The Origins of Tolerant and Repressive Secularism:
An Analysis of the United States and France in Comparative Perspectives



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"The biggest battle is the war against ignorance."
Mustafa Kemal Ataturk

Abstract

In the field of political science, the term "secularism" is commonly understood as a statecraft doctrine that guarantees the separation between religion and state. A careful examination of history discloses that the United States and France are the two founding nations of this principle. Notwithstanding their common foundation of secularism, these two countries exhibit substantive variation in the implementation of this constitutional tenet — notably, in the extent to which they tolerate religious freedom and its expression. My thesis investigates the causal factors as to why the United States practices a tolerant form of secularism, which guarantees freedom *of* religion; while France exercises a repressive type of secularism, which is concerned with freedom *from* religion. For this purpose, my research project relies upon a qualitative analysis using comparative–historical methods and within-case *process tracing*. In essence, I argue that the outcome of the political conflict that occurred between liberal and conservative elites during the periods of secular state-building explains the type of secularism adopted by the country and its persistence in the mid-long run. After providing in-depth and theory-guided narratives of the American and French cases, I explore the external validity of my argument on two *shadow cases*, namely Senegal and pre-AKP Turkey. These brief studies echo the findings from my main cases by showing that the adaptation and persistence of tolerant secularism in Senegal is the result of a political comprise reached between liberals and conservatives during the country's process of secular state-building similar to the United States; whereas liberals' political victory over conservatives in Turkey during a comparable episode resulted in the imposition and persistence of repressive secularism like in France, until the AKP leadership managed to halt it.

Key Words: Secularism; Types of Secularism; State–Religion Relations; Periods of Secular State-Building; Political Conflict; Political Victory; Political Compromise; Critical Junctures; Path Dependence; the United States; France; Senegal; Turkey

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Puzzle, Research Question & Hypothesis

On 16 August 2016, France was shaken by a scandal when a 34-year-old French Muslim woman, Siam, who was walking with her children on the seaside in Cannes, was forced by the local police to leave the beach or pay a fine for wearing an Islamic headscarf. The police alleged that Siam's clothing was "not correct" and had an "ostentatious" character, hence violating "a 'pillar' of the French Constitution" (Gunn, 2004, p. 428): *la laïcité* — the French word for secularism — formalized in 1905 with the Law on the Separation of Church and State to ensure freedom *from* religion. Siam refused to leave the beach and was thus sentenced to a fine of €11 (Torres, 2016). The police's attitude was heavily criticized by the country's Muslim communities, who have long been aspiring to a form of secularism that is "more democratic, flexible, and open to differences" (Burdy & Marcou, 1995, pp. 13-14).

In the United States, by contrast, religious freedom has been embraced within the framework of secularism that is guaranteed under the First Amendment to the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." More precisely, this formulation stipulates that the Federal Government must ensure freedom *of* religion for everyone, while simultaneously refraining from establishing one particular faith as the official religion of the country over others, for the sake of impartiality: "All religions find their place in the American public sphere, but none is more meaningful than another. All have equal dignity, all have the same value, and none can dominate another" (Zoller, 2006, p. 576). As witnessed in *Zorach v. Clauson* (1952), the Supreme Court upheld the request of a student's parents for the former to be dispensed from classroom activities, in order to receive religious instruction in a private institution outside the school, through the creation of a "released time" program. The Court rationalized its support for tolerance toward individuals' freedom to practice their spiritual beliefs wholeheartedly as an imperative of the country's secular values.

Empirically speaking, although the United States and France share a common foundation of secularism, they appear to exhibit profound differences regarding its type. While a fairly accepted approach in the literature interprets secularism as the separation of state and religion as a means to enhance freedom of conscience, a rival school of thought insists that this constitutional tenet entails protecting the practice of each and every belief within society for the identical purpose. However, neither of these competing perspectives are able to explain why different types of secularism emerged in the United States and France. Put differently, it is at the same time empirically and theoretically puzzling to observe that these two countries pursue markedly distinct state policies toward religion, despite their shared secular features. This thesis will attempt to expose the most striking aspects of these differences and shed light on the following question: ***Why do secular countries vary in their type of secularism?***

To do so, this research project distinguishes between tolerant and repressive secularism, and suggests that while a number of secular countries, such as the United States, adopted the former, which is significantly more tolerant toward religious freedom and its expression; others, like France, established the latter, which considerably restricts such basic individual liberties. Essentially, I argue that the choice of tolerant secularism is the product of a

compromise reached between the politically competing liberal and conservative entities that lacked the adequate decision-making clout to eliminate each other during the periods of secular state-building. In contrast, the adoption of repressive secularism stems from the politically ascendant liberal side's victory over the conservative opposition, which was thereby able to impose its preferred ideology in terms of state–religion regime.[1]

My thesis will assess this hypothesis through a combination of cross- and within-case analysis of two countries: (1) the United States and (2) France. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I will first compare and contrast several definitions associated with secularism, and present my own that most effectively serves the objectives of this study. I will then conceptualize and operationalize in detail tolerant and repressive types of secularism. Lastly, I will outline what the following chapters of this research project will cover.

1.2. Defining "Political Secularism"

The study of secularism has been an important matter of interest in numerous academic disciplines, especially since the Muslim population has significantly grown in several Western European countries (Kuru, 2008a). The scholarly wisdom has commonly agreed to deem secularism as "an ideology" (Scherer, 2011, p. 622), "a modern statecraft principle" (Casanova, 2009, p. 1049), or "the name of a *political* doctrine" (Bilgrami, 2012, p. 90). Notwithstanding a long interdisciplinary engagement with this concept, there is surprisingly no clear consensus on its definition and fundamental practices due to persistent disagreements among academics, jurists, and politicians over the years. As the methods literature stresses, it is pivotal to identify the most appropriate definition, which will be operationalized to tackle the aforementioned puzzle (Adcock & Collier, 2001; Collier et al., 2012; Lieberman & Singh, 2012; Philips, 2015). In this light, I will now consider various conflicting definitions, along with the original interpretations dating back to when the term was first brought into broad usage.

The tension among scholars over divergent understandings of secularism is rooted in the conflictual history of the term. George Jacob Holyoake, a 19th century British thinker, was the first person to employ the word "secularism" to a wide extent (Zuckerman & Shook, 2017), with the aim of promoting "the idea that society, its functioning and its government, should be based upon the principles of science and reason, completely eschewing the supernatural" (quoted in Beard et al., 2013, p. 756). In his book, *The Origin and Nature of Secularism*, Holyoake (1896) did certainly not repudiate religion in general, Christianity in particular, nor was he particularly intent on drafting a full-scale doctrine that identifies what kind of behavior the state is supposed to conduct toward individuals' religious freedom and its expression. He merely propounded the insight that daily life ought to be purified from divinely inspired concepts — which he viewed to be at odds with scientific truths. Conversely, Charles Bradlaugh, a staunch atheist in the British Parliament, incorporated an anti-religious dimension into the notion of secularism, since he viewed church establishment as a serious menace to all kinds of government functions, as well as human society (Bonner & Robertson, 1894). He blatantly advocated for the suppression of religious influence from the political and public

[1] I do not consider the case of conservatives' victory because such an outcome of the political conflict would not have resulted in a secular system and thus falls outside the scope of my argument. This research project is interested exclusively in countries with a secular form of state–religion regime.

settings. Meanwhile, he also championed state policies designed to curb individuals' freedom of conscience. In short, Holyoake's recommendation to get rid of the transcendent in everyday societal matters, on the one hand, and Bradlaugh's zealotry for the prevention of religious interference into state affairs, on the other, gave rise to a twofold perception of secularism in the forthcoming decades. Consequently, "[t]he struggle to formulate a [standardized] definition of secularism continues to this day" (Beard et al., 2013, p. 756).

Charles Taylor (1989; 2007) offers an analysis about the long years of intellectual involvement with secularism, underscoring two separate conceptualizations of this entangled term: (1) decline in religious beliefs and/or practices and (2) diminution of religious influence on state and public affairs. The former is chiefly associated with the process of modernization that took place in Europe and other Western societies, which equally led to a trend toward widespread secularization, whereby the influence of Christianity was sharply weakened in everyday matters (Bruce, 1992; 2002; 2017; Inkeles & Smith, 1976; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Parsons, 1963; 1966; Quack, 2017). In contrast, the latter is often referred to as "political secularism" (Berlinerblau, 2017; Fox, 2017) — which concerns the state's relations and attitude *vis-à-vis* religion, and constitutes the primary focus of this research project. With my conceptual emphasis pinpointed, it is now crucial to evaluate the alternative definitions of secularism, in order determine their respective drawbacks prior to developing a revised one that best corresponds to the targets of this thesis.

Secularism unequivocally implies a complex set of notions that may vary in accordance with different political and cultural circumstances (Asad, 2003; Calhoun et al, 2011; Juergensmeyer, 2007). In the field of political science, "the basic definition given for secularism is the separation between church and state — or, in a country where there is no church, it is the separation between religion and politics" (Topal, 2012, p. 2). However, this narrow conceptualization has been repeatedly contested by a group of authors who have asserted that secularism embodies not only "the differentiation of religious and state institutions" (Buckley, 2015, p. 443), but also a means to "protect and promote the ability of citizens to practice a variety of faiths" (Das Acevedo, 2013, p. 141). According to Akeel Bilgrami (2012), for instance, secularism ensures the liberty of worship and equality of different faiths. Again, Rajeev Bhargava (1999) describes secularism as the safeguard of equal religious freedom for all through a "principled distance" (p. 504), between the state and religious communities. Yet, none of these definitions are precise enough to capture what is explicitly meant by the separation between religion and politics, or the promotion of concepts such as freedom to worship and equality of faiths. In fact, scholars fail to properly articulate the central role played by the state in keeping itself separate from religion or granting people the right and freedom to practice their beliefs under equal conditions. Accordingly, I consider these definitions to be incomplete.

On his side, José Casanova (2009) combines different aspects of this highly disputed term and suggests a more exhaustive definition:

> "[S]ome principle of separation between religious and political authority, either for the sake of the neutrality of the state *vis-à-vis* each and all religions, or for the sake of protecting the freedom of conscience of each individual, or for the sake of facilitating equal access of all citizens, religious as well as nonreligious, to democratic participation" (p. 1051).

Although Casanova's conceptualization is more elaborate, he is presumably mistaken on one point. The association between secularism and democracy appears to be erroneous according to empirical evidence. For example, Jonathan Fox (2017) demonstrates that "few democracies meet any standard of political secularism" and thus contends that this principle "is not an essential element of liberal democracy" (p. 115). Moreover, numerous predominantly Muslim-majority countries around the world, which are not liberal democracies, claim to be *de jure* secular states (Kuru, 2007; 2009; 2013; 2019). Therefore, I do not include democracy in my own definition of secularism, because I do not believe that its constitutional affirmation is required for the former to prevail.

My conceptualization of secularism is, too, based on two dimensions as frequently seen in previous scholarship: (1) independence of the branches of government from religion and (2) impartiality of the state with respect to all kinds of beliefs as well as non-beliefs. Unlike the majority of early definitions, however, I go one step further by combining these two vying features into one unified conceptualization and elucidating what they actually stand for in legal, political, and social terms. The first attribute signifies the constitutional independence of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, alongside the administrative affairs and state policies, from religious matters, laws, rules, customs, and rituals. I refer to this as the *institutional side*, which is handled at the elite level and subsequently transmitted to the rest of society. The second dimension, on the contrary, concerns the state's constitutional impartiality regarding all kinds of beliefs or non-beliefs through the non-establishment of either an official state religion or atheism/anti-religiosity as the ruling ideology. I characterize this as the *societal side*, which involves privileges or constraints to which individuals are subjected by the government. Consequently, it is usually felt at the mass level. The degree to which these two specific dimensions are implemented by the state varies across secular countries, hence leading to two different forms of secularism, as I call them: (1) tolerant secularism and (2) repressive secularism.

1.3. Conceptualizing Tolerant & Repressive Secularism

According to Ahmet Kuru (2007; 2009), modern states can be divided into four distinct categories in terms of their state–religion relations: (1) religious states/theocracies, (2) states with an established religion, (3) secular states, and (4) anti-religious/atheist states. Table 1 below presents a few country examples for each of these four state–religion regimes observable across the globe. The legislature and judiciary of religious states/theocracies are religion-based, and they officially favor one religion over others. Likewise, states with an established religion are inclined to constitutionally endorse one particular religion, but their legislative and judicial branches remain independent of religious influence. Conversely, secular states *de jure* promote no religion whatsoever, and their legislative as well as judicial processes reject any sort of religious interference. Lastly, anti-religious/atheist states show hostility toward all divinely inspired beliefs and prohibit religious intrusion in their legislative and judicial affairs. My primary interest and universe of cases are *de jure* secular states, which currently make up 120 countries around the globe.[2]

[2] See Appendix A for a table of all 120 secular states in the world.

Table 1: Different Types of State–Religion Regimes

Religious States/Theocracies	*States with an Established Religion*	*Secular States*	*Anti-Religious/Atheist States*
• Afghanistan • Bahrain • Brunei • Iran • Mauritius • Saudi Arabia • Sudan • The Vatican	• Algeria • Cambodia • Denmark • Greece • Iraq • Israel • Thailand • The United Kingdom	• Azerbaijan • France • Kosovo • Indonesia • Mexico • Senegal • Turkey • The United States	• Cuba • China • North Korea • Vietnam
Sources: Kuru (2007; 2009); Madeley (2003); Wood (1998)			

Previous research has proven that secular states vary conspicuously in the extent to which they imply this constitutional principle. Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor (2011) draw attention to two distinct forms of secularism, along with a range of typologies that have been elaborated to label them:

> "The world's secular political regimes are generally categorized in terms of the relationship they maintain with religious practice. It will be said, for example, that the secularism is 'rigid' or 'strict' or, rather, more 'flexible' and 'open,' depending on how dilemmas are resolved when the principles and operative modes of secularism enter into conflict with one another. A more 'rigid' form of secularism allows greater restriction on the free exercise of religion, in the name of a certain understanding of the state's neutrality and of the separation of political and religious powers. Conversely, an 'open' secularism defends a model centered on the protection of freedom of conscience and of religion, as well as a more flexible concept of separation and neutrality. These could also be characterized as 'republican' secular regimes versus 'pluralist' or 'liberal' ones" (p. 27).

In a similar vein, Kuru (2007; 2009) develops his own terminology of passive and assertive secularism to illustrate different practices of this statecraft principle across countries. Overall, the literature highlights that there is a first model of secularism, which promotes freedom *of* religion by protecting people's convictions from state intervention, as well as tolerating the presence of religion in the public sphere; and a second model, which is principally concerned with freedom *from* religion through a rhetoric that represses people's freedom of conscience in the public realm (Berlinerblau, 2017; Gunn, 2004; Kuru, 2007; 2009; Perry, 2017; Maclure & Taylor, 2011; Taylor, 2007; Trigg, 2017; Yavuz, 2019).

While I agree that secular countries can be divided into two separate categories, the prevailing typologies do not, in my view, fully gauge the state's position *vis-à-vis* the public in relation to the pursuit of secular policies. Kuru's typology of passive and assertive secularism, as well as various others presented by Maclure and Taylor fail to mirror at first glance whether the state pursues tolerant or repressive policies toward individuals' fundamental right to religious freedom and its expression. Put differently, the adjectives employed in these typologies do not adequately specify the attitude adopted by the state when exercising the

principle of secularism enshrined in the constitution. For this reason, I have opted to develop my own conceptualization of tolerant and repressive secularism, which clarifies at first blush both the stance pursued by the state and its effect on people.

By *tolerant secularism*, I understand an institutional arrangement, in which the separation between the branches of government and religion is guaranteed on the basis of an impartiality principle toward all kinds of faiths, including non-beliefs, and by tolerating the visibility of religion in the public domain for the sake of promoting ubiquitous freedom of conscience. India, Indonesia, Senegal, the Netherlands, and the United States are examples of countries where tolerant secularism is practiced.

By *repressive secularism*, in sharp contrast, I refer to an alternative institutional pattern, in which the separation between the branches of government and religion is strictly enforced in practice so as to ensure the freedom of state affairs from the potentially harmful influence of the supernatural, by prohibiting the appearance of religious expression in the public arena, thereby restricting people's freedom of conscience through repressive policies and confining religion exclusively to private life. Azerbaijan, France, Kosovo, Mexico, and pre-AKP Turkey[3] exemplify countries where repressive secularism is exercised.

Having clarified my terminology of tolerant and repressive secularism, as well as given examples of several countries in this regard, it is now useful to operationalize these two concepts through empirical evidence. In the United States, the Federal Government maintains a tolerant approach with respect to the visibility of religion in the judicial, political, and public realms. For instance, the motto "In God We Trust" is featured on all banknotes and coins. Furthermore, official oaths, including the swearing in of the President or State Governors, traditionally incorporate the statement of "so help me God" and are conducted by placing the left hand on a holy book. Besides, the sessions of Congress open with a customary prayer in the presence of a Christian chaplain[4] and those of the Supreme Court with the traditional invocation: "God save the United States and this Honorable Court." In France, conversely, such practices do not exist, and the State severely inhibits the public exposure of religion insofar as it can. In a nutshell, one may discern the public noticeability of religion in the United States as a direct consequence of tolerant secularism; whereas its strict elimination in France due to repressive secularism, which is often considered to be inimical to the presence of any sort of supernatural belief in the public space.

Moreover, the headscarf dispute, which took place in France under the name of "*l'affaire du foulard*" (Göle, 1997, p. 49), has been a crucial topic that has found its place in countless studies on secularism. The French *laïcité* prevents individuals from wearing signs or clothing that ostentatiously indicate their religious affiliation in public schools. Likewise, civil servants are prohibited from manifesting their religious allegiances in public buildings or elsewhere while on duty. Contrarily, the Federal Government in America pursues totally different policies in this respect. In the United States, people are allowed to display their

[3] Prior to the second half of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule, Turkey had perhaps the most repressive form of secularism in the world. It should be thus borne in mind that when I refer to Turkey as a repressively secular country in this thesis, I speak of the period before 2010. With the AKP's political dominance, Turkey shifted toward a state–religion regime, which was originally similar to America's tolerant secularism (Kuru, 2013).

[4] On multiple occasions, Jewish rabbis, Muslim imams, Hindu priests, and Buddhist monks also assumed this role.

religious adherence in all educational and public institutions.[5] Once again, tolerant secularism in America allows people to express their religious affiliation in the educational and public realms; whereas repressive secularism in France inhibits such basic individual freedoms.

Last but not least, religious instruction has also been another varying phenomenon between these two countries that have two opposite forms of secularism. France "is the only country in Western Europe where there is no religious instruction in public schools" (Kuru, 2008a, p. 4). However, there are private religious schools funded by the State on the condition that they agree to sign an official contract, which requires them to abide by government control. Thus, previous scholarship emphasizes that France, by using repressive secularism, aims to generate a certain degree of leverage over the way in which students receive religious instruction (Barras, 2017; Baubérot, 1990; 2003; 2004; Cady & Hurd, 2014; Fowler, 1987; Gunn, 2004; Kuru, 2007; 2008a; 2009).[6] While in the United States, although there is no religious education in public schools, private religious instruction is authorized and not subject to state control. This indicates that the Federal Government, unlike the French State, does not seek to influence the way students perceive religion.

In short, the United States pursues policies that are tolerant of religion by ensuring substantial freedom of conscience, allowing individuals to freely express their divinely inspired beliefs in the educational and public domains, as well as refraining from monitoring private religious institutions. By contrast, France implements repressive policies toward religion by restricting people's freedom of faith, outlawing religious expression in the educational and public environments, while also assuming a direct role in the oversight of private religious institutions. Table 2 below encapsulates these noteworthy differences and reflects the significant variation between these two countries.

1.4. Plan of the Thesis

The remainder of this research project will consist of seven chapters. In Chapter 2, I will provide a conscientious survey of the existing scholarship on secularism and evaluate five widely held perspectives that attempt to account for the variation in the type of secularism across countries. The central objective of this chapter will be to expose the shortcomings and limitations of each account that will be examined. In Chapter 3, I will spell out my own argument that posits the outcome of the political dispute between liberal and conservative elites during the periods of secular state-building, as the primary cause behind the adoption of two distinct forms of secularism in the United States and France. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the comparative–historical research design that I have undertaken to complete this thesis. More precisely, I will detail my case selection and analysis, as well as data collection and assessment techniques. Chapter 5 will be an empirical account devoted to the United States. I will apply my argument to this specific country and show how a political trade-off between liberals and conservative gave birth to tolerant secularism. Chapter 6 will present the case of France, where liberals' political triumph over conservatives led to the imposition of repressive secularism. In

[5] On 3 January 2019, Ilhan Omar, a black Somali-American woman, became the first veiled woman to serve in the House of Representatives (Smith, 2019).

[6] It is important to acknowledge the French State displays notable controversies in the funding of private religious schools, since only one single private Islamic middle/high school, Lycée-Collège Averroès, receives government subsidies as of 2013.

Chapter 7, I will explore the external validity of my theory through two *shadow cases*, namely Senegal and pre-AKP Turkey. Finally, Chapter 8 will summarize my findings and propose three potential directions for future academic research.

