rather than a belief system in lockstep with communism, state atheism and its anti-religious policies are better viewed in the extent to which they serve particular states' interests and reflect the personal beliefs of those in power.

Although the PRC certainly has more Catholics than Cuba<sup>35</sup>, and likely more Christians than most countries in Latin America, it is difficult to imagine a Papal visit any time soon. A palpable hope that its growing Christian population may spur a languishing democratization movement can be identified not only among Christians throughout the world, but also in supposedly secular scholarship, as in the Winter 2010 edition of the *Journal of Church and State* focusing on religion in China but giving disproportionate (and favorable) attention to Christianity.

This section can best conclude, as a transition to the next, with Yu's authoritative thesis statement:

[T]here has never been a period in China's historical past in which the government of the state, in imperial and post-imperial form, has pursued a neutral policy toward religion, let alone encouraged, in terms dear to American idealism, its free exercise...Despite the adoption of a constitution that allegedly would transform its socio-political body into a modern, secular republic, it has yet to scrutinize and query the legitimacy of its enduring form of political religion—the worship of absolute power invested in the state.<sup>36</sup>

**The State, Party, Dear Leader, and Nationalism as Religious Substitute.** No consideration of state atheism could conclude without a consideration of whether, concomitant with anti-religious policy, a non-religious political entity inevitably takes the place of God in society. That certain states and even religions have consistently been less concerned with God and the transcendent than others, it could simply be a reflection of

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businessmen, as the CCP has done in recent years to share power with its growing middle class. Marx turns in his grave regardless, but more restlessly as the "Chinese characteristics" and capitalism of the PRC overshadow remaining socialist elements in this flagship developmental state.

<sup>35</sup> Marsh and Zhong's 2010 article gives three estimates for the PRC's Christian population: 2.5% (or about 35 million) estimated by Baylor University's Empirical Study of Values in China, 66 million as estimated by Liu Peng and the state-sponsored Chinese Academy of Social Science, and in what they consider "overestimated", nearly 100 million according to the World Religion Database.

<sup>36</sup> Yu, pg. 3, 145.

the state's eternal sacredness. If true in all cases across time, this would render the state-atheism side of the tri-polar secularization spectrum quite redundant, as merely a non-religious version of theocracy.

To compare my two cases in this regard, both Mao and Castro have courted devotion among their populations which often veered into religious-like worship.<sup>37</sup> The Chinese and Cuban states have similarly taken on godlike status in terms of their worthiness of veneration and total submission by the masses. Even as communists operated through often anti-religious revolution for strictly materialist salvation, in the modernist mode considered by Taylor, their totalitarian ideology has always relied heavily on faith that the rewards for their revolutionary behavior and submission to state and dear leader would bring a kind of salvation. This has most often taken the form of a utopia, or "heaven on earth" of peace and prosperity. Moreover, in the post-totalitarian era, even as what we in the West recognize as religion is added to society, allegiance to the state above all remains. Phrased differently, whereas state atheism used to be the heavily promoted state policy with regard to religion, after this has been "toned down" we see more clearly that state authority and security have been the primary concern all along. Yet state survival and a healthy degree of nationalism have always been desirable for *all* states, including strongly theocratic ones.

In summary, devotion to the state, party, or leaders in a manner resembling religion, even ascribing supernatural powers to them, should not be seen as religion in the same sense as Christianity or Islam. Rather, it should be connected to the effects of mundane power in its highest form, the nature of the modern state, yet another spectrum on which totalitarian and authoritarian states rely more heavily than democracies.<sup>38</sup> Faith in states aspires to material security and salvation. As Taylor notes, if religions become increasingly awkward as

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<sup>37</sup> More illustrative examples, representing deification and non-deification of a personalistic regime's founder might be North Korea's Kim Il Sung and Spain's Francisco Franco. Rather than seeing the DPRK as a generational transfer of deification or charisma, it is beginning to look like a modern dynasty as it enters its third generation, with less supernaturalism, orthodox communism, and stability in each (while religious belief nonetheless remains an oft-punished crime). Much of Franco's support came from Spain's conservative Catholics, while he certainly never achieved the wholesale adoration of Kim. Despite being personalistic, his own chances of deification were slim. It is quite different to claim, as Franco did, that "Divine Providence" sent him to save the country, than to become God and outlaw other religious beliefs.

