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SECULARISM. Political secularism has distinct European roots. It emerged in response to the problem of religion in political life. Islam has long been viewed as a religious tradition that is uniquely anti-secular. Influential scholars in the social sciences have argued that Islam's early formative historical experience and its inner theology have prevented secularism from developing. The strength of these arguments was enhanced by the writings of political Islamists in the twentieth century who rejected any separation between *din wa-dawlah* (religion and government) in their normative theories on what constituted a just political order.

The problems with secularism in Muslim societies are rooted in the lived experiences of Muslim communities since the early nineteenth century. The most politically salient part of this lived experience has been the encounter with European (and later American) imperialism. The 2003 American-Anglo invasion and occupation of Iraq is just the latest chapter in a long series of interventions that has shaped the moral context in which debates on modernization and secularism have taken place. In broad terms, the Muslim experience has been marked by a perception of secularism as an alien ideology initially imposed from outside by invaders and then kept alive by the postcolonial states and the ruling elites who came to power after World War II. As a result, secularism in the Muslim world has suffered from weak intellectual roots and, with a few exceptions,

most notably Turkey, it has never penetrated the mainstream of Muslim societies.

For generations of Muslims growing up in the postcolonial era, despotism, dictatorship, and human rights abuses came to be associated with secularism. Muslim political activists who experienced oppression at the hands of secular national governments concluded that secularism is an ideology of repression.

The Ottoman Empire and Its Legacy. Ottoman Turkey, as a bureaucratic empire, had institutionalized both civil and religious authority in the imperial administration and in the figure of the sultan. During the nineteenth century, a state-sponsored modernizing reform movement created secular institutions intended to introduce Western educational methods, legal systems, and military techniques. This process of reform, called the Tanzimat (reorganization), encountered resistance throughout the century.

After World War I and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the new state of Turkey emerged under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, later known as Atatürk. He abolished both the political sultanate and religious caliphate, opening the way for a secular state on the French model in which Islam would be relegated to the private sphere. The Muslim calendar was replaced by the Gregorian and Arabic script by Latin, and the veil was discouraged. This top-down secularization process created an authoritarian secular state, but it could not erase Islam as a religion followed by the masses. With the advent of a multiparty democratic system after World War II, secular politicians often won elections by appealing to mass religiosity, thus appearing to threaten the legacy of Atatürk. Military intervention in Turkish politics has been frequent throughout the twentieth century. In 1997 the military once again intervened to topple a coalition government led by an Islamist-based party, thus highlighting