Table 2: Coding Scheme for the Form of Secularism Practiced in the United States and France

	The United States of America	**France**
Independence of the Branches of Government from Religion		
Religious Ceremonies/Prayers in Public Institutions	Yes (1)	No (0)
Reference to God/Religion during Official Oaths	Yes (1)	No (0)
Reference to God/Religion on the Currency	Yes (1)	No (0)
Policy Consultation to Eminent Religious Figures	Partially (0.5)	No (0)
Consideration of/ Reference to Religious Practices for Judicial Matters/Court Decisions	Partially (0.5)	No (0)
State Funding for Places of Worship	Partially (0.5)	Partially (0.5)
Impartiality of the State towards All Beliefs/Non-Beliefs		
Students' and Instructors' Right to Wear Religious Symbols/Garments/Clothes in Public Schools	Yes (1)	No (0)
A Pledge Referring to God/Religion Recited in Public Schools	Yes (1)	No (0)
State Permission for Organised Prayer in Public Schools	No (0)	No (0)
Religious Instruction in Public Schools	No (0)	No (0)
State Permission for Private Religious Instruction	Yes (1)	Yes (1)
State Funding of Private Religious Schools	No (0)	Partially (0.5)
Civil Servants' Right to Wear Religious Symbols/Garments/Clothes in Public Buildings/While on Duty	Yes (1)	No (0)
Religious Minorities' Right to Become State Officials	Yes (1)	Yes (1)
Type of Secularism	**Tolerant Secularism (9.5/14)**	**Repressive Secularism (3/14)**

Chapter 2: Limitations of Previous Explanations

The literature on secularism is remarkably rich and offers numerous potential explanations that attempt to throw light on why two distinct types of secularism are found across different countries. Previous research has focused on five perspectives that have gained broad support within the academic community: (1) civilizational approach, (2) modernization theory, (3) rational choice account, (4) impact of regime type — democracy versus authoritarianism — on the form of secularism, and (5) presence or absence of an *ancien régime* (old regime). Yet, none of these explanations adequately resolves the empirical that motivates my study. Adopting a thematic approach, this chapter will first present the core arguments of each alternative explanation, then assess their assertions through empirical evidence, and finally identify their limitations, respectively.

2.1. Civilizational Approach

The civilizational approach, mainly espoused by scholars such as Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, affirms that Islam has a peculiar nature that is compatible neither with the independence of the branches of government from religion, nor with the impartiality of the state regarding other beliefs and non-beliefs. For instance, Lewis (1990; 1991; 1996; 2003) argues that in Islam, the conceptions of "clergy" and "lay" or of "sacred law" and "secular law" are not as distinguished as in Christianity.[7] Based on this premise that "[t]he distinction between church and state, so deeply rooted in Christendom, did not exist in Islam" (Lewis, 1991, pp. 2-3), civilizationist scholars often consider the separation between political and religious authorities to be unrealistic and impracticable in countries with predominately Muslim populations. Similarly, al-Qaradawi (1977) contends that Christian societies are more comfortable with the idea of keeping state and religious affairs separate, owing to the formally organized structure of the Christian clergy.

Had this cultural argument been veracious, we would have expected to see a rigid unification of religion and politics since the early Islamic state entities. However, previous research proves this assertion wrong and documents that a distinction between political and religious powers has existed since at least the 8th century (Kuru, 2019; 2020; Lapidus, 1975; 1996; 2002). For example, Ira Lapidus (1975) writes that "[i]n the development of Islamic institutions, we have come from an early identification of politics and religion to a differentiation of political and religious life into organized and partly autonomous entities" (p. 384). Furthermore, a number of academics and journalists, such as Abdullah Saeed (2017), Faisal Gazi (2009), or Sami Zubaida (2005), provide insightful examinations of theological realities and uphold the view that there is no legitimate reason in the roots of Islam, which prevents Muslim-majority countries from implementing the doctrine of separation between religion and politics. This is because "[n]either the *Qur'an* nor the traditions of the Prophet [Muhammad] specify a particular form of governance" (Saeed, 2017, p. 197). Finally, an empirical analysis demonstrates that out of 49 Muslim-majority countries in the world, 22 can be classified as secular states, thus refuting the erroneous assumptions of the civilizational

[7] Civilizationists frequently cite the Biblical phrase of "render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" to support their claims regarding the church–state separation in Christianity (quoted in Kuru, 2020, p. 92).

approach.[8] Table 3 illustrates the state–religion regimes of these 49 Muslim countries through a categorical perspective.[9]

Table 3: State–Religion Regimes of 49 Muslim-Majority Countries

Religious (Islamic) States with the Dominance of Shari'a Law	*States with Islam as Established Religion*	*Secular States*	*Anti-Religious/Atheist States*
11	**16**	**22**	**0**
Sources: Kuru (2007, 2009); Stahnke & Blitt (2005)			

Moreover, civilizationist scholars tend to overlook major theological debates and thereby draw conclusions that I find difficult to agree with. According to Lewis (1990), "Islam was never prepared, either in theory or in practice, to accord full equality to those who held other beliefs and practiced other forms of worship" (p. 56). By the same token, Huntington (1993; 1996) argues that Islam lacks tolerance toward non-Muslims. This claim of the civilizational approach is misleading, since the *Qur'an* explicitly emphasizes that *Allah* "created diversity in the universe" (Stepan, 2013, p. 219) and the followers of Islam are expected to respect the differences among individuals. As Saeed (2017) discusses in greater detail, despite the existence of more fundamentalist interpretations, there is nothing inherent in Islam that makes it irreconcilable with respect for the Other:

> "Traditional Islamic law has always accepted the idea that societies by and large are religiously plural. Muslims are not allowed to force other people to accept Islam, no matter how powerful the Muslim population or the Muslim state is" (p. 198).

Most importantly, Maher Abu-Munshar (2012) stresses that Islam recognizes all human-beings as the equal products of God, and the *Qur'an* serves to teach Muslims the important notion of peaceful co-existence.[10] In line with this perspective, Kuru (2020) notes that from the 8th to the mid-11th century, non-Muslims enjoyed a certain degree of religious freedom, were actively present in socio-economic life, had the right to own land, and could even work as bureaucrats in Muslim lands under Umayyad, Abbasid, and Fatimid rule.

Besides, the civilizational approach fails to account for the empirical variation across my cases of interest. As depicted in Table 4 below, this competing theory is unable to explicate why France, a predominantly Christian country, practices repressive secularism that restricts religious freedom and its expression in a similar fashion to Turkey, a nation whose population is 98-percent Muslim. Likewise, it is incapable of answering as to why Senegal, a country with a 95-percent Muslim population, exercises tolerant secularism that fosters freedom of conscience just like the United States, a predominantly Christian nation. Recent research

[8] Kuru (2007) points out that "eleven of these twenty-two states openly declare themselves as secular states in their constitutions, while the other eleven neither declare Islam as the official religion nor use the term secular state explicitly in their constitutions" (p. 577, ft. *a* in Table 4).

[9] See Appendix B for a table of the state–religion relations in these 49 Muslim-majority countries.

[10] See *Sura 7:189*; *Sura 5:48*; *Sura 18:29*; *Sura 49:13*; and *Sura 256* of the *Qur'an* for concepts such as diversity, tolerance toward believers of other faiths or non-believers, unity, peace, universal brotherhood, and co-existence in Islam. See also several *hadiths* by the Prophet Muhammad on *tasamuh*, which insist on the necessity of tolerance for a peaceful harmony.

suggests that this is largely because the civilizational narrative often underestimates the important role of human agency and does not take into account that even in Muslim-majority countries, pro-Islamic conservatives in power have incentives to design their policies in accordance with the prevailing socio-political conditions (Kuru, 2007; 2009).

Table 3: Civilization and Type of Secularism in the United States, France, Senegal & Turkey

	Civilization	*Type of Secularism*
The United States	**Western/Christian**	**Tolerant Secularism**
France	**Western/Christian**	**Repressive Secularism**
Senegal	**African/Islamic**	**Tolerant Secularism**
Turkey	**Turkic/Islamic**	**Repressive Secularism**
Sources: Buckley (2015; 2016); Kuru (2007; 2009); Stepan (2013)		

2.2. Modernization Theory

Another alternative explanation is the modernization theory, which suggests that religion will ultimately fade away not only in social life, but also in the judicial, political, and public domains — the so-called "secularization" phenomenon — as a by-product of the modernization process that may be associated with industrialization, urbanization, and mass education (Bruce, 1992; 2002; 2017; Inkeles & Smith, 1976; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Parsons, 1963; 1966; Quack, 2017). Similarly, Jörg Stolz (2009) and Peter Berger (1967) hold the view that the modernization pathway undergone by Western societies led to the creation of diverse rationalities among individuals and hence a pluralization within society. Consequently, conceptions of secular life became increasingly important alternatives to divinely inspired lifestyles, and religion gradually lost its powerful influence on people. However, this structural argument is unable to explain the ubiquity of religion in American society, which constitutes one of the most advanced countries in the world (Beard et al., 2013; Gunn, 2004; Kuru, 2007; 2009; Zoller, 2006). Likewise, after reviewing various studies using regression analysis, Veit Bader (2017) concludes that the supposed decline of religious beliefs and practices is not valid on a global scale:

> "There is no general decline of religious beliefs, practices, or membership in religious organizations, certainly not on a global scale, and hardly at all in Western or modern societies, so a generalized decline thesis is theoretically weak and empirically indefensible" (p. 335).

Furthermore, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart (2004) note that the process of modernization involves "[t]he division of church and state, and the rise of secular-rational bureaucratic states" (p. 8). In the same vein, a number of other scholars trace a causal relationship that begins with modernization, then continues with secularization in society, and eventually results in the independence of the branches of government from the control of organized religions, notably churches (Bader, 2017; Quack, 2017) — which is an indispensable dimension of political secularism. Yet, this assertion raises two key concerns.

First, since the modernization theory is of a structural nature and does not take into consideration the crucial role of human agency or cultural factors, one would expect all

modernized and developed states to practice the same type of secularism. A straightforward way to test this is to compare the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) *Human Development Index* (HDI) scores for my countries of interest, through the lenses of secularism. According to the 2006 HDI data,[11] the United States (0.903) and France (0.871) record high levels of development, standing in the top-thirty out of 186 Member States. Meanwhile, Turkey (0.704) displays moderate levels of development, ranking in the top-hundred. Senegal (0.438), in turn, can be classified as having low levels of development, as it does not appear among the first hundred countries. In short, the modernization theory fails to account for why the United States and France, two highly developed nations, differ from each other in their types of secularism. In parallel, it is unable to clarify why the United States shares similarities with Senegal, an under-developed nation, in its exercise of tolerant secularism; nor why France pursues repressive secularism as does Turkey, a moderately-developed country. Table 4 presents these observations and exposes the modernization theory's fallacies.

Table 4: Development Level and Type of Secularism in the United States, France, Senegal & Turkey

	Development Level	*Type of Secularism*
The United States	**High – 0.903 (10th)**	**Tolerant Secularism**
France	**High – 0.871 (23rd)**	**Repressive Secularism**
Senegal	**Low – 0.438 (166th)**	**Tolerant Secularism**
Turkey	**Moderate – 0.704 (89th)**	**Repressive Secularism**
Sources Ibid (Table 3); UNDP's 2006 HDI Data		

Second, systematic data confirm these limitations. For instance, a number of scholars mistakenly claim that "richer countries are less likely to have state religions" (Barro & McCleary, 2005, p. 1348). However, Robert Barro and Rachel McCleary (2005) investigate the state–religion relations of 188 countries and discover that per capita wealth has a trivial relationship with and "an ambiguous effect on the probability of state religion" (p. 1348). In addition, Fox (2006) analyzes 175 countries and observes that "economically developed states have lower levels of separation of religion and state" (p. 560). Finally, Kuru (2009) creates his own dataset and finds that "[c]ountries with high development have a much higher percentage (43%) of having official religions than countries with medium (41%) and low development (5%)" (p. 16). Therefore, one may notice that modernization does not necessarily lead to secularism. To sum up, such results undoubtedly disprove the predictions of the modernization theory and underscore its flaws.

2.3. Rational Choice Account

Anthony Gill (2005; 2007), who explores the causes of different state policies toward religion, argues that the variation across countries can be explained through the rulers' opportunity cost

[11] I have deliberately chosen to rely on the UNDP's 2006 HDI data to control for the second half of the AKP rule in Turkey. See Footnote 2 for further details.

calculations. Kuru (2009) points out that those are often related to "(1) sustaining political survival, (2) minimizing the cost of ruling, and (3) succeeding in economic growth in addition to maximizing government revenue and minimizing civil unrest" (p. 21). The principal critique that can be directed at this account is the following: rational choice is merely a mechanism of decision-making and not a cause. Thus, this explanation seems under-theorized and leaves out the systematic factors that drive political actors' cost-benefit analyses.

Besides, this agentic reasoning hardly reflects the reality in the majority of countries, where repressive secularism is prevalent. In Turkey, for example, the ban on headscarves enforced in civil service and the educational setting was not beneficial at all in minimizing the costs of ruling, but rather politically dangerous to a large extent, taking into account that only 22-percent of the population supported it (Çarkoğlu & Toprak, 2006). Similarly, the striking discrimination faced by the graduates of public *İmam Hatip* (Islamic) schools, when it comes to university enrolment, was strongly challenged by the 85-percent of Turks (Kuru, 2012). Hence, right-wing and centrist political parties, advocating for a tolerant form of secularism, usually received the majority of popular votes in elections against the Republicans and other left-wing parties. Though, they were unable to "lift the restrictions on public Islamic expression" (Kuru, 2012, p. 239) for years, because the military and judiciary vehemently guarded repressive secularism.

Likewise, in France, the 2004 law prohibiting the wearing of ostentatious religious clothing and signs in public schools has risen concerns among the country's rapidly growing Muslim inhabitants. Equally, the international community and human rights activists have been urging French politicians to reconsider their policies that abridge freedom of religion — a fundamental right guaranteed under the United Nation' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the Council of Europe's *European Convention on Human Rights*.

Had the rational choice account been valid, we would have expected Turkey's left-wing political personalities to strategically adopt a more tolerant approach *vis-à-vis* religion in their election campaigns, so as to effectively challenge the centrist and right-wing parties, considering that the majority of the country's electorate is composed of pious Muslims based on public opinion data (Kuru, 2007; 2009; Yeşilada & Noordijk, 2010). In parallel, France's political leaders would have also been expected to ease the discriminatory aspects of *laïcité* with the intention of displaying more sensibility and sympathy toward the country's swiftly rising Muslim population, in order to secure a larger number of votes in the polls. Nevertheless, none of these assumptions holds up to reality, thereby casting doubts on the rational choice account's explanatory power.

In conjunction with its under-theorization, this approach suffers from assuming that individuals' preferences are shaped by rational socio-economic and socio-political conditions, thus neglecting key elements such as ideological commitments and lessons gleaned from various historical or cultural experiences (Kuru, 2007; 2009). Empirically, it fails to explain the variation across the countries investigated in this thesis.

2.4. Regime Type & Secularism

A wide range of previous research suggests that democracy provides people with basic rights and freedoms, regardless of their ethnic, religious, cultural, or socio-economic differences (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Ansell & Samuels, 2010; Boix & Stokes, 2003; Dahl, 1971;

Lipset, 1959; Przeworski & Limongi, 1997; Schmitter & Karl, 1991). As Fox (2017) elaborates, "democracy includes a concept of tolerance that needs to include a tolerance of the religious" (p. 105). Congruent with this standpoint, scholars such as Bader (1999) and Greenawalt (1988) argue that the exclusion of religion from the public sphere would constitute a form of discrimination that runs counter the democratic values. Therefore, one would expect democratic countries to practice tolerant secularism that assimilates diversity within the society, ensures widespread freedom of conscience to all citizens, and allows religious expression in public. Nonetheless, this hypothesis has no empirical ground as clearly confirmed by recent studies.

Kuru (2007; 2009) rejects this assumption by explaining that in France, repressive secularism was instituted during the Third Republic and has since then coexisted with a similar political setting of multi-party democracy. In Turkey, conversely, repressive secularism "was established by an authoritarian single-party rule in the early 20th century and has been defended since 1960 by several military *coups d'état* against democratically elected governments" (Kuru, 2009, p. 32). In the United States, on the other hand, tolerant secularism has traditionally existed alongside forms of democratic decision-making (Gunn, 2004; Kuru, 2007; 2009; Perry, 2017; Trigg, 2017). Following this intuition, one may realize that regime type appears to have no unequivocal effect on the type of secularism. According to the *Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2006*,[12] the United States and France are classified as democratic states; while Senegal and Turkey are characterized as countries with hybrid regimes. As illustrated in Table 5 below, this theory is unable to reflect the variation across my cases of interest. In fact, France, a democratic country, differs from another democratic nation, the United States, but exhibits similarities with Turkey, which operates under a hybrid regime. Based on this empirical evidence, one may draw the conclusion that democracy is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for tolerant secularism to thrive.

Table 5: Regime Type and Form of Secularism in the United Stated, France, Senegal & Turkey

	Regime Type	*Form of Secularism*
The United States	**Democracy**	**Tolerant Secularism**
France	**Democracy**	**Repressive Secularism**
Senegal	**Hybrid Regime**	**Tolerant Secularism**
Turkey	**Hybrid Regime**	**Repressive Secularism**
Sources: Ibid (Table 3); Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2006		

2.5. *Ancien Régime* & Secularism

Kuru (2007; 2009), in his comparative analyses of the United States, France, and Turkey, adopts a structural approach and argues that the presence or absence of an *ancien régime* based

[12] I have deliberately chosen to rely on the *Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2006* to control for the second half of the AKP rule in Turkey. See Footnote 2 for further details.

on the marriage of monarchy and hegemonic religion of the nation accounts for the establishment of tolerant or repressive secularism across these three countries. He underlines that in France, the legacy of the former Catholic Kingdom led to ideological, as well as political struggles between anti-clerical Republicans and conservative Catholics — a polarization that Émile Poulat (1987) names "*la guerre des deux France*" (war of two Frances). Likewise, in Turkey, such clashes took place between modernist Kemalists and pro-Islamic conservatives due to the Ottoman inheritance.

From an agentic angle, Kuru (2007; 2009) then emphasizes that because anti-clerical Republicans in France and modernist Kemalists in Turkey were successful in eliminating the opposition, they were able to establish repressive secularism, which represented their ideological inclination. Such ideological contest, he claims, was not the case in America, since an *ancien régime* did not exist. As much as I agree with the argument that the presence of an old regime was a paramount source of conflict between the opposing political entities in France and Turkey during the periods of secular state-building, I disagree with two points raised by Kuru: (1) the supposed absence of an old regime in America and (2) the belief that a comparable power struggle did not occur in the founding of the United States.

Indeed, previous research proves Kuru's premise false and presents substantive evidence showing that in America, notwithstanding the academically disputed absence of an *ancien régime*, there was an ideological polarity between multiple groups that can be labelled into two main opposing camps: (1) liberals and (2) conservatives. The former group was composed of non-believers and unorthodox Protestants inspired by the progressivist Enlightenment ideals, as well as Roman Catholics who favored an institutional separation between church and state (Fraser, 1999; Marty, 1995; McConnell, 1990; Witte, 1991; 2004) The latter group, by contrast, consisted of deeply religious men from a multitude of Protestant sects and denominations, who supported a state structure with an established church on the basis of their respective faiths (Archer, 2001; Huntington, 2004; Jordan, 2017; Murrin, 2007; Modood, 2017; Noll, 2009; Saeed, 2017). As Saeed (2017) puts it, the conservative circles of the American secular state-building period opposed the idea of a political system freed from the transcendent:

> "In fact, the idea that there should be a separation of church and state was completely alien to their belief system. On the contrary, the unity of religion and politics was central to the very rationale for founding the new society" (p. 191).

This stringent stand held by conservatives arguably stems from the fact that prior to the establishment of the United States, nine among the thirteen signatory states of the *Declaration of Independence* had established churches.[13] While it has been a matter of scholarly debate whether to classify the United States as a country with an *ancien régime* or not, one may infer that its presence is not necessary for ideological struggles to occur between competing groups during the periods of secular-state building. What then appropriately explains the adoption of tolerant or repressive secularism across my countries of interest? The following chapter will outline the details and mechanics of my own theory.

[13] New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, New York, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia had established churches, whereas Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware did not.

Chapter 3: Theory & Argumentation

My theory pursues an agentic approach and postulates that the type of secularism exercised in a country depends primarily upon the outcome of the political conflict that occurred between the competing groups during the episodes of secular state-building. Without delving deeply into case-specific details, it can be observed that this dispute takes place between different factions of liberals and conservatives. *Conservatives* can be regarded as proponents of a political arrangement, under which religion wields substantive influence in state affairs, and of a public realm that embraces its visibility. *Liberals*, in contrast, are those who champion a state–religion regime of strict separation and a public sphere devoid of interference from divinely inspired beliefs. I argue that the adoption of tolerant secularism arises from a compromise between the competing liberal and conservative groups that lack the requisite political power to overcome each other; whereas repressive secularism is introduced as a consequence of the former's triumph over the latter. To elucidate, I maintain that the outcome of this contestation may be influenced but not predetermined by structural antecedent conditions (Blyth, 2002; Capoccia, 2015; 2016; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Ertman, 2010; Goldstone, 1998; Mahoney 2000). Rather, I contend that the carrying out of strategic actions, such as coalition-building and tactical calculations, or failure to do so drives the fate of the political confrontation between liberals and conservatives. This chapter will lay out my argument, which is based on a causal relationship involving concepts such as *critical junctures* and *path dependence*. In the ensuing sections, I will first outline the theoretical underpinnings of my argument with reference to a large body of methods literature and then present each causal step of my theory.