<sup>38</sup> How much more is certainly open to debate, especially in times when democracies go to war.

they enter this material realm<sup>39</sup> over the course of centuries, motivational ideologies firmly and strictly in materialist terms are thereby that much more ephemeral, especially when the promised salvation does not arrive within one's lifetime.

If religion and ideology can be separated as dealing with different kinds of belief systems, transcendent and immanent, it is also worth suggesting that believing in an idea is different than believing in a person or group of people who have or have had a physical existence. Belief in a state is trickier, as many would agree that states are no more than reified political ideas or convenient units of analysis which have a quasi-physical existence because enough people believe in them, they can project physical power, etc. Reverence of Mao has certainly outlived the application of his thought, as in the PRC's post-totalitarian era he has continued to symbolize China among the masses, very few of whom remain committed to the realization of an agrarian utopia. While the CCP's official line that Mao was 70% correct and 30% incorrect is likely generous, his legacy will always contain more supernatural elements than his more competent, technocratic successors. One might imagine the same to be true for post-Castro Cuba, though its primarily Christian population will be less "in need" of a deified founder.<sup>40</sup>

While this topic could easily sustain a research paper in itself, I can only suggest in closing that a synthesis of Hurd's laicism and Taylor's concept of exclusively humanist "flourishing" lead to the possibility that the absence of religion in political discourse does not necessitate the placement of politics itself in that role. Though this conclusion is too reliant on modernization and Inglehart's theory of human development, far from everyone needs supernatural or transcendental reassurance in their lives, let alone in their state's politics.

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<sup>39</sup> Taylor's primary example of this inappropriateness begins with apologists' need to argue for God's existence using profane language and rhetoric. In the modern era, spiritual salvation has new competition in the realization of human potential in the immanent world, prominently including political rights and material wealth, together constituting an "exclusive humanist" objective for believers and nonbelievers alike to flourish as a race. There is something akin to lamentation in Taylor's account of this process, though as a whole it sounds quite enticing, provided that our flourishing doesn't cause the extinction of all species not specifically useful to us (an accusation to which I find Christianity and other human-centric perspectives particularly vulnerable).

<sup>40</sup> With more space and scholars to cite, this section would go on much longer. Without citing anything substantial for several paragraphs, however, the red rambling lights are going off.

**Conclusions.** This essay has shown that states with openly restrictive policies on religion, often based on state atheism in the highest ranks, also make secular claims. The atheistic component of communism has almost certainly been overstated, resulting in statistics like the mid-1980's opinion held by 37% of Americans that the Russians were our enemies "because they are atheists"<sup>41</sup>. The need to "control" religion predates both communism and modernity, as the Chinese case shows, and this tradition in China explains why the CCP is only recently (compared to Castro's Cuba) finding religion to be "useful" to the state.<sup>42</sup> The cases have argued that while both the communist parties of Cuba and China believed firmly in communism and atheism, demographics and the histories of controlling religion in pre-revolutionary times have led to the PRC being the consistently more atheist state, in terms of anti-religious policies and despite making more ostentatious claims to being a secular state. As the pope did not find religious cause to continue the U.S. embargo on Cuba, and Cuba continues to find religion less and less challenging to a state more concerned with humanist progress than revolution, it deserves reassessment and could even serve as an exemplar for more restrictive countries like China and North Korea to soften their anti-religious policies.

Just as modernity becomes a more useful and accurate term when it is considered in its many forms, secularism exists and influences state politics in a variety of ways. Definitional ambiguity allows pretenders such as the case studies examined here to make secular claims in their most positive light possible, "freedom of religion", while in fact adhering to policies suited to leaders' particular preferences. Despite drilling the phrase into U.S. elementary school students, atheists and other non-Christians here similarly find that such "freedom" depends heavily on how the state defines religion and evaluates the desirability of particular ones (and their believers) over others within the state. By treating secularism as a pluralist term and dividing its application among levels of discourse, an objective measurement of states' religious policies, or lack thereof, can be made on a global scale, however limited to the modern age.

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<sup>41</sup> From Harpers Index, March 1985, which cites a survey by the Public Agenda Foundation of New York City.

<sup>42</sup> This newfound usefulness for raising funds for local governments no longer collecting agricultural taxes is one of the primary changes in perspective, notes *The Economist*. Thus, it should not be seen as an official "opening up" but a commitment to seek pragmatic material gain wherever possible, as is the priority of developmental states.