3.1. Periods of Secular State-Building as *Critical Junctures*

In the United States and France, the respective periods of secular state-building can be qualified as *critical junctures* (Capoccia, 2015; 2016; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003), during which the achievement of a compromise between the politically opposing liberal and conservative factions or the liberal side's dominance shaped the type of secularism to be implemented thereafter. In the words of Giovanni Capoccia (2015), *critical junctures* can be understood as "moments in which uncertainty as to the future of an institutional arrangement allows for political agency and choice to play a decisive causal role in setting an institution on a certain path of development, a path that then persists over a long period of time" (p. 148). In a social scientific context, the study of *critical junctures* is pertinent to the development or persistence of institutions, which are commonly defined as "a system of human made, nonphysical elements" (Grief & Laitin, 2004, p. 635) that can take the form of economic patterns, formal rules, norms, organizations, public policies, or political regimes (Capoccia, 2015; Pierson 2000). Following this framework, secularism can be treated as an institution — in the sense of a formal rule taking the form of a constitutional tenet, statecraft doctrine, or public policy.

The process of secular state-building in a country can be identified as an episode during which the independence of the branches of government from religious influence and the state's impartiality toward all sorts of beliefs or non-beliefs are formally institutionalized under the

constitutional umbrella. It is noteworthy that among 120 secular countries of the contemporary era, there are those in which secularism was established simultaneously upon the creation of the state itself, as well as others that underwent a period of political secularization at a later point in time. The American, Senegalese, and Turkish cases can be considered as the examples of the former process; while the French and Nepalese cases epitomize the latter one. In France, for example, such a subsequent stage "of openness for radical institutional change" (Capoccia, 2016, p. 98) arose as a direct consequence of an exogenous shock. The country, under the command of Emperor Charles-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, suffered a massive military defeat against Prussia, which promptly triggered a regime change. Irrespective of when they occur, however, both processes can be characterized as episodes of secular state-building and thus *critical junctures* during which the crucial choices made by political agents affect decisively the type of secularism that will be adopted and become subsequently entrenched as an institutional tradition. Therefore, studying these relatively short periods of secular state-building as *critical junctures* provides my theory with analytical leverage, as I am in a position to evaluate the extent to which political agency played an instrumental role in determining the outcome of interest.

In the United States, this pivotal stage of secular state-building occurred between the *1776 Declaration of Independence* and the adoption of the First Amendment to the Constitution in 1791. As one of the ten amendments that constitute the *Bill of Rights*, this clause introduced into American society the notion of secularism through the independence of the branches of government from religion and the Federal Government's impartiality *vis-à-vis* people's beliefs or non-beliefs. Ever since then, religious liberty has been celebrated as America's "first freedom" (Trigg, 2017, p. 305). In France, a similar decisive interim began in 1870 with the proclamation of the Third Republic and ended with the enactment of the *1905 Law on the Separation of Church and State*, during which "more than two dozen laws were promulgated that promoted *laïcité* in ways ranging from placing civil disabilities on those who had received a religious education to preventing religious manifestations in streets during funeral processions" (Gunn, 2004, p. 440). The specific legislation of 1905 finalized the secularism project in France not only through the independence of the branches of government from religion, but also the State's impartiality toward individuals' beliefs or non-beliefs with the purpose of ensuring freedom of conscience within the society. Henceforth, *laïcité* has been "the cornerstone of the state–religion relationship in modern France, in both law and political discourse" (Daly, 2012, p. 583).

Readers may find it strange that the *critical juncture* in France lasted 35 years, which is likely to be viewed as a long period of time. However, there are two reasons why this is not the case. First, *critical junctures* are presumed to be of shorter duration than the institutional arrangements that derive from them. The French *laïcité* has been in vigor since 1905, hence, for 116 years — a period that is over three times longer than the *critical juncture* itself. Second, secularism in France was institutionalized through a series of laws, which only came to an end in 1905. In this light, the 35-year period does not constitute a misinterpretation of the *critical juncture* phenomenon and is appropriate for the purposes of this research project.

I maintain that had the balance of forces among the politically competing groups in the United States and France resulted differently, these two countries would have adopted another type of secularism or alternative state–religion regimes. More precisely, had liberals been able

to defeat conservatives in America, repressive secularism could have been imposed. Similarly, had neither liberals nor conservatives managed to overpower each other, France might have adopted tolerant secularism. Moreover, had conservatives succeeded in dominating liberals, these two countries may have emerged as religious/theocratic states or states with an established religion. In this situation, these episodes could obviously not be classified as processes of secular state-building. In Iran, for example, conservatives were able to prevail over liberals during the *1979 Islamic Revolution* and thereby establish a form of government with a theocratic foundation. Such a potential outcome, though, lies outside the scope of this research project, as I focus exclusively on the variation in the type of secularism rather than state–religion relations.

In fact, the outcome of the political conflict that erupted during these *critical junctures* played a central role in the institutional choice regarding the type of secularism and was clearly affected by agency-related factors including "coalition formation" or "strategic interactions between key actors" (Capoccia, 2015, p. 159). Put differently, political agency was behind the outcome of the political contestation between liberals and conservatives in the United States and France. From this perspective, it is appropriate to highlight that the "organizational landscape of politics" constitutes powerful constraints or inducements for ambitious political figures, who strive to pursue far-reaching institutional transformations during *critical junctures* (Capoccia & Ziblatt, 2010).

For instance, coalition engineering was a primordial aspect of the periods of secular state-building. In France, various political groups, identifying themselves as liberals, were successful in assembling a strong coalition; while conservatives failed to do so. Such a significant advantage brought about the political victory of the unified liberal front, which resulted in the imposition of repressive secularism by means of numerous legislations, policies, and regulations. In the United States, conversely, the picture was marked by a different set of dynamics. Neither liberal nor conservative groups were in a position to mobilize the coalition necessary to impose their preferred state–religion regimes, notwithstanding the existence of abundant social and political capital (Ertman, 2010; Yashar, 1997). This was primarily due to divergences in the aspirations of political actors and their miscalculations in strategic interactions. Consequently, neither side could defeat the other, and a political compromise was eventually agreed upon. With the passage of the First Amendment, the United States became the first country ever to exercise tolerant secularism. These major institutional arrangements, realized in phases of uncertainty, were put "on paths or trajectories, which are then very difficult to alter" (Pierson, 2004, p. 135).

3.2. *Path Dependence* of Institutional Choices

The periods of secular state-building in the United States and France, which I consider as *critical junctures*, were followed by *path-dependent* trajectories, during which institutional change is possible but becomes increasingly unlikely (Mahoney & Schensul, 2006; Pierson, 2000; 2004; Scott, 2006). This is owing to endogenous factors such as complementary institution building, landmark pieces of legislation, or critical court decisions that may entrench the original institutional framework (North, 1990). To quote Scott Page (2006), "[i]n common interpretations, *path dependence* means that current and future states, actions, or decisions depend on the path of previous states, actions, or decisions" (p. 88). Previous scholarship

underscores that there exist several mechanisms whereby *path dependence* can not only persist over time, but also lead to institutional *self-reinforcement* (Grief & Laitin, 2004). One of these is the *increasing returns* trend, which emphasizes "how the costs of switching from one alternative to another will [...] increase markedly over time" (Pierson, 2000, p. 251).

As Paul Pierson (2006) puts it, in an *increasing returns* process, which can be equally described as *positive feedback*, "the *relative* benefits of the current activity compared with other possible options increase over time" (p. 251). In a similar vein, Avner Greif and David Laitin (2004) suggest that "individuals are seemingly rule-followers; they follow the rules associated with the social position they occupy" (p. 638). Consequently, "if an institution *reinforces* itself, more individuals in more situations would find it best to adhere to the behavior associated with it" (Grief & Laitin, 2004, p. 634), in order to ensure that they are not left marginalized in the related spectrum. In this sense, I anticipate that most political actors, who initially supported an alternative state–religion regime or type of secularism in the United States and France, would gradually shift their stance and abandon challenging the institutional arrangements, which were established during the episodes of secular state-building. Likewise, new entrants to the political arena are expected to comply with the norms set by these prevailing institutions.

Spill-over effects constitute another important mechanism of *path dependence* that engenders institutional *self-reinforcement* (Bednar & Page, 2018; Pierson, 2000). This occurs when an institutional behavior, which is associated with a particular setting, diffuses into a new context, "affecting the way agents respond to otherwise unrelated rules or laws" (Bednar & Page, 2018, p. 83). As such, state policies embedded in the tolerantly or repressively secularist traditions of the United States and France can spread across diverse segments of life over time. For example, secularist regulations that are enforced in the civil service setting may be extended to the educational environment.

A last mechanism of *path dependence* is that of *negative externalities*, which compel the agents concerned to maintain institutional arrangements as they have always stood, due to "any kind of constraint: spatial, budgetary, or even cognitive" (Scott, 2006, p. 90). As a result, political actors in the United States and France may eventually deem it "rational to continue following past patterns" (Grief & Laitin, 2004, p. 638) regarding the form of secularism that was institutionalized during the periods of secular state-building. In particular, players on the opposite side of the political landscape or outside of that arena, such as the judiciary, military, and general public, may be eager to preserve the established values of a given institution and thus impose heavy constraints on those individuals who are keen to reshape it for the sake of their electoral gains or ideological leanings. These restraints could take diverse forms. For instance, the country's highest court may declare new legislations unconstitutional, the public might react to the proposed change attempts with demonstrations, or the military can end up interfering with political affairs as a protective barrier. In this regard, it would be reasonable to expect that political actors, who attempt to introduce any changes that could seriously jeopardize the original dynamics of tolerant or repressive secularism in the United States and France, will be held back either by their adversaries or external pressures.

In a nutshell, these mechanisms help justify why *path-dependent* institutions tend to persist and become more robust over time. Accordingly, I expect to see that the institutional choice of tolerant or repressive secularism in the United States and France, made during the periods of secular state-building, has endured since then while also gaining in strength.

Yet, *path dependence* does not mean that institutional change is impossible. In effect, the original type of secularism determined during *critical junctures* has not remained unaltered in all secular countries. For example, in Turkey, the AKP regime, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, found the ample political weight to impose its own conception of state–religion relations, which was initially comparable to America's tolerant secularism. Such an unforeseen shift was the direct consequence of an exogenous shock[14] that prompted a new *critical juncture* — a pattern that Steven Krasner (1984) names *punctuated equilibrium*. This phase of uncertainty was a major incentive for Erdoğan and his allies to first establish their party and then develop an appealing electoral strategy to win the 2002 legislative elections. Through successive electoral victories and a series of the so-called "democratization" reforms to comply with the European Union's *Copenhagen Criteria*, the AKP rule managed to legitimately eliminate its political opponents, as well as other key authorities in the country, including the military and judiciary (Acemoglu & Ucer, 2015). Ultimately, then-Prime Minister Erdoğan and his followers deemed it worth taking the risk of deviating from the entrenched course of the long-running Turkish repressive secularism and shaping it to fit their governing ideology. Despite strong opposition, the AKP was successful: Turkey began to transform itself progressively into a tolerantly secular state.

Punctuated equilibrium is a phenomenon that is typically employed to illustrate how *path-dependent* institutions introduced during earlier *critical junctures* may alter in subsequent windows of opportunity. To be clear, however, this framework does not entail that change is due to the gradual undermining of a given institution (Grief & Laitin, 2004), which is commonly referred to as *incremental change* in the scholarly literature (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). On the contrary, I expect the *path-dependent* character of tolerant or repressive secularism, which was adopted during the episodes of secular state-building, to serve as a safeguard against such *incremental change* by means of the aforementioned mechanisms generating institutional *self-reinforcement*. Though, the example of Turkey provides strong evidence that institutional shift remains possible in the face of new *critical junctures*, notwithstanding the long-running effects of *path dependence*. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that the specific form of secularism, which was initially established in the United States, France, and Senegal, have not undergone any path-reversing alteration, thus buttressing the argument that such institutional change becomes increasingly unlikely in the absence of an exogenous shock.

Yet, perhaps not the type but the degree to which a state pursues tolerant or repressive secularism may be subject to adjustments because of the continuously evolving conditions in the country. These may be related to a range of prevailing demographic, social, or political circumstances. Following Kuru (2007; 2009), therefore, I do not necessarily believe that secularism is a strictly monolithic concept, although one specific form was established during *critical junctures* and then placed on *path-dependent* trajectories, where a substantial turnaround is unlikely. Rather, I contend that the degree of tolerant or repressive secularism, originally adopted during the periods of secular state-building, can be tailored taking into account the unique realities present at any given time. As discussed in the previous paragraphs,

[14] This new *critical juncture* was triggered as a result of the *2001 Turkish Economic Crisis* and continued with the country's prospects of accession to the European Union up until the *2013 Gezi Park* protests.

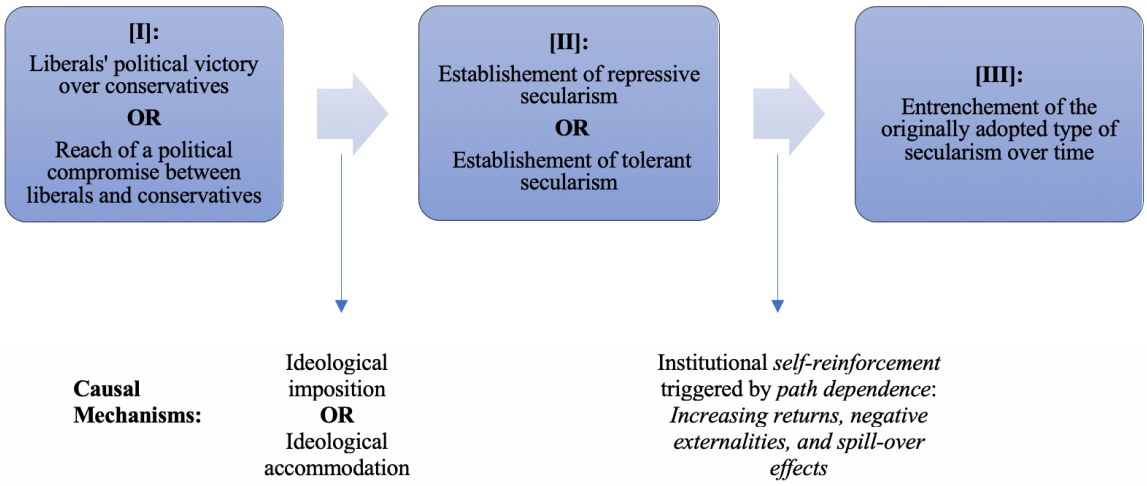
these adjustments can be the result of *self-reinforcing* mechanisms such as *increasing returns*, *negative externalities*, or *spill-over*s. In such cases, the tolerance or repression level of secularism is expected to intensify.

Meanwhile, the tolerance or repression degree of secularism may equally decrease at specific moments in time, though not as a continuous and path-shifting pattern. In other words, these adjustments do not signify *incremental change* in the type of secularism established during *critical junctures* (Grief & Laitin, 2004; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). Instead, such fluctuations or tweaks represent mere adaptations to the evolving circumstances in a country and simply affect the level of tolerance or repression in secular state policies.

3.3. Proposed Causal Relationship

To recall, my theoretical framework posits that the outcome of the political contestation regarding the prospective state–religion regime, which occurred during the processes of secular state-building between liberals and conservatives, accounts for the type of secularism exercised in a country. Figure 1 summarizes my argument and the three steps of the causal chain that I have hypothesized to trace the path to the dominance of tolerant or repressive secularism.

Figure 1: Hypothesized Causal Chain



As depicted in the diagram above, the outcome of the political dispute constitutes the first step and hence the explanatory variable of the causal relationship advanced by my theory. In this regard, if liberals manage to defeat conservatives, I expect a given country to establish repressive secularism. As noted earlier, liberals' victory is the result of successful coalition engineering on their side, by virtue of strategic interactions or careful foresight, and the failure to do so by the competing conservative groups. In contrast, I anticipate that the achievement of a political compromise between the opposing liberal and conservative forces would give birth to tolerant secularism. This eventual political trade-off stems from the fact that both sides lack the adequate political power to eliminate each other, due to the failure of coalition formation or tactical misjudgments.

The second step in the causal process is the institutionalization of repressive or tolerant secularism. The causal energy is transferred to this step through ideological imposition or accommodation. In the event of a liberal triumph, repressive secularism is imposed as an institution that restricts individuals' religious freedom and its expression, thus reflecting the ideological inclination of the victorious liberal camp. In the context of a compromise between liberals and conservatives, conversely, tolerant secularism is introduced as an institution that greatly tolerates people's religious freedom and its expression, thereby mirroring the ideological accommodation between the competing groups.

At last, the entrenchment of the originally adopted type of secularism by a state over time can be treated as the third step and hence the outcome variable of the causal line proposed by my theoretical account. The causal power that leads to this ultimate stage is institutional *self-reinforcement* sparked by *path dependence*, through the aforementioned mechanisms of *increasing returns*, *negative externalities*, and *spill-over effects*.

To conclude this theory chapter, I emphasize once again that during the periods of secular state-building, a political compromise among the competing liberal and conservative groups results in the adoption of tolerant secularism; whereas a liberal victory translates into the imposition of repressive secularism. The following chapter of this thesis will focus on the comparative–historical research methodology that I have employed to conduct my study.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

My thesis attempts to investigate the origins of tolerant and repressive secularism observable across different countries, through a small-*N* qualitative analysis based on two case studies: (1) the United States and (2) France. More concretely, the central objective of my research project is to uncover the underlying reasons why, during the periods of secular state-building, political actors in the United States made the decision to put into practice a tolerant form of secularism; while those in France opted for a repressive model. In addition, my research project seeks to identify the mechanisms for their respective entrenchment over time. This chapter will present the methodological tools upon which I have relied to carry out this study. The subsequent sections will proceed as follows. I will first outline my approach to case selection. I will then address the methodology that I have undertaken to assess the alternative theoretical explanations, which I have reviewed in Chapter 2. I will further discuss the scope of my thesis and draw attention to the introduction of two *shadow cases* in order to explore the external validity of my theoretical framework. Lastly, I will elaborate on the sources and methods that I have used for data collection.

4.1. Approach to Case Selection

This research project primarily examines two countries in a comparative perspective and provides an insightful analysis of different periods of time — ranging from a historical account of the episodes of secular state-building to an overview of state policies toward religion in the contemporary era. Otherwise stated, through this thesis, not only do I intend to expose why the United States and France initially adopted two distinct types of secularism and have since then varied in the extent to which they tolerate religious freedom and its expression, but I also focus on the development of these countries' respective secularist traditions over time, as a result of *path dependence* that generated institutional *self-reinforcement*

I have chosen to center my investigation on the United States and France for five main reasons. First and foremost, these two countries share theoretically relevant similarities that allow me to control for alternative explanations. In fact, this is a pre-requisite for employing the comparative research methods that will be covered in the next section.

Second, as previous scholarship points out, "[t]he United States and France are the two founders of secularism, which have been imitated by other secular countries worldwide" (Kuru, 2009, p. 35). Thus, a careful examination of these two cases is theoretically important and may direct to relatively generalizable results, hence broadening the scope of my findings.

Third, these two countries enable me to offer "a cross-regional and cross-cultural comparison" (Kuru, 2009, p. 34), which certainly increases the analytical leverage of my study. More precisely, my case selection allows me to compare state policies toward religion in a tolerantly secular country with a Protestant-Christian majority population in North America, the United States, and a repressively secular country with a predominantly Catholic-Christian population in Europe, France. The broad applicability of my conclusions can serve as a fruitful contribution to the voluminous scholarly literature on secularism.

Fourth, my case selection was, of course, dependent on the abundance of academic resources. The United States and France are by far the most studied countries on the subject of

secularism, given their tremendously controversial and remarkably varying characteristics. Therefore, I have had access to a large body of secondary literature, which has been essential in assessing several alternative theories before developing my own.

Finally, the selection of these specific cases has minimized any potential language barrier that I might have encountered when conducting my research and gathering data. Since I can read advanced texts in English and French, I have been able to understand and evaluate material from both primary and secondary sources. This advantage has been key in constructing an innovative argument.

4.2. Evaluating Competing Theories

In order to fully capture the empirical variation across my two main cases and control for the alternative theoretical explanations previously addressed in Chapter 2, I principally rely upon comparative analytical methods, famously known as the method of *agreement* (Mill, 1961) or *most-different* systems design (Lijphart, 1971; Przeworski & Teune, 1970), as depicted in Table 6 below. These methods enable me to compare the United States and France — two countries that differ in the type of secularism, while sharing similarities in terms of civilizational identity, levels of economic development, and regime type.[15]

Table 6: Assessment of Competing Explanations through the Method Most-Different Systems Design

Alternative Explanatory Variables (summarized in Chapter 2)					*Outcome Variable*
	Civilization	*Economic Development*	*Regime Type*	*Presence or Absence of Unified Ancien Régime*	*Type of Secularism*
The United States	**Western/Christian**	**High – 0.903 (10th)**	**Democracy**	**Absent**	**Tolerant Secularism**
France	**Western/Christian**	**High – 0.871 (23rd)**	**Democracy**	**Present**	**Repressive Secularism**

As Stanley Lieberson (1991) rightly points out, however, these comparative methods are not sufficient to test competing theories, because they simply capture the co-variation of the explanatory and outcome variables rather than the causation that I seek. Consequently, these methods would erroneously validate Kuru's argument, which suggests that the absence or presence of an *ancien régime* based on the marriage of monarchy and hegemonic religion of the country can explain the dominance of tolerant or repressive secularism in the United States and France.

Hence, I use the method of within-case *process tracing* (Beach & Pederson, 2012; Collier, 2011; George & Bennett, 2004; Goertz & Mahoney, 2012; Mahoney, 2012; Waldner, 2015). *Process tracing* allows me to demonstrate that the absence or presence of an *ancien régime* cannot entirely account for the differences in the type of secularism. As already noted in Chapter 2, I fully acknowledge that during the periods of secular state-building in countries such as France and Turkey, the presence of an old regime was unequivocally an important

[15] Due to the aforementioned under-theorization of the rational choice account, I am unable to include it in my assessment of competing explanations illustrated in Table 6.

contributor to the ideological contestation that occurred between liberals and conservatives. Yet, this historical condition can certainly not be regarded as the paramount cause behind the variation in the type of secularism across countries. Indeed, there are ample historical records indicating that in the United States or other passively secular countries, such as Senegal, comparable power struggles over the state–religion relations equally took place, regardless of the existence or lack of such a historical condition.

Moreover, *process tracing* permits me to provide an in-depth analysis for my cases of interest by identifying the micro-dynamics and causal mechanisms between the intervening steps or "dominoes" in the causal relationship propounded by my theoretical framework (Darnton, 2018, p. 91). By employing this method, I am in a position to trace step by step the trajectory that leads to the adoption of tolerant secularism in the United States and repressive secularism in France. Besides, as stated earlier, since secularism is not a monolithic concept, secular state policies toward religion, whether tolerant or repressive, are subject to evolve with time — notably, in terms of their degree. Accordingly, *process tracing*, through which I track down historical evidence from primary and secondary sources, also helps me explain the within-case variation and *feedback effects* that occur over time — mostly as a product of the institutional *self-reinforcement* prompted by *path dependence*.

4.3. Scope of Research & External Validity of Theory

This thesis is concerned with secularism as a statecraft doctrine or constitutional principle, which I conceptualize through the lenses of two features: (1) independence of the branches of government from religion and (2) impartiality of the state with respect to all kinds of beliefs or non-beliefs. Hence, my research project does not investigate secularization — the decline in religious beliefs and practices — in different countries, whether secular or not, which is often claimed to have occurred as a direct consequence of the process of modernization. Simply put, the universe of cases in this study is merely secular states (n = 120), and its purpose is to construct an original theory that sheds light on the reasons why the United States and France vary in their type of secularism.

Although my study is designed as a small-*N* qualitative research based on two case studies, my ultimate objective is undoubtedly to comprehend a larger class of similar units, since political science research is chiefly interested in establishing generalizable causal inferences (Gerring, 2007; Lieberson, 1991; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). However, scholars with a large-*N* quantitative approach are often skeptical of the external validity of qualitative research for two main reasons. First, there is an assumption that the latter tradition is principally case-oriented and not variable-oriented like the former one (Collier, et al. 2010; Mahoney, 2010; Slater & Ziblatt, 2013). Second, qualitative research is chiefly interested in the causes of specific effects rather than the effects of specific causes across a large population of cases like quantitative scholarship (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012).

In this light, quantitative analysts argue that small-*N* research is essentially concerned with establishing causal processes for intensely studied individual cases rather than estimating the magnitude of effect and looking at the direction of co-variance in a wider population. Consequently, previous methodological research often supports the standpoint that higher levels of measurement, based on statistical data analysis, offer a reliable generalizability of

results; while lower levels of measurement and the examination of a small number of cases facilitate the establishment of a compelling internal validity, but not an external one.

Conscious of potential criticism regarding the generalizability of my observations, I defend my decision to adopt a small-*N* qualitative research design on several grounds. First of all, this approach enables me to acquire an in-depth knowledge about the practice of tolerant secularism in the United States and repressive secularism in France, thus reflecting the variation between these two countries. This is especially meaningful given that secularism is not an easily quantifiable concept. Second, the use of within-case *process tracing* allows me to systematically focus on causal processes and mechanisms to "connect the dots" (Darnton, 2018, p. 94) in my theoretical framework. Third, a profound historical examination of my cases is pivotal in articulating the *path-dependent* nature of the institutional choice as to the type of secularism established during *critical junctures.* Last but not least, this particular research design offers me the opportunity to develop an internally valid theory whose generalizability can be tested on different countries.

With this endeavor, I explore the external validity of my argument by applying it to two *shadow cases* (Gerring & Cojocaru, 2016): (1) Senegal and (2) pre-AKP Turkey. In essence, these cases serve the purpose to probe the plausibility of my argument beyond the two countries of principal investigation.

Again, I have followed a multi-faceted approach when selecting these two *shadow cases*. First and most importantly, these countries constitute a *most-different systems* design for each other, while simultaneously forming *most-similar systems* designs for the United States and France (Lijphart, 1971; Mill, 1961; Przeworski & Teune, 1970). The former method allows me to compare Senegal and Turkey, which differ in the type of secularism, but share theoretically pertinent similarities in terms of civilizational identity, levels of economic development, and regime type. Meanwhile, the latter approach enables me to compare the United States and Senegal, as well as France and Turkey, which exhibit similarities in the form of secularism, while differing with respect to the above-mentioned characteristics. Table 7 below summarizes these observations.[16]

Taken together, these *shadow cases* strengthen my cross-regional and cross-cultural comparative analysis. In effect, Senegal is a tolerantly secular country with a predominant Sunni-Muslim population in Sub-Saharan Africa, and pre-AKP Turkey is a repressively secular country with also a majority Sunni-Muslim population in the Middle East.[17]

Furthermore, the selection of these *shadow cases* has also ensured that any potential language barrier that I might have encountered during the conduct of my research and data collection process have been greatly diminished.[18] Since, in addition to English and French, I can also read advanced texts in Turkish, these *shadow cases* are appropriate for understanding and evaluating material from a diverse range of sources.

Finally, similar to the main cases, my *shadow case* selection was influenced by the availability of sources. Along with the United States and France, Turkey has also been a

[16] See the previous footnote, which also applies to Table 7.

[17] Although both Senegal and Turkey have predominantly Sunni-Muslim populations, 95% of Muslims in the former are members of a Sufi brotherhood; whereas this is not the case in the latter.

[18] Senegal is a former French colony whose official language is still French.

popular case in the existing literature on secularism, for which there are numerous scholarly articles available in English, French, and Turkish. Conversely, Senegal has not been studied as intensively as the others. Nonetheless, a relatively modest body of previous academic research can be found both in English and French. As will be documented in Chapter 7, these *shadow cases* appear to lend support to my hypothesis.

Table 7: Assessment of Competing Explanations through the Methods of Most-Similar & Most-Different Systems Design

Alternative Explanatory Variables (summarized in Chapter 2)					*Outcome Variable*
	Civilization	*Economic Development*	*Regime Type*	*Presence or Absence of Unified Ancien Régime*	*Type of Secularism*
The United States	**Western/Christian**	**High – 0.903 (10th)**	**Democracy**	**Absent**	**Tolerant Secularism**
France	**Western/Christian**	**High – 0.871 (23rd)**	**Democracy**	**Present**	**Repressive Secularism**
Senegal	**Non-Western/Islamic**	**Low – 0.438 (166th)**	**Hybrid Regime**	**Absent**	**Tolerant Secularism**
Turkey	**Non-Western/Islamic**	**Medium – 0.745 (64th)**	**Hybrid Regime**	**Present**	**Repressive Secularism**

4.4. Data Collection Techniques

This thesis draws on data gathered from three main sources. First, it relies on primary sources such as court cases, parliamentary debates, legislations, speeches and testimonies of key political, judicial, as well as religious actors, along with other official government documents that are accessible online or through existing academic and press publications. My initial plan was to conduct research in the physical archives present in the countries of my principal investigation. However, I have been unable to travel abroad due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Consequently, I have been obliged to gather the necessary information and material to complete this research project over the summer of 2020, through the screening of primary sources that are available online or have been drawn upon in the scholarly and press literatures.[19]

Accordingly, one may assume that the inability to visit physical archives may induce potential bias in my data collection and evaluation. Yet, I would disagree with such affirmations because the fact that I was unable to inspect physical archives had no substantive effect on my findings and conclusions. Most of the above-mentioned primary data were fortunately accessible online. Therefore, I am confident that my data gathering efforts have yielded objective results.

On a separate note, when a "smoking gun" evidence is discovered, causation can be inferred, notwithstanding the unavailability of other data (Darnton, 2018; George & Bennett, 2004; Snyder, 2014). Consistent with this qualitatively oriented perspective, I maintain that having access to greater amounts of data does not necessarily imply that one's research is unbiased or credible. On the contrary, it is indeed the access to data that is unique to a specific theory and unlikely to be found unless it was true, which renders one's research sound (Bennett, 2008; Fairfield & Charman, 2017).

[19] Primary data have been used solely for my main cases. I have exclusively relied on secondary data for my *shadow cases*.

Second, I have systematically scanned the press literature in both the United States and France as well.[20] More precisely, I have browsed through newspapers in electronic versions to obtain not only a thorough understanding about the practice of tolerant and repressive secularism in these countries, but also the relevant public debates on this matter.

Lastly, I have also undertaken a conscientious screening of the existing academic literature on secularism and the history of state–religion relations in various countries — from the fields as diverse as anthropology, area studies, history, law, political science, philosophy, sociology, and religious studies. Especially, work published by historians has long been an important source of data for political scientists, as it offers historical narratives that facilitate the verification of causal hypotheses (Darnton, 2018; Lustick, 1996; Møller, 2020; Møller & Skaaning, 2021). In this regard, Theda Skocpol (1984) acknowledges the difficulty of conducting primary research for every single study and thus emphasizes that the use of historically motivated secondary data is vital:

> "Redoing primary research for every investigation would be disastrous; it would rule out most comparative-historical research. If a topic is too big for purely primary research and if excellent studies by specialists are already available in some profusion-secondary sources are appropriate as the basic source of evidence for a given study" (p. 382).

In line with this view, her *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* and Stathis Kalyvas' *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* are excellent examples of how a systematic and exhaustive review of reliable secondary scholarly sources can similarly produce a high-quality political science research. For this reason, I have paid particular attention to a large number of academic books and articles.

Using the data collected, the following two chapters will offer detailed empirical accounts on the United States and France. They will be followed by Chapter 7, which will explore the plausibility of my theory on a broader set of cases, through concise analyses of Senegal and pre-AKP Turkey.

[20] I have also surveyed the press literature in my *shadow cases* in the original languages of these countries. However, my research has certainly not been as extensive as it has been for my main cases.

Chapter 5: Tolerant Secularism in the United States

On 10 October 2003, a public school in Muskogee, Oklahoma suspended an 11-year-old Muslim girl, Nashala Hearn, for having refused to remove her headscarf. This incident sparked a spirited battle between the school board, which warranted its position by a dress code policy, and the Hearn parents, who opposed any compromise concerning their daughter's religious practice (Griffin, 2003). Rapidly, the dispute gained prominence throughout the United States and spurred the Federal Government to intervene. In March 2004, President George W. Bush's Department of Justice sided with Nashala and declared that wearing a religious garb to schools is "a basic right that should be protected" (quoted in Knowlton, 2004). In a further statement reiterating that "[r]eligious discrimination has no place in American schools," Assistant Attorney General Alexander Acosta remarked: "No student should be forced to choose between following her faith and enjoying the benefits of the public education" (quoted in Frieden, 2004). Far from being a partisan issue, the position taken by the Federal Government was also endorsed the Democratic Party. This example, among multiple others, is indicative of the American State's commitment "to embrace religion fully" (Gunn, 2004, p. 421). Why does the United States practice a form of secularism that shows tolerance for religious freedom and its expression? This chapter will argue that America's tolerant secularism is the fruit of a political compromise reached by the competing liberal and conservative elites during the country's process of secular state-building — which was concurrently the era in which the Republic was founded. The discussion will equally throw light on the perpetuation and enhancement of this tolerantly secularist tradition over the years. The remainder of this chapter will be organized as follows. I will first illustrate the emergence of the political trade-off between liberals and conservatives during the establishment of the Federal Republic. I will then turn to the birth of tolerant secularism, which was institutionalized by the adoption of the First Amendment to the Constitution in 1791. Finally, I will discuss the entrenchment of America's tolerant secularism over time, through *self-reinforcement* mechanisms of *path dependence*.

5.1. Political Compromise Between Liberals & Conservatives

In the United States, religious freedom, which is rooted in the separation of church and state, is a bedrock doctrine that guarantees the country's "constitutional norms of equality, neutrality, and tolerance" (Gunn, 2004, p. 422). While the embeddedness of religious freedom in the Constitution might tempt us to believe that such a tolerant behavior has been an inherently American view, historical data reveal that America's state–religion regime was, in effect, fiercely debated during the country's founding. In other words, the American secularism sprang up during a period of heightened ideological and political dissent.

In 1775, the thirteen American colonies began a revolutionary struggle for independence from Great Britain, fueled by their objection to the Parliament's controversial fiscal policies and the lack of decent colonial representation at Westminster. One year later, on 4 July 1776, the Continental Congress adopted the *Declaration of Independence*, which ushered these colonies into a process of federal state-building. During this phase, a central area of incertitude was the future Federal Republic's stance on the matters of state–religion relations. This founding period was fraught with a tense political strife between various groups

who held sharply diverging visions of the prospective state–religion regime, under which the country would be better off (Casanova, 1994).

On the one hand, there were liberals who advocated for a secular government and society to replace those based on religion (Juergensmeyer, 2017). These faithless or unorthodox Protestant figures, led by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Benjamin Franklin not only "defended disestablishments of churches in states" (Kuru, 2009, p. 81), but also stood for a strict "wall of separation" between religion and politics at the federal level (Drury, 2017). They were heavily inspired by the 18th-century deism and anti-clerical ethos of the Enlightenment (Fraser, 1999; McConnell, 1990; Witte, 1991; 2004). In tune with such ideals, these actors had the three main objectives of "exposing religion to the light of knowledge" (Cassirer, 1955, p. 171), transforming the Christian morals of American society into a new "civil religion" (Bellah, 1967), and rendering "the [S]tate independent of the churches" (Kuru, 2009, p. 81). Likewise, Daniel Carroll and Thomas Fitzsimons, who were the only two Catholic signers of the 1789 Constitution, upheld the idea of an institutional division between church and state, in order to avert a potential Protestant government-sponsored persecution of those citizens who shared their faith (Marty, 1995).

On the other hand, there were conservatives. Here, we are especially talking about profoundly religious statesmen from a variety of Protestant sects and denominations — such as Anglicans, Baptists, Calvinists, Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Puritans, and Quakers — who were in favor of a governmental framework in close collaboration with the church of their respective religious affiliations (Archer, 2001; Huntington, 2004; Jordan, 2017; Murrin, 2007; Modood, 2017; Noll, 2009; Saeed, 2017). To clarify, these liberal and conservative groups were, by no means, structured as political parties in the sense that we recognize them nowadays. They merely represented different aggregations of like-minded political actors.

The political contest over the prospective state–religion regime of the American polity took place within the broader debate over whether to establish a federal or confederal institutional configuration, making the period between 1776 and 1791 filled with uncertainties as to which political actors would choose among several available options. Therefore, the political atmosphere prevailing during these years allows me to qualify this specific timeframe as a *critical juncture*. Had these years not constituted a *critical juncture*, we would not have witnessed a heated contestation over the constitutional status of religion in America, nor would we have observed a political battle over whether to form a union of states on the grounds of a federal structure or confederacy. Put another way, the institutional set-up of the American polity and its attitude toward religion would not have been the product of political agency; rather, the antecedent conditions would have preordained the outcome.

In this light, if America's multi-confessional and disunited colonial character had predetermined its destiny, we would have expected to find a confederation of independent states with established churches, in conformity with the majority faith of their populations. However, historical records lend credence to my theoretical framework because the formation of the Federal Republic, as well as the separation of church and state, were the outcome of political interactions. I argue that the incapability of the various competing liberal and conservative groups to obtain decision-making majorities in the political arena, due to ideological dissension stemming from religious diversity, strategic miscalculations, and the

failure to build coalitions, was the overarching driver for the rise of a compromise and hence the establishment of tolerant secularism.

Among liberal personalities, there were two major points of disagreement: (1) the place of religion in public and social lives and (2) the stand against Catholicism. For instance, George Washington and his followers maintained the view that the political sphere ought to operate free from the influence of religion. Yet, Washington was a member of the Anglican Church and attached considerable importance to religion as the foundation for a "virtuous society" (McConnell, 1990). Accordingly, he valued the salience of religion in the public and social realms. By contrast, Jefferson, Madison, Franklin, and their adherents promoted "the freedom and triumph of the reason" (Kuru, 2009, p. 81). They envisioned a form of secularism that would keep the "irrationalist" sway of divinely inspired beliefs apart from the public and social domains, while permitting their unhampered practice in private life (Esbeck, 2004; Munoz, 2006; Owen, 2007; Wills, 1990). In this regard, one may notice that the Washington camp favored a tolerant form of secularism, while Jefferson, Madison, and Franklin promoted a repressive model.

In an attempt to unify liberals, Madison presented the *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* to the Virginia General Assembly in 1785. He pleaded for a rigid institutional church–state division and against government support of religion in any form whatsoever. In summary, Madison emphasized that a secular framework, ensuring the independence of the political, public, and social fields, was to secure the free exercise of religion in private life — the proper place where supernaturality truly belongs. Nevertheless, his "pious appeals" (p. 1321), writes Thomas Lindsay (1991), were regarded as disingenuous and purely "rhetorical" (p. 1333). As a result, liberals failed to act as a united front, since they disagreed about the exact basis on which secularism was to function.

Regarding the second matter of quarrelling, liberals were again divided into two factions. Martin Marty (1995) notes that anti-Catholic sentiments were endemic in a large number of Protestants, since they viewed Catholics as aliens to American society. For example, John Jay, a delegate from New York to the Continental Congress, was an ardent anti-Catholic; he endorsed laws to disenfranchise Catholics politically unless they relinquished their allegiance to the pope (Gunn, 2004). Meanwhile, there were a handful of liberals, most notably the Catholic delegates Carroll and Fitzsimons, who believed in the notion that all faiths are equal, and the State must thus take an impartial stance with respect to different religious beliefs.

Despite lengthy talks and several attempts at coalition building, neither side managed to impose its preferred position against Catholics on the other, nor were they able to agree upon a middle ground. A liberal alliance was thereby precluded. This was chiefly due to personal distrust coupled with these actors' initial level of fragmentation. In sum, consistent with the expectations of my theory, political agency explains the failure of coalition engineering within the liberal front: ideological divergences and strategic miscalculations are indeed the principal reason why liberals were unable to bond together.

In a similar fashion, conservatives also faced a problem of unification. Kuru (2009) underlines that "American society experienced a substantial diversity of Protestant denominations, none of which could have a nationwide majority" (p. 82). Hence, conservative delegates from each of the different denominations were sympathetic toward the idea of having their own church as the official one not simply in their states, but also at the central level.

Aware of this majority handicap, several political figures, who were members of the Anglican Church, sought to form alliances that cut across denominational lines. They advocated for the establishment of Anglicanism as the country's official religion, reflecting the white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant characteristics of the American nation (Gunn, 2004). Yet, this proposal received strong opposition for two main reasons.

First, the Anglican Church was viewed as an organization that was closely associated with British colonialism, against which the people of America had fought (Esbeck, 2004; Witte, 2004). Second, members of the dissenting Protestant denominations, born out of the Great Awakening, did not trust the sincerity of Anglican elites. They were fearful that an Anglican establishment would threaten their religious freedom (Archer, 2001). The prime rationale behind this anxiety was history. In fact, Puritans, who had previously resented the Church of England's policies and sought to reform it, had suffered persecution at the hands of Anglicans (Hutson, 1998). On account of these two issues, non-Anglican conservatives were resistant to a prospective Anglican state. Consequently, pro-Anglican establishment political actors failed to gather conservatives into a unified camp. In short, as per my theoretical framework, political agency accounts for the absence of a conservative coalition. Ideological discords, due to religious plurality, and tactical misjudgments of Anglican conservatives made it impossible to forge a politically powerful conservative alliance.