To succeed in their agenda of secularization, laicists have the most at stake in differentiating themselves from advocates of state atheism, lest they be rightfully disparaged by religious and human rights advocates. While public spaces remain contestable in terms of whether religious discourse is to be allowed, any restriction on interpersonal religious discussion or personal practice should be seen as anti-religious. When such is imposed by laws, state atheism in the guise of fervent secularization is the process at play. A laicist or even atheist state is better off testing the proposition that religion will simply “fade away” as material prosperity is achieved, maintaining secular restraint from any legislation which will only galvanize religious resistance, and thereby, persistence. Atheist states’ declarations of secularity should be taken as a challenge to human rights advocates to achieve it, based on empirical evidence that such restraint is possible.

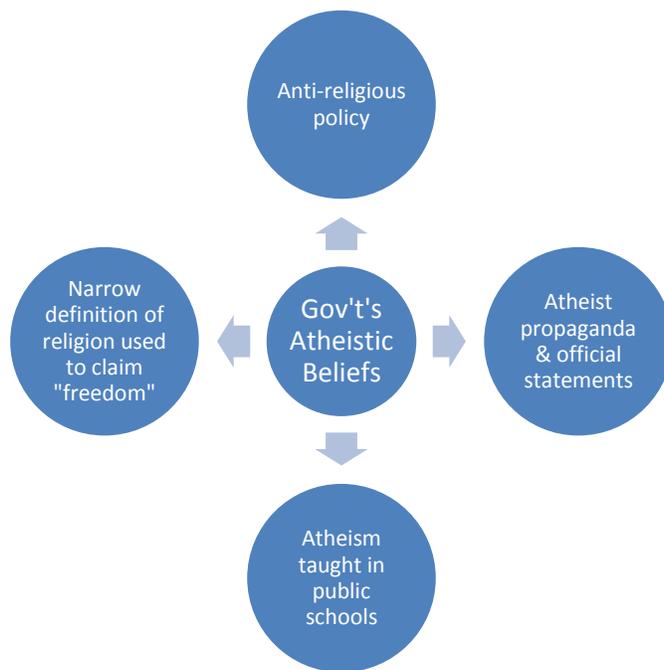
A puzzle which remains for empirical studies on state atheism to solve is whether anti-religious policies are actually caused by leaders’ atheistic beliefs, the state’s application of communist ideology, or simply because leaders see religious practice as a threat to the state, either in terms of alternative authority systems or actual state capture and overthrow of secular and minority-religion regimes. This essay has at least suggested that communism is neither necessary nor sufficient for anti-religious policy. What is more likely, and what I hope will not be taken as a platitude to critical theorists whose contributions this essay has unfortunately excluded, is that atheism at the highest levels of discourse is mutually constituted by each of the preceding factors. I leave it to more sophisticated, nuanced analyses in the future to establish the proportional importance of each.

The post-totalitarian communist states, represented by a larger proportional sample than most categories could accommodate in a qualitative study, are currently involved in a transition in the opposite direction than the kind Taylor described for the West. As communism and the human rights paradigm of the international community may both be seen as products of modernism, we certainly needn’t expect these states’ transitions toward a more genuine secularity to take centuries or even decades. The populations once part of Latin Christendom are becoming less religious, while those studied here are becoming more so, yet both are undergoing a process of secularization. That “the secular” to which their states lead them resembles the more neutral and discourse-sensitive “remainder” is this essay’s openly normative prescription.

APPENDIX A: BASIC TERMS AND CONDITIONS IN THE CASES (NUMBERS REFER TO THE "SPECTRAL APPENDIX", ATTACHED)

Case or Concept	Leaders/Party Members Atheist?	"Freedom of Religion" Declared?	Anti-religious laws?
Authoritarian Cuba	Castros Yes, others No after 1992	Yes, in 1992 constitution	Yes
Authoritarian China	Yes, officially but likely not all	Yes, in 1982 constitution	Yes
Totalitarian Cuba	Yes	No	Yes
Totalitarian China	Yes	Yes, but far from realized	Yes
State Atheism (0-2)	Yes	De jure perhaps, Defacto No.	Yes
Secularism (4.5-5.5)	Maybe, but not relevant to politics.	Yes	No
Theocracy (8-10)	Virtually impossible	De jure perhaps, Defacto No.	For minority religions

APPENDIX B: PROPOSED RELATIONSHIPS OF KEY TERMS



Laicist government's beliefs → anti-religious policy in guise of secularism, equality, etc.