In the face of this stalemate, generated by the failure of both liberals and conservatives to mobilize majority coalitions to eliminate each other, Isaac Backus, who was a Baptist preacher, realized the need for a political trade-off that would be mutually beneficial to all parties (Kuru, 2009). Thus, he pushed liberals and conservatives to work toward an institutional arrangement in which state affairs would be unfettered by the supernatural, while still ensuring extensive religious freedom (Esbeck, 2004; Munoz, 2006; Owen, 2007; Wills, 1990). As a clergyman, Backus' solution was quickly embraced by conservatives, who articulated their desire to cooperate with liberals in order to end the political impasse. Not long after, Jefferson also recognized that the Backus' proposal was the most rational means of at least accomplishing his aspiration for the separation of church and state (McConnell, 1990). Hence, he invited his fellow liberal comrades to negotiations with conservatives. Following these long exchanges, liberals and conservatives reached a political compromise that would result in both the independence of the State from the churches and the liberation of the churches from the State's intervention (Monsma, 1995; Murrin, 2007)

To recapitulate, the inability of liberals and conservatives to stand as unified fronts resulted in a gridlock regarding the state–religion relations in America, as no single group possessed the sufficient political power to impose its desired model. Accordingly, first Backus and then Jefferson understood that the opposing liberals and conservatives were compelled to work out a political compromise to end this deadlock. Ultimately, this gave rise to tolerant secularism, which to this day is practiced in the United States.

5.2. Establishment of Tolerant Secularism

In 1791, tolerant secularism was espoused as a "hallmark" of the United States. This outcome occurred because neither liberals nor conservatives were capable of building majority coalitions that possessed the requisite decision-making authority to knock out opponents and dictate their preferred state–religion regime, due to ideological dissension and strategic errors.

Beginning with the signing of the *Declaration of Independence* on 2 August 1776 by the Continental Congress, a process of political secularization was underway in America. In the first instance, this operation was undertaken at the level of the signatory states. Until 1776, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware were the only four colonies that lacked established churches and granted religious freedom to their inhabitants (Kramnick & Moore, 2005; Spurgin, 1989). However, these colonies represented "the exception rather than the rule" (Gunn, 2004, p. 444), as the other nine had established churches (Esbeck, 2004; Witte, 2004) and did not tolerate religious freedom (Fraser; 1999; Gill, 2007). Immediately after the *Declaration of Independence*, circumstances changed: a political dispute began over the status of religion in these states. As mentioned earlier, the nature of this conflict was about whether to keep religion institutionally separate from the political, public, and social arenas or to maintain "a united regime of church and state" (Saeed, 2017, p. 191). In five states, because liberals and conservatives could not form unified camps to overcome each other, they found a compromise for the disestablishment of churches, which satisfied the former actors, and a political authority that tolerates the place of religion in public life, which pleased the latter figures (Archer, 2001; Pole, 1978). In chronological order, North Carolina (1776), New York (1777), Virginia (1779), Maryland (1785), and South Carolina (1790) were these five states to disestablish their churches (Esbeck, 2004).

Concurrently, the state–religion regime of the soon-to-be established Federal Government was also a matter of contention. Similar to the state level, liberals and conservatives held opposite tendencies in the federal context. Yet, the failure to operate as cohesive fronts prevented the development of a liberal or conservative majority coalition that would have had the appropriate political leverage to eliminate the adversaries. As a result, liberal and conservative actors were pushed to bargain for a middle ground, accommodating the competing voices across the political spectrum. Eventually, this political trade-off led to the emergence of tolerant secularism.

A first step toward secularism at the federal level was the ratification of the Constitution in 1789. Article VI's "prohibition of a religious test for public employees" (Kuru, 2009, p. 80) was a noteworthy advancement that implied the State's equal and neutral posture *vis-à-vis* different faiths. This was followed by the adoption of the First Amendment in 1791, which completed the institutional configuration of the American secularism. Through the *Establishment Clause* and the *Free Exercise Clause*, the Federal Government was legally prohibited from establishing one set of beliefs as the country's official religion or inhibiting the free exercise of any faith. In other words, these clauses came into force as institutional mechanisms to ensure a strict division between church and state, as well as to grant "religious freedom for all" (Esbeck, 2004, p. 1415). Ever since then, the church–state separation has been in effect, and religious freedom has "had primacy over other rights" (Gunn, 2004, p. 445).

In sum, the lack of majority alliances on both the liberal and conservative sides of the aisle induced these actors to work toward a compromise. Notwithstanding the disunity among various liberal personalities over the status of religion in the public and social spheres, the assurance of an institutional separation between church and state at the federal level was of utmost priority. Likewise, although conservative figures deemed it optimal to structure a state based on the union of the Federal Government and their own churches, they eventually recognized that "a neutral state that enabled citizens to live a Godly life of their choosing was

the next best thing — certainly better than being forced to live according to the laws of another religious group" (Saeed, 2017, pp. 190-191). Consequently, a political middle ground resulted in "the dominance of religion-friendly [tolerant] secularism in America" (Kuru, 2009, p. 81) and contented both sides.

5.3. Entrenchment of Tolerant Secularism

A survey of academic and press literatures, along with official government documents, indicates that the American tolerant secularism has not only endured, but been solidified since 1791 thanks to institutional *self-reinforcement*.

Following the First Amendment's institutionalization of tolerant secularism on the national level, liberals and conservatives in different states started adapting to this principle. As such, the remaining four states with established churches underwent a process of disestablishment. This demonstrates the diffusion of tolerant secularism from the federal context down into the state setting. Georgia was the first one to do so in 1798 (Kuru, 2009). Subsequently, Connecticut (1818), New Hampshire (1819), and Massachusetts (1833) disestablished their churches and switched to secular political systems (Esbeck, 2004; Witte, 2004). This piece of evidence yields meaningful support for my theoretical framework. Consistent with the expectations of my argument, the *path-dependent* nature of America's secular institutional set-up incentivized conservative political actors, who had previously opposed the disestablishment of churches at the state level, to embrace the integral secular feature of the Federation. Besides, all the states, which were admitted to the Union after the ratification of the Constitution, also implemented the church–state separation in the ensuing years or decades. This came as a formal requirement for accession to the Union. Thus, such an institutional condition can be considered as the entrenchment of initial power asymmetries between the federal and state governments, which contributed to the reproduction and reinforcement of America's tolerant secularism.

Had America's secular configuration not been perceived as a *self-reinforcing* institution, there would have been no reason why previous opponents or incoming political would endorse its norms. Instead, we would have expected these agents to stick to their own institutional arrangements and carry on contesting the separation of church and state. As detailed above, however, this was not the case, thereby evidencing the *path-dependent* character of secularism in the country.

With the strong influence of the Second Great Awakening, the United States witnessed the "socio-cultural hegemony of Protestantism" in the 19th century (Kuru, 2009, p. 84). This movement of religious revival prompted the emergence of new Protestant denominations and had far-reaching implications (Feldman, 2005; Kramnick & Moore, 2005). For example, Casanova (1994) underscores that the sway of Protestantism "encompassed the entire public realm of education and religious instruction" (p. 137). Moreover, James Fraser (1999) points out that the Federal Government actively supported the missionaries, who endeavored to impose the Protestant faith on Native Americans and Southern slaves. Accordingly, numerous scholars refer to the period between 1815 and 1860 as "the *de facto* or quasi-establishment of Protestantism" (Monsma, 1995; Smith, 2003). In this respect, the State's neutrality toward religion was felt to apply solely to Protestant denominations as opposed to all faiths (Demerath

& Williams, 1987). One way to interpret this is as an undermining of America's institutional scheme of tolerant secularism.

Had this been true, the *path-dependent* skeleton of tolerant secularism in the United States would have collapsed at some stage in time due to *incremental change*. Yet, the country's tolerant secularism is still in force. In fact, this implies that the Federal Government's pro-Protestant attitude was nothing more than an adaptation to the social circumstances in the wake of the Second Great Awakening. In other words, these fluctuations in the degree of tolerant secularism did not constitute a path-reversing change. As a result of these social developments, America's secularism grew temporarily more tolerant toward Protestantism, while becoming more repressive regarding other divinely inspired beliefs.

In the early-20th century, however, the demographic dynamics of the United States changed dramatically because of increased immigration. By 1910, the Catholic population numbered about sixteen million of the 92 million Americans (Casanova, 1994; Macedo, 2000). In addition, the Jewish immigrants gained clout in the American political, public, and social domains (Handy, 1991; Sarna & Dalin, 1997). Consequently, the socio-cultural supremacy of Protestantism began to wane on American soil (Kuru, 2009). This led to the weakening of Protestant influence not only in the public sphere, but also in the matters of education (Casanova, 1994), with the strong involvement of the Federal Government. According to Casanova (1994), these transformations constituted a phase of "second disestablishment."

In this light, a momentous occurring was the Supreme Court's decision in *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947). The verdict was consistent with the original institutional configuration of America's state–religion regime established by the First Amendment. Indeed, the opinion written by Justice Hugo Black affirmed the tolerantly secularism character of the United States:

> "Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another [...] Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa."

He further assured that the First Amendment does, by no means, imply "a governmental hostility to religion or religious teachings." In short, this landmark court ruling played an instrumental role in buttressing America's tolerantly secularist tradition and served as a benchmark for the future.

This event can be construed as a *negative externalities* mechanism of *path dependence*. Acting like an institutional veto player, the Supreme Court legally constrained evangelical Protestants, who had been striving to shape the educational, political, and public realms of the country since 1815, in accordance with their piety-centric worldview. Had America's state–religion regime not been a *path-dependent* arrangement, we would not have expected to observe the judiciary obstructing the pursuit of anti-secular activities and setting precedents to ensure the protection of the country's tolerantly secularist institutionalism in the future.

In the 1950s, the United States was caught up in a geopolitical and ideological battle against the Soviet Union — popularly dubbed the Cold War. The USSR was governed under an anti-religious/atheist ideology, which had absolutely no tolerance for religious freedom and its expression. Conversely, the United States was considered as the "leader of the free world." During these years, the American leadership was obsessed with fighting "the 'godless'

communists" (Kuru, 2009, p. 93). Hence, "it was important for American leaders to show their nation and others how they possessed a distinct respect for God" (Kuru, 2009, p. 93).

In this regard, it can be noted that the conditions of the Cold War contributed to a change in the preferences of certain political actors regarding the Federal Government's attitude toward religion. For instance, even several members of the Democratic Party, who favored a strictly separationist arrangement of secularism resembling the French *laïcité* (Esbeck, 1988), abandoned their position, as they recognized that such an institutional shift was exceedingly costly. They were conscious that advocating for a form of secularism, which exhibits low levels of religious tolerance, could have resulted in their marginalization in the anti-communist political spectrum. Otherwise stated, in line with the expectations set by my theoretical framework, the *path-dependent* nature of America's state–religion relations, coupled with the Cold War effect, provided these liberal political personalities with incentives to abide by the norms of tolerant secularism.

Furthermore, the Federal Government launched a process of fostering greater tolerance for piety. In 1952, Congress adopted a bill to designate an annual *National Day of Prayer*, which was promulgated as a law by President Harry Truman. In 1954, another piece of legislation was enacted by Congress to add the phrase "under God" to the *Pledge of Allegiance*. Lastly, Congress passed a legislation in 1955 to include the motto "In God We Trust" on all coinage and paper currency. Both of them were then signed into law by President Dwight Eisenhower. To sum up, complimentary laws ensured the *self-reinforcement* of tolerant secularism and increased the public visibility of religion.

Since the 1950s, America's tolerant secularism has also been cemented through a number of institutional *spill-overs*. As aforementioned in the opening vignette of this thesis, the Supreme Court's decision in *Zorach v. Clauson* (1952) backed the creation of a "released time" program for pupils whose parents desired them to receive religious education during class hours away from public schools. This development, according to Kuru (2009), is indicative of the Federal Government's respect for "people's spirituel needs" (p. 94). Another notable instance was the case of *Goldman v. Weinberger* (1986). The Supreme Court ruled that the Air Force had the right to prohibit an officer from wearing religious headdress — in this case, a kippah. Nonetheless, Congress passed a bill in 1987, granting the members of the armed forces the right to wear religious garments. This constitutes not only the diffusion of tolerant secularism into a new setting through a path-confirming legislation, but also an example of its *negative externalities* characteristic that emboldens dedicated individuals to act like a veto player and pose legal restraints on those who do not adhere to the fundamental norms of the institution. Had tolerant secularism in the United States not been a *self-reinforcing* institution, we would not have expected it to be inserted into different environments with time, in spite of the ongoing challenges.

Among the myriad instances of institutional *self-reinforcement*, two additional Supreme Court rulings deserve to be highlighted. The first one is *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963), in which the Court held that Adell Sherbert, an employee of a private textile firm, had the legal right to opt out of work on her Sabbath, without forfeiting her unemployment benefits. This judgement can be treated as an expansion of religious freedom into the private business sector. In parallel, it is a re-assertion of the Federal Government's high tolerance for individuals' divinely inspired observances (Flowers, 2005; Reid, 2002). The second occurring is *Wisconsin*

v. Yoder (1972), in which the Court ruled that the parents of three Amish schoolchildren, who had dropped out of their public high school, had a legitimate religious reasoning for requesting their kids to "be exempt from school attendance beyond the eight-grade because their free exercise outweighed the [S]tate's interests in compelling student attendance" (Kuru, 2009, p. 47). This is equally a pivotal decision demonstrating that people's religious liberties are of greater importance than the Federal Government's emphasis on compulsory education, hence bolstering America's tolerantly secularist heritage. These important path-affirming rulings show again how the institutional configuration of state–religion relations in the United States has been undergoing a process of *self-reinforcement* since 1791.

Last but not least, it is crucial to draw attention to the American leadership's attitude toward the fast-growing Muslim population of the country. Although the United States declared a global war on "Islamic terrorism" in the wake of September 11 attacks and has been militarily engaged on the ground against armed groups such as the *Al-Qaeda*, *ISIS*, and *Taliban*, the Federal Government's interactions with the country's Muslim minority have been remarkably warm. Kuru (2012) underscores that "[s]tarting with Bill Clinton, [United States] presidents have made regular gestures toward Muslims at home and abroad, such as celebrating Muslim holidays with public messages and organizing official *iftaar* dinners in the White House during the month of Ramadan" (p. 248). Similarly, the country's "Postal Service has issued a stamp with Arabic calligraphy to commemorate Islamic holidays" (Kuru, 2012, p. 248). Moreover, Muslims of the United States have not been adversely affected from a headscarf ban, unlike their fellow Muslims in France or Turkey (Moore, 2007). These examples provide ample evidence of how America's tolerant secularism is relatively inclusive of the Muslim population compared to France, which operates under a repressively secularist institutional configuration.

In this respect, 2009 was an impactful year. President Barrack Obama stressed America's commitment to safeguarding Muslims' religious liberties through two speeches delivered in Ankara, Turkey and Cairo, Egypt. Remarking that "[t]he United States is not and will never be at war with Islam," he added: "[F]reedom in America is indivisible from the freedom to practice one's religion" (quoted in Kuru, 2012, p. 249). Obama substantiated this claim by recalling that "there is a mosque in every state of our [U]nion, and over 1,200 mosques within our borders" (quoted in Kuru, 2012, p. 249). In addition, he underlined that the Federal Government "has gone to court to protect the right of women and girls to wear the hijab, and to punish those who would deny it" (quoted in Kuru, 2012, p. 249). In essence, Obama articulated that "Islam is part of America" (quoted in Kuru, 2012, p. 249) and espoused a stance that is path-confirming of tolerant secularism, thereby contributing to its *self-reinforcement*.

Moreover, despite his recurrent controversial statements and policies regarding "radical Islamic terrorism," President Donald Trump also proved to be somewhat accommodating toward America's Muslim inhabitants. In 2018 and 2019, he hosted *iftaar* dinners at the White House to commemorate the Muslim holy month of *Ramadan* (Günerigök, 2019; Ruiz & Sanchez, 2018). At the beginning of the 2018 dinner, Trump even expressed words of praise about Islam: "In gathering together this evening, we honor a sacred tradition of one of world's great religions" (NBC Universal, 2018). Considering Trump's hardline Republican label, these were rather unexpected occurrences. Therefore, these bits of evidence prove that tolerant secularism in the United States is so deeply ingrained that it transcends the partisan divide.

To conclude this chapter, America's tolerant secularism was the product of a political compromise reached by the various contending liberal and conservative groups between 1776 and 1791, which I qualify as a *critical juncture*. This tolerantly secularist legacy has been following a *path-dependent* journey, during which it has been effectively nurtured by institutional diffusions, supplementary legislations, and influential court verdicts. The following chapter of this thesis will examine the practice of repressive secularism in France, through the lenses of my theory.

Chapter 6: Repressive Secularism in France

2004 was a polemical year in France, since over 75 pupils were expelled from public schools under the banner of *laïcité* (Chérifi, 2005). The 13-year-old teenager, Khouloude, was one of the veiled Muslim girls who were evicted from their schools, because they, as then-Minister of Education François Fillon put it, refused "to bare their heads despite warnings from school officials" (quoted in Anonymous, 2004). Apart from these girls, three Sikh boys, who resisted to take off their turbans, were equally forced out of their school in a Parisian suburb. Reiterating the impartiality of the French State in the matters of religion, Fillon stressed that "the law applies to everybody" (quoted in Anonymous, 2004). Although the stance espoused by the Government was justified on the basis of absolute indifference for equality and neutrality (Stasi, 2003), it implied some sort of blindness "to religious and cultural differences in schools" (Arthur, 2017, p. 408). This prohibition imposed on schoolchildren is, according to Jeremy Gunn (2004), a reflection of the French *laïcité*'s "suspicion (or even hostility) toward religion" (p. 421). Why does France exercise a form of secularism that displays intolerance toward religious freedom and its expression? This chapter will argue that France's repressive secularism is the product of anti-clerical Republicans' political victory over conservative Catholics during the country's process of secular state-building — the first half of the Third Republic. The discussion will also illuminate the continuation and strengthening of this repressively secularist tradition over the years. The subsequent sections will first provide an account of liberals' supremacy over conservatives, then address the imposition of repressive secularism, which was realized through a series of anti-clerical laws, and finally cover its entrenchment over time, thanks to *self-reinforcement* mechanisms of *path dependence*.

6.1. Liberals' Political Victory Over Conservatives

Laïcité constitutes a founding principle of the French Republic, which is purportedly claimed to possess a "unifying" force that "bring[s] citizens together" (Gunn, 2004, p. 422). However, historical records disclose that the French secularism emerged during a period of glaring ideological and political confrontation. Following the collapse of the Second French Empire during the French-Prussian War, Emperor Napoléon III was dethroned, and the Third Republic was proclaimed. Five years later, with the adoption of the *1875 Constitutional Laws* that defined the composition of the newly established form of government, a process of "*laïc* institutionalism" (Akan, 2017, p. 125) was instigated by the liberal figures of the country. This process galvanized a fierce political struggle over the prospective status of monarchy and the country's state–religion regime between two camps that were engaged in a heated animosity.

Readers may find it preposterous that I begin my analysis with the Third Republic and not the French Revolution. It is noteworthy that in the aftermath of the Revolution, there were attempts to secularize both French society and politics. Yet, these efforts were unsuccessful due to the high regime instability following the 1789 events. Indeed, this is a phenomenon that Micheal Bernhard (2015) names *chronic instability*. Briefly, he suggests that "[i]nstead of institutional lock-in," *critical junctures* may occasionally "lead to periods of instability, in which a series of regimes replace each other in rapid succession" (Bernhard, 2015, p. 976). This *chronic instability*, asserts Bernhard (2015), inhibits institutional configurations from

becoming entrenched in *path-dependent* trajectories, thus leading to their rapid demise. In fact, France witnessed an excessive number of regime turnover between 1789 and 1870: (1) First Republic, (2) National Convention, (3) Directory, (4) Consulate, (5) First Empire, (6) Bourbon Restauration, (7) July Monarchy, (8) Second Republic, and (9) Second Empire (Hamon & Troper, 2020). Therefore, the institutional norms of secularism, which were developed under one regime, were often abolished under another, and political secularism was never fully crystallized. For this reason, I prefer to focus on the Third Republic as the beginning point of my investigation, during which *laïcité* was materialized.

Kuru (2009) points out that following the breakdown of the Second Empire, "[o]ne France was the inheritor of the 1789 Revolution's values. It was republican, anti-clerical, and secularist" (p. 143). This liberal bloc was chiefly represented by various left-wing political parties, influential civic associations, and religious minorities (Nord, 1995). Conversely, "[t]he other France was tied to the *ancien régime*. It was monarchist and clerical, in the sense of supporting [the] restoration of monarchy and preservation of the Catholic establishment" (Kuru, 2009, p. 143). This conservative side was principally made up of the Catholic Church, conservative politicians from right-wing parties supportive of monarchy, and traditionalist newspapers endorsing them (Ducomte, 2001; Wieviorka, 1995).

In light of this ideological dispute, which induced uncertainty over France's prospective state–religion regime and a window of opportunity for the competing sides, the first half of the Third Republic can be characterized as a *critical juncture*. Had this period not been a *critical juncture*, we would not have observed a bitter contestation between liberals and conservatives, nor would we have anticipated seeing political agency to play such a decisive role in determining the outcome of this conflict. Put differently, if the antecedent conditions had predetermined France's "*laïc* institutionalism," we would have witnessed little discussion and struggle for secularism to be implemented. Political actors would have believed that Napoléon III's Catholic Church-backed imperial regime had driven the country into a major military defeat against Prussia, and there would have been a widespread consensus to jettison a form of government associated with religion. Yet, historical evidence shows that the first half of the Third Republic was marked by an intense political dispute over the country's stance on the matter of religion. I argue that liberals' success in forming a powerful coalition, and conservatives' failure to do so accounts for the former's victory and thereby the imposition of repressive secularism.

Although liberal actors involved in the political arena held "diverse party affiliations and personal beliefs" (Kuru, 2009, 145), it was undoubtedly their common strong attachment to anti-clericalism that functioned as the unifying force in their quest to eliminate the conservative opposition, which was in favor of a Catholic state ruled under monarchy (Kalyvas, 1996; Nicolet, 1982). In 1877, Republican leader Léon Gambetta declared the alliance of liberals and their shared stand against conservatives with his celebrated motto: "*Le cléricalisme, voilà l'ennemi !*" (the clericalism, here is the enemy!) (quoted in Ozouf, 1982, p. 50). By 1879, the coalition of anti-clerical Republicans began to dominate both houses of the French Parliament. This enabled them to control the political agenda and adopt numerous "secularizing" legislations (Kuru, 2008a; 2009). Simply put, Gambetta's strategy to deploy antagonistic sentiments against the Catholic Church, as a tool of unifying power, proves how

instrumental political agency was in building the alliance of anti-clerical Republicans and is thus consistent with my theoretical framework.

Deeply alarmed by the growing union of liberals, on the grounds of anti-clericalism, and its rising political clout, the conservative front attempted to employ a new strategy to discourage the former from implementing its anti-Catholic policies. As such, conservative politicians launched a national petition campaign "against certain secularization laws" (Kuru, 2009, p. 143). In spite of 1,775,000 signatures collected, they failed to overturn these bills passed by the majority liberal alliance (Kalyvas, 1996). Moreover, conservatives also leaned on the print media. Certain traditionalist newspapers overtly incited citizens to popular resistance against the anti-clerical agenda of liberals (Ozouf, 1982). As Kuru (2009) reports, however, this was a complete failure, since the pro-Catholic press "had a negligible political impact" (p. 143).

Furthermore, the conservative camp was ineffective on the political stage due to the disunity between different right-wing parties and pro-Catholic civic associations that suffered from internal disputes (Bosworth, 1962). Oddly, the Catholic Church did not provide the necessary cohesive leadership and instead preferred to remain politically apathetic on the assumption that the Republican form of government would be short-lived (Bosworth, 1962). As Kalyvas (1996) emphasizes, this perception was derived primarily from historical experience; France had never managed to consolidate Republicanism in the past, which "was viewed as a regime [...] incompatible with large countries" (p. 27). Consequently, the Church was mostly preoccupied with seeking a window of opportunity to restore a new religious monarchy, "instead of supporting conservative politicians to compete with the secularists in the elections" (Kuru, 2009, p. 144). In short, the misjudgments of the Church and right-wing parties, as well as the divergencies between them, precluded the birth of a conservative coalition that could have been capable of seriously countering the liberal front. In line with my theoretical approach, political agency once again stands out as the most crucial factor in explaining the inability of conservatives to coalesce.

The absence of unification and a fully-fledged program within the conservative side resulted in colossal repercussions on the political outlook. Right-wing parties incurred repetitive electoral defeats (Kalyvas, 1996). William Bosworth (1962) observes that the popular votes cast for conservative politicians declined from 3.4 million in 1889 to 1.3 million in 1893. A sizeable number of peasants, for instance, were against the conservative front and expressed their support to liberals, as they feared that a potential return to *ancien régime* could once again bring about a feudal hierarchy in the country (Gould, 1999; Weber, 1976). Realizing the political weakness of the conservative side and its own expanding resources stemming from the formation of a dominating coalition in the legislature, the liberal camp was able to introduce a set of anti-clerical laws and reforms in its pursuit to build a secular state that would quash the influence of the Catholic Church.

6.2. Establishment of Repressive Secularism

Following the creation of the adequate political power through a majority coalition, liberals eliminated conservatives and thus managed to impose repressive secularism through a number of anti-clerical legislations. With the *coup de grâce* of 1905 law, *laïcité* was institutionalized as a "cornerstone" of the French Republic.

Once the liberal coalition was formed in the late-1870s, France embarked upon a phase of substantial transformation in accordance with the secular principles of the Republican virtue. The early reforms targeted the school system with the clear aspiration "to shape the worldviews of future generations" (Kuru, 2009, p. 145). At the time, there was a fierce competition between public and Catholic schools that "were teaching two opposite value systems" (Kuru, 2009, p. 145), hence giving rise to the emergence of "*deux jeunesses*" (two youths), as claimed by Republican Prime Minister René Waldeck-Rousseau (quoted in Anderson, 1970, p. 54). Considering that one-third of pupils were enrolled in Catholic schools (Ozouf, 1982), liberals were fearful of the prospect that these institutions would bestow upon a considerable number of schoolchildren the "irrationalist" Christian notions, such as Revelation, contradicting the enlightened Republican ideals and, most importantly, sympathy for the restoration of *ancien régime* (Larkin, 1974).

Jules Ferry, who served as Prime Minister and Minister of Education in the 1880s, was the architect of several education reforms (Akan, 2017). His famous slogan was "free, obligatory, and secular" schooling for both boys and girls (quoted in Kuru, 2009, p. 146). With an important law enacted on 16 June 1881, primary education became free in public schools throughout the country. The rationale behind this policy was to encourage parents to choose state schools over Catholic ones for their children. In the following year, the Law of 28 March 1882 did not only introduce compulsory schooling for all pupils between the ages of six and thirteen, but also secularized the primary education system. This landmark piece of legislation excluded religious instruction from the public-school curriculum; instead, it offered a day off during the week for those who wished to attend religious courses outside school — for example, in churches (Cabanel, 2005). Additionally, upon the adoption of a bill on 30 October 1886, imposing the secularization of public-school personnel, members of the clergy were no longer permitted to teach in public schools. Jean-Paul Burdy (1995) notes that around fifteen thousand clerical teachers were directly affected by this decision. With that final reform, the "*laïc* institutionalism" on the matter of public education was completed (Debré, 2004; Durand-Prinborgne, 2004; Laout, 1998).

In conjunction with these educational reforms, the union of liberals "undertook certain policies to weaken religion's role in other public institutions" (Kuru, 2009, p. 147). The Law of 27 July 1884, prepared by Republican Senator Alfred Naquet, for instance, re-established divorce in the French Civil Code and thereby diminished the authority of the Catholic Church in civic matters. In the same vein, a bill passed on 14 August 1884 abolished the long-standing custom of reciting Catholic prayers at the beginning of each parliamentary session. The purpose of this act was to signal that politics was a secular domain, liberated from the "perilous" sway of supernatural norms (Durand-Prinborgne, 2004). Likewise, hospitals underwent a comparable process of secularization, following the promulgation of the Law of 11 February 1885 (Kuru, 2009). Finally, crucifixes and religious emblems, such as portraits of Jesus or Virgin Mary, were withdrawn from all courtrooms, with a decree issued by the Ministry of Justice, in order to symbolize the independence of the judiciary from the Church (Kuru, 2009). Through these reforms, the liberal camp was able to impose a widespread secularization across the country and a "*laïc* institutionalism" in the public sphere.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the ruling alliance of liberals consolidated its power by a repeated electoral victory and carried on with the "secularizing" reforms. Unlike

the bills adopted in the 1880s and 1890s, however, the laws, under the government of Republican Prime Minister Emile Combes, targeted explicitly the Catholic Church. The Law of Associations, enacted on 1 July 1901, "required all religious associations to have state authorization" (Kuru, 2009, p. 148). A further piece of legislation, passed on 7 July 1904, declared that all religious communities were banned from providing any kind of education. This had disastrous effects: approximately ten thousand Catholic schools were shut down, and a total of thirty thousand teachers, affiliated with Catholic orders, were no longer permitted to teach, even in private institutions (Cabanel & Durant, 2005; Chanet, 2004; Lalouette, 2004).

The remaining months of 1904 and the whole of 1905 were marked by a severe political clash over the determination of the country's prospective church–state relations. At first, despite their strong union against the conservative opposition, liberals suffered from internal disagreements as to the future status of the Catholic Church (Akan, 2017; Kuru, 2009). There were indeed three alternatives considered on the table: (1) radicals, led by Maurice Allard, favored an anti-religious regime; (2) moderates, headed by Combes, pushed for a revised system of *concordat*, whereby the Catholic Church would be subject to the absolute authority of the State; and (3) socialists, under the leadership of Aristide Briand and Jean Jaurès, advocated a strict church–state separation (Cabanel, 2004; Kuru, 2009; Larkin, 1974). On 4 March 1905, Briand submitted a report to the Parliament, in which he wrote: "It is not for satisfying political grudges, or for hate of Catholicism, that we demand the complete separation of churches and state, but in order to institute the only regime where peace can be established between followers of diverse beliefs" (quoted in Akan, 2017, p. 129). With his convincing rhetoric, Briand managed to pull together liberal parliamentarians one more time and impose on them the state–religion regime preferred by his party, in order to finalize the "*laïc* institutionalism" initiated three decades ago.

Conservatives were opposed to Briand's proposal. Albert de Mun, the leader of the Popular Liberal Action — a right-wing political party supportive of *ancien régime* — was particularly critical of an institutional church–state separation, for the sake of impartiality toward diverse faiths: "No! I do not believe at all in the neutral state in the matters of religion, that is to say, apparently, the state does not recognize any religious *culte*" (quoted in Akan, 2017, p. 129). Therefore, he urged his conservative colleagues to vote against the separation law. Notwithstanding the conservative opposition, the bill was approved by clear majorities in both chambers of the Parliament and thereafter promulgated by President Émile Loubet as a law on 9 December 1905. In line with the expectations derived from my theoretical framework, liberals' victory was possible thanks to their decision-making power flowing from a strategic alliance in the legislature; whereas conservatives' defeat was due to their failure to form a cohesive alliance, which could have furnished them with the adequate political strength to efficiently challenge the former.

The 1905 Law on the Separation of Church and State, which unilaterally abolished the *concordat* regime, was based on the ideology of repressive secularism. Under Article II of this law, the funding of all kinds of divinely inspired beliefs by the government was strictly proscribed: "The Republic neither recognizes, nor salaries, nor subsidizes any *culte.*" With this legislation, "churches and other types of religious [...] buildings became public property" (Kuru, 2009, p. 151). Moreover, the law required all religious associations, groups, institutions, or organizations to be registered by the state as *associations cultuelles* ("religious/worship"

associations) to ensure and monitor their compliance with government regulations. Lastly, it is noteworthy that the law was also intended to prohibit religious clothing and symbols in civil service, with the aim of confining the "sacred" way of life exclusively to the private sphere of individuals. In short, as victors of this aggressive enmity that lasted 35 years, liberals were able to replace the "pervasive" dominance of Catholicism by their repressively secularist ideology, which is still predominant in France.

6.3. Entrenchment of Repressive Secularism

An examination of previous scholarship, press articles, and official state documents reveals that the French repressive secularism has not only persisted, but gained greater strength 1905, through institutional *self-reinforcement.*

One year after the adoption of the 1905 law, legislative elections were held in France. With these elections, left-wing political parties increased their parliamentary representation by obtaining sixty additional seats (Kuru, 2009), which signified that the majority of the French electorate approved the reforms introduced by the government, under the motive of *laïcité* (Guerlac, 1908; Winock, 2004). The liberal coalition obtained 357 of the seats; while conservative parties won only 96. Such a result was, of course, "a major disappointment for conservative Catholics" (Kuru, 2009, p. 152), since they were politically powerless to reverse the secularist laws that had been enacted by liberals in the preceding decades.

In theoretical terms, these results can be linked to the *negative externalities* nature of *laïcité*, which was a corollary of its *path dependence*. To be precise, the French electorate made it politically impossible for conservatives to repeal the anti-clerical laws, which had been previously introduced by the majority liberal coalition, and restore a Catholic monarchy. The election results offer an important piece of evidence as to the 1906 electorate's commitment to preserving France's secular and Republican set-up. Arguably, voters were conscious that a conservative parliamentary majority could have resulted in the establishment of a new monarchical regime in close collaboration with the Catholic Church. Thus, they were eager to impede such a shift and cast their votes for liberals. Had France's Republican secularism not been embraced by the general public, the electorate would not have continued to support liberals. However, historical records prove this wrong and bolster the assumptions of my theoretical framework.

Although the political dispute lingered between the two opposing camps following the 1906 legislative elections, liberals carried on with their anti-clerical agenda throughout the remainder of the Third Republic. For example, amid suspicions of illicit activities in Catholic churches and clandestine teaching in schools associated with them, two additional bills were adopted in 1907 and 1908, rendering the state "responsible for the upkeep of existing religious edifices" (Barras, 2017, pp. 143-144) and promising public funding to religious schools, provided that they followed the national curriculum and did not discriminate among the pupils that they admitted (Bowen, 2015). These laws sought to keep the Catholic Church, which "still nurtured dreams of another Bourbon Restoration" (Scott, 2007, p. 99), under state control, as well as to shield the new generation from the anti-Republican and conservative precepts of religion. These complimentary legislations can be viewed as institutional *spill-overs*, as the breadth of *laïcité* was expanded into new settings. Anti-clerical Republicans were able to solidify the State's grasp on religion in a multitude of contexts and further diminish the

damaged clout of the Catholic Church. These new laws rendered France's repressive secularism more robust and difficult to alter.

Following the Nazi Germany's invasion of France in 1940, the south of the country self-proclaimed itself the Vichy Republic under the leadership of Marshal Philippe Pétain. Vichy was a pro-Catholic regime that aspired "to eliminate Communism, Jews, Freemasons, and other rivals to Catholicism" (Warner, 2000, p. 69). Although Pétain's government did not formally reinstate Catholicism, it increased state funding for Catholic schools, restored crucifixes in public buildings — such as city halls, courthouses, or schools — and allowed religious expression in civil service (Kuru, 2009).

In the wake of Germany's defeat in 1944, however, the Vichy regime collapsed, and General Charles De Gaulle's liberation government seized power. Once World War II was over, and the Fourth Republic was declared, public opinion in the country interpreted the Catholic Church's endorsement of the Vichy regime, as "a fatal mistake that damaged its credibility" (Kuru, 2009, p. 154). Accordingly, De Gaulle's government forced more than thirty bishops to resign because of their collaboration with Pétain's Vichy Republic (Warner, 2000). Moreover, despite being a devout Catholic, De Gaulle took the initiative to restore the *laïques* values of the country. The political leadership of the time was presumably aware of the general public's vocal anti-Church sentiment and adherence to *laïcité*.

The Vichy period and post-World War II political settlement could have been a potential *critical juncture*. However, because of Vichy and the events during the War, a return to a different type of secularism was not an option. Yet, it is also plausible that the 40-year history of repressive secularism influenced decision-makers in their choices. In this light, a return to the pre-Vichy period was perhaps regarded as the most rational option, since the ruling elites feared a potential popular resistance, in case they had maintained the pro-Catholic institutional arrangement established under Pétain's command. Unfortunately, the accessible historical records do not allow me to explore this in more depth.

Following the reinstatement of the *laïques* values in the mid-1940s, the Catholic Church and conservative politicians finally recognized that the restoration of *ancien régime* was no longer a possibility, especially considering the Republican supremacy in the country (Kuru, 2009; Warner, 2000). Consequently, they abandoned their opposition to Republicanism and accepted the church–state separation (Gauchet, 1998). This shift in the behavior of the conservative political figures is in line with the expectations of my theory. The *path dependence* incentivized conservatives to acquiesce to the secular and Republican character of the State, in order to avoid a potential marginalization in the political spectrum. Even the Popular Republican Movement — a center-right political party founded on the grounds of Christian democracy that contained a number of priests — deemed it more realistic not to contest the church–state division (Callot, 1978). Yet, conservative political actors were still in disagreement with the repressive nature of the French secularism and advocated for a more flexible version of *laïcité*. In the ensuing decades, therefore, "[t]he old conflict between the secularist [R]epublicans and anti-secular Catholic monarchists turned into a struggle between leftists, who defended [repressive] secularist policies to exclude religion from the public sphere, and the rightist, who resisted these policies and asked for more public visibility of religion" (Kuru, 2009, p. 155).

Between the 1950s and late-1970s, there were two main areas of disagreement between left-wing and right-wing parties: (1) the public funding of private religious schools and (2) the visibility of religion in the public sphere. Conservatives were in favor of higher levels of government funding for private religious schools and expressed their support for the re-installation of crucifixes or other forms of religious emblems in public buildings. With a series of laws passed in 1951, 1959, and 1977, conservatives did not only reinforce the state financing of private religious schools, but also secured a certain degree of freedom for optional religious instruction, on the condition that these institutions agreed to sign a specific legal contract with the government (Healey, 1968; Kuru, 2009).

It bears underlining that owing to these laws brought in by right-wing parliamentarians, *laïcité* became less repressive compared to its previous version. These fluctuations, however, should not be treated as an infringement of *laïcité*; rather, they merely typify adjustments to the social circumstances of the time. During this particular period, elite families from upper economic classes were sending their children to private religious schools for a more privileged education. Thus, right-wing legislators pushed for these changes so as to gain greater political popularity in the eyes of these families.

Admittedly, left-wing lawmakers were ideologically averse to such changes. Nonetheless, they tolerated these relaxations for three important reasons: (1) a *retour* (return) to *ancien régime* was no longer possible, as it was backed by no mainstream political party, (2) the Catholic Church was politically inactive, and (3) despite the introduction of relative accommodation for students, who wished to receive religious instruction, the State was still in a position to control these private institutions financially and oversee their teaching activities. By contrast, there occurred no change with respect to the status of religious symbols in public space. This was a non-negotiable issue for liberals who desired the maintain the *laïc* character of the country. From their viewpoint, the juxtaposition of Republican and religious symbols in public buildings was foolish, since Catholicism had been the nemesis of Republicanism until the near past (Gunn, 2004; Poulat, 1987; 2003). In other words, conservatives were constrained by liberals, who were keen to perpetuate the country's repressively secularist tradition.

In the first half of the 1980s, the Socialist Party, which was largely composed of avowed promoters of repressive secularism, was the dominant political entity in France. The party members were seriously troubled by the growing number of pupils attending private religious schools (Burdy & Marcou, 1995). Correspondingly, the public funding allocated to these institutions became a prominent theme in parliamentary debates and discussions of the decade (Beattie, 2000; Kelly, 2000). In 1984, Socialist Minister of Education Alain Savary "initiated a project of unified education by cutting the funding of private schools" (Kuru, 2009, p. 156). The basic slogan of this campaign was: "Public money to public schools; private money to private schools" (quoted in Kuru, 2009, p. 156). This was a strategic thrust aimed at marginalizing religious schools and forcing them to request additional fees from the parents of their students, in order to be able to continue their teaching activities. Put differently, this initiative was viewed as a weapon to decrease the enrolment rates in these institutions, on the grounds of financial considerations.

Socialists were convinced that a larger number of pupils receiving their mandatory education from state schools would further strengthen Republicanism and *laïcité*. However, the public opinion was heavily critical of Savary's project. With the support of right-wing

parties, nearly two million people demonstrated against the Socialist government in Versailles and Paris (Kuru, 2009). Following these mass protests, Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy had to resign, and President François Mitterrand reluctantly announced the repeal of the Savary Bill (Coq, 2004; Dereymez, 1995). Ultimately, the *status quo* was preserved, and the degree of repressive secularism remained unchanged as result of social circumstances. It is important to recognize that although conservatives resisted this change attempt by liberals to expand repressive secularism, the former's preferences had already come a long way in shifting from initially supporting a religious state to accepting the country's secular nature.

In the 1990s, the balance of power was reversed to the advantage of conservatives. Right-wing parties held the majority of seats in both chambers of the legislature and were thereby capable of swaying the policy-making process. In 1993, Minister of Education François Bayrou, from the Union for French Democracy, launched a project that sought to increase the public funding granted to private religious schools, as well as to accord them greater freedom regarding optional religious instruction and even the authorization for worship times during teaching hours (Kuru, 2009). Similar to what happened in the preceding decade, however, nearly a million people protested against this proposal in Paris with the encouragement of the Socialist Party (Brechon, 1995).

Furthermore, the Constitutional Council ruled the Bayrou Bill unconstitutional by invoking the Preamble of the 1946 Constitution: "The provision of free, public, and secular education at all levels is a duty of the State." Hence, the government was compelled to scrap its controversial project (Laot, 1998; Safran, 2003). In a nutshell, popular backlash and a pivotal court verdict, which functioned as an institutional veto, not only thwarted conservatives from reshaping *laïcité*, but also ensured its *self-reinforcement* and foreclosed the prospects for a revised form of education that better accommodates pious schoolchildren. Besides, the Council's decision set precedents for the future. Had France's repressive secularism not been a *path-dependent* institution, we would not have expected forces outside the political arena to withstand conservatives by constraining them.