Secular government (may include all types of belief/anti-belief/non-belief/agnosticism) → gov't demurs or abstains from all religious discourse, except in clear and present danger of "state capture" or regime overthrow by a religious or atheistic group.

Judeo-Christian Secularist government → pro-Judeo-Christian official statements, anti-minority religious policy of questionable intentionality

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## A Convoluted, 3-Extreme Spectrum of the Secular Ideal, Fundamentalist Imperialisms of State Atheism and Theocracy

NOTES: This is mostly about the official/state level of discourse, as described in the midterm paper.

The middle extreme is silly, while the poles are scary. At poles believers, non-majority believers, and non-religious need protection. At center, majority believers feel threatened/oppressed, underappreciated.

Governments at 2-7 are likely to declare themselves 5 or “secular”, or make the claim that the population has “freedom of religion”.

Speculative causal claims for 0-4.5: the government wants to change its population to be less religious.

For 5.5-10, the demographics of the population are the driving force behind individual leaders’ religious beliefs as well as government policy and involvement in religious matters.

Why is 5 an impossible extreme? The state would not be able to regulate cults or militant atheists which may have beliefs at either pole and may want to overthrow the gov’t. On a more superficial but still problematic level, gov’t officials would be prohibited from answering simple questions like, “What is your religion?”

Suggested and highly unsubstantiated contextual rankings, on which the criteria are admittedly based: USA = 6-7, “Secular” Europe = 4-4.5 or 5.5-6, PRC post-Mao = 2-3, PRC Cultural Revolution = .5-1.5, Soviet Union = .5-4, Saudi Arabia 7.5-8.5, Afghanistan under Taliban = 9?, Spanish Inquisition = 9.5, etc. etc.

# A Convoluted, 3-Extreme Spectrum of the Secular Ideal, Fundamentalist Imperialisms of State Atheism and Theocracy

Population Demographics above Line, in Pink

<--"OTHERING" BEGINS



The state believes religion is BAD (undesirable).

The state believes religion is GOOD (desirable).

State goal is 100% internal & global atheism. Religious people are expelled or executed. Religious practice is illegal.

Similar to 0, but religious policy is not a priority (not actively pursued). Citizens are often jailed for religious "crimes".

All members of gov't must disavow religious beliefs (declare their atheism). Restrictions are placed on registered places of worship. Non-registered places of worship are regularly raided/shut down, leaders punished severely, believers also punished. Religious identifiers are banned in public.

State leaders regularly, publicly disparage religion and particular believers. Believers are often subject to harassment by authority figures.

Religious organizations are not tax exempt, may be taxed more heavily or have to pay for special permits. Permits are needed for public religious events and ceremonies (but not secular ones). Violations of secular laws by officials may be a crime.

SECU-LAR STATE =4.5-5.5  
NO LAWS ON RELI-GION

Many in gov't are likely to hold religious beliefs but feel it is inappropriate to express them publicly.

Organizations whose purpose is religious are tax-exempt. Religious "heritage" is publicly celebrated, with gov't leaders present. Flag, currency, pledge of allegiance, etc. have religious references. Not being of majority religion is "an issue" for politicians & gov't workers. Secularization cases reach courts.

State leaders regularly, publicly make positive statements concerning their own religion (not being an active believer likely to disqualify one from leading the state). Blasphemy is a crime, but rarely prosecuted. Constitution contains religious references. Non-believers are treated differently by police, justice system, other authority figures. Many laws impede practice of minority religions.

Blasphemy is a serious crime, often prosecuted, sometimes severely. All members of gov't must declare religious belief. State may declare one or more "official religion". Identifiers of minority religions are banned in public.

Similar to 10, but religious policy is not a priority (not actively pursued). Non-believers are often jailed for religious "crimes".

THEOCRACY=8-10

State requires everyone to be of the same religion. Non-believers are expelled or executed. State actively proselytizes beyond its borders,

Totalitarian, Imperialist Theocracy

If realized, all have same religion, religion is objective truth. All is religious and so, "religion" ceases to exist.

goal is global religious hegemony.

Totalitarian, Imperialist State Atheism  
If realized, world is non-religious.

STATE ATHEISM= 0-2

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10