In 1989, the principal of a high school in a small town near Paris, forbade three Muslim girls from attending their classes, claiming that they disagreed to remove their headscarves while on campus — an act that he deemed to be in breach of *laïcité* (Tempest, 1989). This issue "gained national importance" (Kuru, 2009, p. 103) and has since then been at the heart of the debates on secularism. In an effort to resolve this dispute, Socialist Minister of Education Lionel Jospin "requested a formal opinion (*avis*) from the highest French administrative court, the *Conseil d'État* (Council of State), on the question whether schoolchildren can wear 'insignia' that identify their religious affiliation in public schools" (Gunn, 2004, pp. 454-455). Subsequently, the Council declared that "[t]he wearing of signs by students in which they wish to express their membership in a religion is not by itself incompatible with the principle of *laïcité*" (quoted in Gunn, 2004, p. 455). The opinion issued by the Council "cautioned, however, that students could be prevented from wearing religious attire if they attempted to propagandize others or to disturb school activities" (Gunn, 2004, p. 455).

With the swift growth of the Muslim population in France throughout the 1990s, such incidents began to occur on a frequent basis (Scott, 2005). This rose serious doubts regarding the integration of Muslims into the enlightened French values and way of life among the general public, alongside a sizeable number of politicians (Akan, 2017; Barras, 2017; Baubérot,

2004; Cady & Hurd, 2014; Gunn, 2004; Kuru, 2007; 2008a; 2009; Scott, 2005; 2007). These concerns, coupled with "[t]he rising public visibility of the Muslim minority" (Kuru, 2009, p. 157), were a powerful incentive for left- and right-wing parties to put an end to their aforementioned quarrels over private religious schools (Mathy, 2000). Accordingly, Islam began to be perceived as the new arch enemy of the Republic by both sides of the political spectrum. Eventually, this shared vision prompted "a coalition of two old enemies — secularist leftists and anti-immigrant conservative rightists" (Kuru, 2009, p. 107).

During the late-1990s and early-2000s, liberals and conservatives launched a phase of policy cooperation to draft a legislation that would impose a general ban on the wearing of headscarves in public schools. This is a valuable piece of information in support of my theoretical framework. In the face of France's rapidly changing demographic and social conditions, the *path-dependent* nature of *laïcité* guided political actors in their policy choices. For instance, conservatives, who were previously hostile to repressive secularism, had an incentive not only to preserve this institutional configuration, but also fortify it with a complimentary legislation.

However, a prohibition targeting exclusively the Islamic headscarf was not entirely compatible with *laïcité*, as it is a constitutional principle that not only guarantees the independence of the state from the influence of divinely inspired beliefs, but also ensures its "neutrality with regard to religion and non-religion" (Gunn, 2004, p. 426). Consequently, the Stasi Commission, created by President Jacques Chirac to exhaustively investigate the headscarf issue, recommended that the ban should equally include other forms of conspicuous religious insignia such as Jewish skullcaps, large crosses, and Sikh turbans (Stasi, 2003).

Once the Commission submitted its report to President Chirac on 17 December 2004, he expressed his support for a new law to proscribe religious expression in public schools. Shortly thereafter, a bill was prepared upon the recommendations of the Stasi Commission, which was adopted by a crushing majority in both the National Assembly and Senate within the first three months of 2004. On 15 March 2004, this legislation was signed into law by President Chirac and Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin. In sum, with the promulgation of this supplementary legislation, *laïcité* became more repressive as its entrenched intolerance toward religion intensified. Besides, France's repressive secularism has also transformed itself into a more robust institution, which became far more resistant to alteration.

The *self-reinforcement* of repressive secularism in France has, by no means, ceased since 2004. In 2011, for instance, President Nicolas Sarkozy's government enacted an additional law prohibiting the wearing of face-covering clothing in public spaces. Although this legislation was justified on the grounds of national security and public order, it actually outlawed the wearing of full-face covering Islamic veils such as burqa or niqãb, which are, in fact, alternative forms of religious expression.

Most recently, President Emmanuel Macron's government proposed a new bill to combat "radical Islam" and its "separatism" in November 2020 (Agence France-Press, 2020). In a public speech given in early December, Prime Minister Jean Castex justified the necessity of this law on the basis of the repetitive terrorist attacks committed by radical Islamist organizations (Fillon, 2020). According to government sources, France has suffered 34 serious terrorist incidents, since the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting that took place in January 2015. In the preceding months, the frequency of these attacks has escalated dramatically. On 16 October

2020, for example, Samuel Paty, a middle school teacher, was beheaded by a *jihadist* for having shown caricatures of Prophet Muhammad in classroom (Willsher, 2020).

Deeply worried about such horrific incidents, Macron and his ministers quickly drafted a bill that "aims to reinforce the legal tools available to the government to curtain Islamist radicalism from taking hold in the French society" (Momtaz, 2020). One of the key measures proposed in this bill is the extension of the rule, which prohibits civil servants from wearing ostentatious religious clothing, beyond the public sector. If enacted by the French Parliament, all private contractors of public services will equally be bound by this regulation (Momtaz, 2020). Put differently, the bill is designed to further hinder individuals' religious freedom and its expression by means of an institutional *spill-over*. It is thus possible to witness an escalation in the repression level of *laïcité* in the near future. Theoretically speaking, it can be argued that the *path-dependent* character of repressive secularism has influenced the current French leadership's response to terrorist attacks — which are exogenous developments.

These projected implications have given rise to a number of controversies, notably among Muslim citizens or residents of the country, who perceive the bill as a stigmatization against Islam. Yet, the French authorities stressed that "[i]t is in no way an action against a religion. It is not against Islam, it is against people who in the name of a wrong or reconstructed vision of a religion behave in a way contrary to the Republic" (quoted in Momtaz, 2020). Notwithstanding a strong opposition by the country's Muslim population, the National Assembly adopted this bill by a majority of 347 votes to 151, with 65 abstentions (Anonymous, 2021). The bill is expected to be reviewed by the Senate in the upcoming weeks.

To conclude this chapter, the French *laïcité*, which is a repressive model of secularism, was the fruit of liberals' political supremacy over conservatives during the first half of the Third Republic. The repressively secularist trend, which was established during this *critical juncture*, entered a *path-dependent* trajectory during which it has been successfully bolstered through institutional diffusions, complementary legislations, and impactful court orders. The following chapter of this thesis will explore the external validity of my theoretical framework through brief analyses of Senegal and Turkey.

Chapter 7: Secularism in Senegal & Pre-AKP Turkey

On 16 June 1995, Turkey was shaken by a scandal, when three veiled nursing students were denied access to the graduation ceremony of Sivas Cumhuriyet University. During the ceremony, they broke their way to the podium. However, an unveiled student immediately intervened to stop them. Following the ceremony, the University filed a lawsuit against these three students and announced that they would never be allowed to take the nursing oath (Anonymous, 2017). The University justified these measures by the constitutional principle of *laiklik* — the Turkish word for secularism — which was then interpreted as "the separation of religion and worldly affairs" (quoted in Kuru, 2008b, p. 103). This stand was applauded by the country's judiciary, military, and liberal political figures.

Similarly, Senegal witnessed a headscarf controversy on 1 May 2019, as the parents of eight veiled girls enrolled at a private Catholic school in Dakar were notified that their daughters must attend classes with their heads uncovered. The parents denounced the school's policy and warned that they were ready to take the necessary legal action, unless the former immediately rescinded its decision. Shortly thereafter, the Ministry of National Education declared that Senegal is a *laïque* and democratic Republic that respects different faiths and guarantees freedom of conscience, which includes the wearing of headscarves in schools (Soumaré, 2019). Therefore, these girls were permitted to return to the Catholic school with their headscarves.

What explains the markedly distinct practices of secularism across these two countries? Why did Turkey repress people's religious freedom and its expression, while Senegal displayed considerable tolerance in this regard? This chapter will test the plausibility of my theory beyond the United States and France, by applying it to two *shadow cases*. First, I will describe the establishment and entrenchment of tolerant secularism in Senegal. Afterwards, I will employ the identical approach to portray the case of repressive secularism in pre-AKP Turkey.[21]

7.1. Tolerant Secularism in Senegal

Despite the incorporation of *laïcité* into its Constitution, Senegal does not operate under a form of state–religion regime that is "clerically hostile" (Sow, 2014). In stark contrast, "religious tolerance is a national characteristic and norm" (Marshall, 2016) of the Senegalese State, which exercises a model of secularism akin to that of the United States.

Senegal upholds a tolerant outlook on the visibility of religion in judicial, political, and public realms. For instance, sessions of the National Assembly begin and end with prayers (Smith, 2013). Multiple cabinet-rank officials of the secular State attend religious ceremonies or festivals of all kinds (Stepan, 2013). Political figures and judges may even turn to religious leaders of Sufi brotherhoods or Catholic denominations for policy consultation, in order to ensure that the State does not hinder individuals' freedom of conscience (Buckley, 2016). Moreover, religious expression is authorized in the Senegalese public sphere. In fact, not only has the wearing of religious garments or symbols never been subject to debate, but the State also promotes freedom to live one's faith wholeheartedly, by providing devout citizens with

[21] On the reasoning of this periodization, see Footnote 2 and Chapter 3 (p. 23).

significant financial support in the event that they can go on pilgrimage (Stepan, 2013). Lastly, the Senegalese tolerant secularism can also be discerned in the country's educational *milieu*. Private religious schools are largely independent of the State's oversight (Smith, 2013). Besides, both Muslim and Christian pupils "in public schools may elect to receive formal religious education" (Buckley, 2016, p. 116). What lies at the origins of this tolerantly secularist trend in Senegal?

With the end of World War II, Senegal, which was one of France's colonial possessions in Africa, engaged in the struggle for independence that erupted around the globe. The period, beginning in 1950 and ending in 1960 with the proclamation of an independent Republic, was a *critical juncture* not only in the development of the post-colonial Senegalese State, but also in determining the country's state–religion relations. During this pivotal phase, uncertainty about the prospective state–religion regime pitted various liberal and conservative groups against each other. The liberal side consisted of French-inspired political elites, who endeavored to liberate the State from the influence of religion, and eminent figures of the Catholic minority, who strove to thwart the potential dominance of Islam (Stepan, 2012; 2013). The conservative camp, in turn, was the High Council of Religious Leaders, encompassing leading personalities of various Sufi brotherhoods, which either advocated for an Islamic state, in conformity with their respective customs, or aspired to the partial constitutional establishment of Islam (Buckley, 2016).

Among liberal figures, Blaise Diagne, Lamine Gùeye, and their followers were supportive of institutionalizing repressive secularism along the lines of the French *laïcité* (Buckley, 2016). As Mamadou Diouf (2013) states, these political actors essentially sought to establish "a rather rigid separation between the [S]tate and the *mosque*" (p. 16). Yet, the politically active leaders of the Catholic minority, who were initially sympathetic toward the idea of a secular government to prevent the emergence of Senegal as an Islam-centric country, were concerned that the French model of secularism could eventually "threaten their [community's] basic [religious] rights" (Buckley, 2016, p. 99).

Diagne and Gùeye, who were fervent admirers of France's Republican ethos, attempted to seduce the French-educated Catholic political elites into coalescing against the Sufi leaders, through a narrative that foregrounded Senegal's long-standing French heritage (Markovitz, 1969). However, these lengthy negotiations failed. Catholic actors, writes David Buckley (2016), were wary that the French *laïcité*'s "full-fledged anticlericalism [...] would drive religion from public life" (p. 97). Undoubtedly, Catholic figures were apprehensive that the formation of an alliance, with those who championed France's repressive secularism, could undercut the support that they received from their own community, which included a large number of pious individuals. As a result, liberals were unable to stand as a cohesive front defending one specific form of secularism.

Meanwhile, the conservative camp included the leaders of the "three major, somewhat competing, Sufi orders" (Stepan, 2012, p. 383). Members of these brotherhoods "were hardly religious moderates" (Buckley, 2015, p. 448). In fact, some of them had even previously declared *jihad* against the French colonial rule (Stepan, 2013). Buckley (2016) notes that the post-colonial independence period was a key moment of opportunity for these Muslim leaders "to bring Islamic doctrine into state law because the departure of colonial authorities would allow the Muslim majority to unite political and religious authority" (p. 93).

Notwithstanding their shared opposition to secularism and dedication to "maintain[ing] the dogmas of Islam in their true sense" (Villalón, 1995, p. 207), they were at odds over the prospective status of their respective brotherhoods. Especially, leaders of the *Tijaniyya*, the largest Sufi order, and the *Quadriyya*, the oldest one, found themselves in an intense rivalry to dominate the country's future path. Both claimed legitimacy to impose their own traditions onto the desired Islamic identity of Senegal (Villalón, 1995).

Conscious of this never-rending race, Cheikh Tidiane Sy found the Senegalese Solidarity Party to unite Muslim leaders against not only the proponents of repressive secularism, but also the "Catholic menace" (Coulon, 1981, p. 159). Although extensive bargaining took place within the High Council of Religious Leaders, Sy's efforts were ultimately in vain. Conservatives could not form a powerful coalition to render "their preference for an Islamic state" viable (Buckley, 2016, p. 95).

The internal discord among both liberals and conservatives, as well as the political dispute between these two fronts, were perceived by Léopold Sédar Senghor as an opportunity to play the intermediary role. Senghor was Catholic and belonged to the *Serer* ethnic group, while the majority of the Senegalese population was Muslim and *Wolof*. Simply put, he was "a double minority" (Smith, 2013, p. 157). Thus, his principal interest was to enshrine religious and ethnic tolerance in the post-colonial Senegalese polity (Vaillant, 2013).

Senghor simultaneously approached liberal political elites, Sufi clerics, and Catholic leaders to coax them into a political trade-off, with the goal of securing "the [S]tate's toleration for religious associations and religious communities' toleration for the autonomous functioning of the [S]tate" (Buckley, 2016, p. 99). Put differently, his political strategy focused on stimulating dissenting groups to reach an agreement — which could be "described as a 'bargain' that allows both secular and religious to flourish side by side" (Marshall, 2016). Consequently, Senghor's "skillful consolidation of support" (Buckley, 2016, p. 95), from these competing groups, created the possibility of a political compromise and eventually led to the institutionalization of *laïcité* in 1960, by means of several clauses present in the country's first post-independence Constitution.

Though, this political middle ground, notices Alfred Stepan (2012), resulted in a particular "interpretation of *laïcité*, with great emphasis on mutual respect between [S]tate secularists and society's religious activists" (p. 385) — which corresponds to my conceptualization of tolerant secularism. As the protagonist of this ideological accommodation, Senghor was elected the first President of Senegal.

Since 1960, there have been instances of institutional *self-reinforcement* concerning Senegal's tolerant secularism. The first remarkable development was the adoption of a new secular Family Code in 1972, "after a long and arduous codification process" (Camara & Seck, 2010, p. 878). Until then, [c]ustomary law regarding family relations [had] still predominated in much of the country" (Buckley, 2016, p. 104). Additionally, there were special courts for Muslims, reflecting that "the Muslim faith [was] the only religious tradition singled out for consideration and respect" (Camara & Seck, 2010, p. 877).

In an attempt to "unify the law, strengthen the secular nature of society, acknowledge individual rights, and insure the equality of all citizens" (Gellar, 2005, p. 117), President Senghor's government proposed a revised system of family law. Although senior figures from Sufi orders resisted Senghor's bid (Villalón, 1995), claiming "the anti-Muslim nature of the

[proposed] Family Code" (Smith, 2013, p. 161), the National Assembly enacted it. The new Code reaffirmed the secular character of the Senegalese Republic and guaranteed the State's equal stance *vis-à-vis* all confessions. In light of my theory, this occurrence can be treated as an institutional *spill-over*. In simple terms, the exercise of tolerant secularism diffused from the constitutional *echelon* into the realm of family law.

A second noteworthy example of institutional *self-reinforcement* surfaced in 2003, when public schools were granted legal permission to offer optional religious instruction (Stepan, 2012; 2013). Government instructions underlined that such provision was to be made available for both Muslim and Catholic pupils attending state schools (Buckley, 2016). This event epitomizes yet another *spill-over* of Senegal's tolerantly secularist legacy into the educational setting. Besides, it further demonstrates the State's "robust commitment to respect and harmony" in matters of religion (Marshall, 2016).

A final episode of institutional *self-reinforcement* to mention occurred during the presidency of Abdoulaye Wade. While in office from 2000 to 2012, "Wade showed excessive preference toward one religious group" (Stepan, 2012, p. 388). In a blow to the secular trait of the Senegalese Republic, he even "prostrated himself in deference before the Khalif General of the *Mourid* Sufi Brotherhood" (Stepan, 2012, p. 388). On top of this, Wade controversially ventured to work on "a draft constitution that contained no reference to the *laïque* nature of the [S]tate" (Buckley, 2015, p. 451). Furthermore, "[t]he favoritism culminated" when he issued a directive to his ministers, obliging them to "consult [the] *Mouride* leadership before forming state policy" (Buckley, 2015, p. 452).

These repetitive infringements of *laïcité* drew public criticism and prompted the emergence of a broad-based opposition movement against the President. As such, "hundreds of leaders of Senegalese civil and political society created an unprecedented *Assises Nationales* (National Conference) [...] to preserve Senegal's traditions of 'mutual respect and conviviality' that were threatened" (Stepan, 2012, p. 389). In addition, not only the secular political elites and esteemed personalities from the Catholic minority, but also distinguished figures from all Sufi orders, who had originally stood for a religious establishment, were invested in safeguarding the country's secular values and decried Wade's actions (Buckley, 2015). This embodies how actors develop adherence to the norms of *path-dependent* institutions over time.

Ultimately, Wade was forced to abandon his project of a new constitution and lost the 2012 elections to Mack Sally, who is an ardent defender of tolerant secularism. In a nutshell, despite "an environment that seemed ripe for the breakdown and replacement of *laïcité*, Wade's term in office was a period of secular evolution" (Buckely, 2016, p. 107). In the wake of this turmoil, Senegal's tolerant secularism grew in strength.

To recapitulate, this concise account of the Senegalese case lends weight to my argument. Despite variations on theoretically relevant variables, as outlined in Chapter 4, the origins and development of tolerant secularism in Senegal shares important similarities with the roots and evolution of tolerant secularism in the United States. More specifically, Senegal's tolerant secularism was the offspring of a political compromise brokered by various competing liberal and conservative groups in the 1950s, under the stewardship of Senghor, which constituted a *critical juncture*. Since then, this tolerantly secularist tradition has been repeatedly consolidated through diverse incidents such as institutional diffusions and complimentary legislations, as a result of its *path dependence*.

7.2. Repressive Secularism in Pre-AKP Turkey

Turkey's constitutional principle of *laiklik* was foisted by a small number of elites, who had modelled it on France's *laïcité* (Sevinç et al., 2017). Fundamentally, secularism was utilized as a weapon to uproot Islam from the legal, political, public, and social spheres (Lewis, 1961). Therefore, the doctrine of *laiklik* was operationalized as a repressive form of secularism, until the AKP leadership managed to redesign it during a *critical juncture* triggered by the *2001 Economic Crisis*.

Pre-AKP Turkey was dedicated to minimizing the public visibility of religion. For instance, the wearing of religious clothing and symbols was strictly prohibited not only in civil service, but also in all educational settings, including universities (Akyol, 2019; Göle, 1997; Gülalp, 2005; Kandiyoti, 2012; Köker, 2010). As for the status of religion in education, private religious institutions were outlawed; however, public *İmam Hatip* schools were created to train future preachers, who would become state employees (Toprak, 2005). Also, the course of *Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge* was compulsory in both public and private schools. This measure was directly related to the State's strong desire to control religion and engender wisdom around a precise pro-Sunni outlook of Islam (Davison, 2003). Previous research suggests that the overarching motive for mandatory religious instruction was to hinder extreme religious practices that could be potentially "conductive and harmful to national unity" (Cady & Hurd, 2014, p. 67). In short, prior to the AKP's ascendency, *laiklik* exhibited a restraining attitude towards individuals' religious freedom and its expression. What was the genesis of this repressively secularist leaning in Turkey?

Following a massive defeat in World War I, the Ottoman Empire collapsed, and its territories were partitioned by foreign powers. In response, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk launched a war of independence in 1919. On 23 April 1920, senior figures of this struggle for liberation established a parliament in Ankara, with the participation of representatives from diverse backgrounds, such as Turkish nationalists, pro-Ottoman personalities, and Islamists (Berkes, 1964; Çınar, 2005; Findley, 2010). Shortly thereafter, Atatürk, who had previously made his mark as a successful military leader, was handed the reins of the Turkish National Movement (Sevinç et al., 2017). With a final triumph against the Greek army in 1922, Turks were victorious. Immediately afterwards, Mustafa Kemal set in motion a process of nation-state construction. In this context, a crucial area of political contention was the state–religion regime of the future Turkish polity. Indeterminacy in this regard generated a *critical juncture* until a constitutional amendment in 1937 finalized the transformation of the Turkish Republic into a repressively secular country (Göle, 1997).

On the one hand, liberals, headed by Atatürk, viewed Islam as "a real impediment" (Mardin, 1971, p. 208) on the path to building a modern, Western-style nation-state. The majority of these liberal elites had been educated in Europe, or in a European fashion, and were thus inspired by the Enlightenment ideals. Most importantly, thanks to Mustafa Kemal's and his closest ally İsmet İnönü's long negotiations with various representatives to the Parliament, liberals managed to form a majority bloc and constituted the *de facto* ruling cadre of the country during the independence war (Frey, 1965).

On the other hand, there were pro-Islamic conservatives. Although these actors cooperated with the former camp in liberating the Turkish territories, they disagreed over the place of religion in the post-independence period. Unlike liberals' eagerness to modernize

Turkey through a rupture with Islam, conservatives supported a new political order maintaining the country's religious heritage (Demirel, 1995). Therefore, they became organized as an opposition group in the Assembly and sought to exert influence on the Turkish nation-state building process (Frey, 1965).

Once the Turkish National Movement defeated the occupying troops, liberal elites began to overtly express their intention to abolish the Sultanate. However, certain conservative minds, who advocated for "a constitutional monarchy under the Caliph, in conformity with old customs and traditions" (Köker, 2010, p. 26), contested the call to dethrone the Ottoman dynasty. Previous scholarship unveils that "religious deputies such as Salahaddin Bey and Ziya Hurşit Bey vocally opposed to the draft, others such as Hakkı Hami Bey and Hacı Mustafa Efendi attempted to block it over procedure" (Köker, 2010, p. 23). In contrast, other conservative figures held an alternative perspective. They were keen to retain Islam at the core of the new Turkish State, but rejected the continuation of the Ottoman rule (Zürcher, 2000). Despite extended conversations within the conservative front, the unification efforts came to naught. Consequently, the Parliament, owing to the presence of a politically dominant liberal coalition, abolished the Sultanate on 1 November 1922.

Subsequently, the Republic was proclaimed on 29 October 1923 and Atatürk "became its uncontested president until his death in 1938" (Akyol, 2019, p. 2). At the time, the country's political leadership was persuaded that "if Turkey was to become a modern and advanced nation, it would have to cede its Islamic tradition" (Yavuz, 2019, p. 56). Accordingly, a radical break with Islam was deemed vital for the reconstruction of Turkish society. From 1924 onwards, Turkey entered a phase of substantial secularization not only at the state level, but also in all aspects of social life. Some of the most significant institutional and legal reforms can be summarized as follows:

> "[T]he abolition of the Caliphate in 1924; the abolition of the Ministry of Pious Foundations, religious courts, and religious titles; the adoption of a secular civil code of law from Switzerland in 1926; and the declaration that the Turkish Republic was a 'secular state' by a constitutional amendment in 1937" (Göle, 1997, p. 47).

In tandem, several changes were imposed to eradicate Islam from education and daily life. Religious schools were banned, and the Ministry of Education was established in 1926 to ensure secular schooling in line with the Kemalist ideology (Toprak, 2005). The Islamic calendar was replaced with the Gregorian one, and the Arabic script was changed to the Latin alphabet (Akyol, 2019). Western time, weight, and length measurements were adopted (Kuru, 2009). The *fez* — an Ottoman headgear with a religious connotation — was outlawed, and the European hat became compulsory (Köker, 2010). Similarly, "the veil was banned for women who were government employees and discouraged for the rest" (Toprak, 2005, p. 31). In addition, "the weekly holiday was changed from Friday — the day of rest for Muslims around the world — to Sunday" (Toprak, 2005, p. 32).

Moreover, the Directorate of Religious Affairs was established with the aim of placing Islam under the State's control (Lord, 2018). This Directorate was tied to the Prime Minister's office and "its personnel serving in the mosques became paid employees of the [S]tate to be controlled, watched, and used to back up government decisions" (Toprak, 2005, pp. 31-32). The mission of this peculiar institution was to produce "knowledge about a particular

conception of Islam" (Gürbey, 2009, p. 375), in harmony with Kemalism. By aiming to manipulate people's perception of religion, liberal elites sought to inhibit any potential religious reaction or fanaticism that could imperil their secular system (Kandiyoti, 2012).

During this process of secular state-building, Atatürk's rule encountered numerous protests and riots organized by conservative factions of society that gained the support of Islamist political actors (Ceylan, 1991; Özbek, 1982). Yet, the ruling circle was capable of suppressing opposition movements by force, shutting down political parties that menaced the country's secular identity, executing or imprisoning eminent political figures from the conservative side and religious leaders, as well as crushing popular unrest (Kuru, 2009). In essence, Atatürk and his liberal-minded comrades were able to pursue their secularization agenda and institutionalize *laiklik*, which "was anti-religious, anti-Islamic, and radically secularist" (Davison, 2003, p. 341), because they possessed the necessary decision-making clout thanks to their strategic interactions that translated into a commanding coalition in the political arena. Furthermore, as the victorious cadre of the liberation war, they owned the coercive means through alliances with senior military officers, such as Marshal Fevzi Çakmak. As a result, Mustafa Kemal and his followers managed to impose repressive secularism, in a bottom-up and authoritarian manner, notwithstanding considerable opposition.

Following the 1937 constitutional amendment that officially converted Turkey into a secular Republic, the country's repressive secularism witnessed several episodes of institutional *self-reinforcement* until the AKP rule. From 1923 to 1946, Turkish politics functioned as a single-party system under the autocratic regime of the Republican People's Party (CHP), founded by Atatürk. In the competitive elections of 1950, however, the Democrat Party (DP) "came to power with an overwhelming majority of the votes" (Toprak, 2005, p. 33).

Under the leadership of President Celâl Bayar and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, the DP rule "advocated, and tried to implement, a more religion-friendly secularism" (Akyol, 2019, p. 4). Yet, "the relaxation of secularist policies [...] gave the military the excuse to stage a *coup d'état*" on 27 May 1960 (Gürbey, 2009, p. 318). This incident resulted not only in the closure of the DP, but also in the execution of Menderes and his two ministers. In addition, the coup plotters took substantive action to shield *laiklik* "by establishing a constitutional court and a new senate, strengthening the administrative higher court, and founding the National Security Council to empower the military as the guardians of secularism" (Yavuz, 2019, p. 66). In sum, this event typifies institutional *self-reinforcement*. It shows how the military, which was an institutional veto player in the Turkish system, started using the principle of repressive secularism to justify its actions, thus entrenching it further. Additionally, the establishment of the above-mentioned state bodies can be regarded as complimentary institution building that rendered the alternation of *laiklik* more difficult in the future.

In 1971, Turkey witnessed a similar military crackdown against conservative personalities. During the second half of the 1960s, the leader of the Justice Party (AP), Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, "represented the legacy of Menderes, in terms of having overwhelming popular support in elections and conducting accommodation policies toward religion" (Kuru, 2009, p. 227). Most notably, though, Necmettin Erbakan, a staunch proponent of political Islam, founded the National Order Party (MNP). The military viewed the presence of accommodationists and Islamists as a direct threat to the country's repressively secularist

virtues. Accordingly, Memduh Tağmaç, the Chief of the General Staff, issued a memorandum to the government on 12 March 1971. In the end, Demirel was forced to resign with his cabinet, and the MNP was shut down by the Constitutional Court. Moreover, new regulations came into force regarding *İmam Hatips*. For instance, their middle school division was closed, and the graduates of their high school section were denied the right to enter universities (Kuru, 2009). In short, this military intervention constitutes another example of institutional veto player effect, which prevented conservative political actors from jeopardizing Turkey's repressive secularism. By the same token, the introduction of new regulations can be understood as the *self-reinforcement* of *laiklik*, through its *spill-over* from the constitutional framework to the educational domain.

On 12 September 1980, Turkish politics was the victim of another military coup. Although the generals' intervention had no initial motive concerning *laiklik*, its aftermath led to the reaffirmation of the country's repressively secularist ethos. In 1982, the coup leader, Kenan Evren, brought in a new constitution and established the Council of Higher Education to oversee universities. By means of this institution, the military regime not only monitored academic activities to avert any potential threats to Turkey's Kemalist heritage, but also imposed a ban on the wearing of headscarves (Kuru, 2009). In theoretical terms, complimentary institution building, coupled with additional restrictive policies, once again ensured the *self-reinforcement* of *laiklik*.

Last but not least, it is crucial to highlight a fourth military intervention, which occurred in 1997. Erbakan, whose MNP was shut down in 1971, became Prime Minister in 1996. As a believer in political Islam, he attempted to soften Turkey's repressive secularism. However, his attitude, perceived as religious reactionism, provoked the military to stage a "post-modern coup" through the National Security Council (Akyol, 2019; Toprak, 2005; Gürbey, 2009). Subsequently, his "Welfare Party was closed by the Constitutional Court, and Erbakan was banned from political activity" (Toprak, 2005, p. 40). Furthermore, this incident prompted "the purge of bureaucrats suspected to be affiliated with Islamism and the closure of the *Qur'an* courses" (Kuru, 2009, p. 161).

Besides, Demirel, who had previously pushed for tolerant secularism during his premiership and had thus been forced to step down, was serving as President at the time and backed the generals' actions. In fact, he had completely reoriented himself to support repressive secularism in the 1990s, so as to assume the role of presidency, for which the military used to have the decisive voice. Demirel's eventual adherence to Turkey's *laik* principles is an excellent illustration of how former losers shift their stance and espouse the entrenched institutional arrangements.

In summary, this brief discussion of the Turkish case bolsters the plausibility of my theory. Similar to France, pre-AKP Turkey's repressive secularism emerged as a result of liberals' political victory over conservatives at the founding of the Republic, which was a *critical juncture*. In the ensuing decades, this repressively secularist tradition was solidified by a series of developments, such as institutional diffusions and supplementary institution building, owing to its *path-dependent* journey. The next and final chapter of this thesis will deliver the concluding remarks of my investigation and propose three potential avenues for future academic research.

Chapter 8: Concluding Remarks

This research project has attempted to answer the question of why countries vary in their type of secularism. For this purpose, I have relied upon a comparative–historical analysis and within-case *process tracing*. After having conceptualized tolerant and repressive forms of secularism, I have assessed the competing explanations from the literature and highlighted their limited explanatory power. Subsequently, I have constructed an innovative theory based on a parsimonious causal relationship. My investigation has been designed as a small-*N* qualitative study focusing primarily on understanding the strikingly divergent policies of the United States and France toward religion. Yet, I have also provided brief analyses of two *shadow cases*, Senegal and pre-AKP Turkey, in order to probe the plausibility of my argument on a broader range of secular countries. Notwithstanding markedly differing contexts, the origins and development of tolerant and repressive secularism in Senegal and Turkey have shown remarkable similarities to the American and French cases, respectively. In this concluding chapter, I will first summarize the observations of my thesis and then propose three potential avenues for further academic research.

8.1. Summary of Findings

This research project has illustrated that despite the enshrinement of secularism in their respective constitutions, the United States and France display substantial variation in their behavior regarding the matters of religion. On the one hand, the Federal Government in America exercises tolerant secularism, which promotes freedom *of* religion. On the other hand, the French State practices repressive secularism, which clings to freedom *from* religion.

My investigation has suggested that the emergence of either tolerant or repressive secularism stems from the outcome of the political contestation that occurred between liberals and conservatives during the periods of secular state-building in these two countries. In the United States, tolerant secularism was born out of a political compromise reached by the competing liberal and conservative entities, since no single group succeeded in eliminating the adversaries and thereby establishing its desired state–religion regime. In France, by contrast, liberals managed to defeat conservatives and were hence able to impose repressive secularism.

My study has shown that the fate of these disputes over the prospective state–religion relations in America and France was largely shaped by political agency and the success or failure of collation building. The political leverage, which enabled liberals to eliminate conservatives in the French case, was constructed through strategic interactions between key actors that resulted in the formation of a dominating coalition. Conversely, both liberals and conservatives' inability to overpower each other in the United States was due to the failure of coalition-building and tactical miscalculations.

From a theoretical perspective, my research project has documented how, instead of structural antecedent conditions, contingent micro-events and political agency during *critical junctures* can lead to the creation of *path-dependent* institutions, consistent with the predictions of historical institutionalism scholarship (Capoccia, 2015; 2016; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Fortwengel & Keller, 2020; Pierson, 2000; Prado & Trebilcock, 2009). In this light, my thesis has demonstrated that the type of secularism, established in the American and French periods of secular

state-building, embarked upon *path-dependent* trajectories, during which they have been entrenched through institutional *self-reinforcement* owing to *spill-over effects*, complimentary institution building, critical court rulings, and changes in the preferences of political actors. In fact, this is the principal reason why tolerant secularism in the United States and repressive secularism in France have persisted over time, while also becoming more powerful institutions.

Following the thorough analyses of the American and French cases, I have explored the external validity of my theory. First, I have discovered that Senegal's tolerant secularism was the product of a political trade-off between liberals and conservatives, similar to the United States. This tolerantly secularist trend has not only been sustained, but also reinforced by means of *path dependence* until now. Next, I have presented an overview of the Turkish case, which has revealed that the pre-AKP era's repressive secularism was the fruit of liberals' political victory over conservatives, much like in France. This repressively secularist tradition was maintained and strengthened owing to *path dependence*, until the AKP leadership managed to reshape Turkey's state–religion regime during a subsequent *critical juncture* generated by an exogenous shock. In short, my *shadow cases* have echoed my findings in the American and French cases, thus indicating the potential generalizability of my inferences.

8.2. Prospective Scholarly Research

In this thesis, I have intensively studied two main cases and then looked into two *shadow cases* to verify whether my theoretical framework can account for the emergence of tolerant and repressive secularism in distinct contexts. While this research project has illustrated that my argument provides an accurate explanation for the cases of the United States, France, Senegal, and Turkey, I certainly do not make the claim that my theory is valid for all secular states across the globe. Therefore, a first intuitive direction for future academic research may be to test my theory in different settings. Adopting a large-*N* quantitative approach, a vast number of tolerantly and repressively secular countries can be scrutinized through the lenses of my hypothesis. Such an examination will help ascertain whether a unique theory is able to explicate the emergence of tolerant and repressive secularism in all relevant countries.

As previously stated, my thesis has exclusively focused on the variation in the type of secularism, rather than the state–religion regime. However, my proposed causal relationship suggests that there is a third potential outcome, which may bring about the establishment of a non-secular configuration: the political triumph of conservatives over liberals. Accordingly, a second avenue for prospective scholarly research is to concentrate on this specific outcome of the political conflict. Future contributions to the literature could explore religious states/theocracies or states with an established religion to find out whether conservatives' political victory over liberals explains these particular state–religion relations.

Lastly, a third possible path for future academic research might be to delve more deeply into the Turkish case, which is an example of *punctuated equilibrium* (Krasner, 1984). As discussed earlier, the Kemalist leadership of Turkey's founding period imposed repressive secularism that remained in force for over 70 years. Yet, Erdoğan's AKP managed to replace it with a state–religion regime, which initially resembled America's tolerant secularism, during a recent *critical juncture*. A comprehensive account of this shift could serve as a valuable contribution to the voluminous scholarly literature on secularism.

To close this thesis, the following statement can be presented as the core take-away for readers: The origins of either tolerant or repressive secularism in the United States, France, Senegal, and pre-AKP Turkey lie in the political processes between state elites, rather than structural antecedent conditions such as the presence of an *ancien régime*, cultural dynamics, religious ethics, levels of development, or regime type.

Appendix A: 120 Secular States in the World

Albania	Chad	Guinea	Luxembourg	Palau	Suriname
Angola	Chile	Guinea-Bissau	Republic of North Macedonia	Papua New Guinea	Swaziland
Antigua and Barbuda	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Guyana	Madagascar	Philippines	Kingdom of Sweden
Australia	Republic of the Congo	Hungary	Malawi	Romania	Switzerland
Austria	Côte d'Ivoire	India	Mali	Russian Federation	Syria
Azerbaijan	**Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*[22]	Indonesia	Marshall Islands	Rwanda	Taiwan
Barbados	Czech Republic	Republic of Ireland	Mauritius	San Marino	Tajikistan
Belgium	Dominica	Jamaica	Mexico	São Tomé and Príncipe	Tanzania
Belize	Ecuador	Japan	Federated States of Micronesia	Senegal	Togo
Benin	Equatorial Guinea	Kazakhstan	Mongolia	Serbia	Kingdom of Tonga
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Eritrea	Kenya	Montenegro	Seychelles	Trinidad and Tobago
Botswana	Estonia	Kiribati	Mozambique	Sierra Leone	Turkey
Brazil	Ethiopia	Republic of Korea (South)	Namibia	Singapore	Turkmenistan
Burkina Faso	Fiji	Kosovo	Nauru	Slovakia	Tuvalu
Burma	France	Kyrgyzstan	Nepal	Slovenia	Uganda
Burundi	Gabon	Latvia	Netherlands	Solomon Islands	Ukraine
Cameroon	The Gambia	Lebanon	New Zealand	South Africa	The United States of America
Canada	Germany	Kingdom of Lesotho	Nicaragua	Saint Kitts and Nevis	Uruguay
Cape Verde	Ghana	Liberia	Niger	Saint Lucia	Uzbekistan
Central African Republic	Grenada	Lithuania	Nigeria	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Zimbabwe
Sources: Barrett, Kurian & Johnson (2001); Barro & McCleary (2005); Fox (2008); Kuru (2009); Stahnke & Blitt (2005)					

[22] According to international law, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is not a sovereign state. The United Nations recognizes it as the territory of the Republic of Cyprus under Turkish occupation since 1974.

Appendix B: State–Religion Relations in 49 Muslim-Majority Countries

Religious States/Theocracies (11)	*States with Islam as Established Religion (16)*	*Secular States (22)*	*Anti-Religious/Atheist States (0)*
1. Afghanistan 2. Bahrain 3. Brunei 4. Iran 5. Maldives 6. Mauritania 7. Oman 8. Pakistan 9. Saudi Arabia 10. Sudan 11. Yemen	1. Algeria 2. Bangladesh 3. Comoros 4. Djibouti 5. Egypt 6. Iraq 7. Jordan 8. Kuwait 9. Libya 10. Malaysia 11. Morocco 12. Qatar *13. *State of Palestine*[23] 14. Somalia 15. Tunisia 16. United Arab Emirates	1. Albania 2. Azerbaijan 3. Bosnia and Herzegovina 4. Burkina Faso 5. Chad 6. **Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*[24] 7. Gambia 8. Guinea 9. Indonesia 10. Kazakhstan 11. Kosovo 12. Kyrgyzstan 13. Lebanon 14. Mali 15. Niger 16. Senegal 17. Sierra Leone 18. Syria 19. Tajikistan 20. Turkey 21. Turkmenistan 22. Uzbekistan	
Sources: Kuru (2007, 2009); Stahnke & Blitt (2005)			

[23] Since the adoption of United Nations General Assembly *Resolution 67/19*, the State of Palestine has been granted the status of a non-member observer state of the UN General Assembly.

[24] See Footnote 21.

Primary Material: Court Cases & Legislations

- **The United States:**
  - *Arch R. Everson v Board of Education of the Township of Ewing, et al. (1946)*
  - *Zorach, et al. v. Clauson, et al., constituting the Board of Education of the City of New York, et al. (1952)*
  - *S. Simcha Goldman v. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, et al. (1986)*
  - *Sherbert v. Verner et al., Members of South Carolina Employment Security Commission, et al. (1963)*
  - *State of Wisconsin v. Jonas Yoder, Wallace Miller, and Adin Yutzy (1972)*
  - *36 U.S.C. 119 - National Day of Prayer*
  - *36 U.S.C. 172 - Pledge of allegiance to the flag; manner of delivery*
  - *36 U.S.C. 186 - National motto*
  - *31 U.S.C. 5112 - Denominations, specifications, and design of coins*
  - *10 U.S.C. 774 - Religious apparel: wearing while in uniform*

- **France:**
  - *Le Conseil d'État — Avis n° 346.893 du 27 novembre 1989*
  - *Le Conseil Constitutionnel — Décision n° 93-329 DC du 13 janvier 1994*
  - *Loi du 25 février 1875 relative à l'organisation des pouvoirs publics*
  - *Loi du 16 juin 1881 établissant la gratuité absolue de l'enseignement primaire dans les écoles publiques*
  - *Loi du 28 mars 1882 portant sur l'organisation de l'enseignement primaire*
  - *Loi du 27 juillet 1884 rétablissant le divorce*
  - *Loi du 14 août 1884 portant révision partielle des lois constitutionnelles*
  - *Loi du 30 octobre 1886 portant sur l'organisation de l'enseignement primaire*
  - *Loi du 1er juillet 1901 relative au contrat d'association*
  - *Loi du 7 juillet 1904 relative à la suppression de l'enseignement congréganiste*
  - *Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Églises et de l'État*
  - *Loi du 29 décembre 1959 sur les rapports entre l'État et les établissements d'enseignement privés*
  - *Loi du 15 mars 2004 concernant le port de signes ou de tenues manifestant une appartenance religieuse dans les écoles, collèges et lycées publics*
  - *Loi du 14 mars 2011 d'orientation et de programmation pour la performance de la sécurité intérieure*

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