Racializing Religion: Constructing Colonial Identities in the Syrian Provinces in the Nineteenth Century

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Abstract:
In recent decades, international events and incisive critical voices have catapulted the concepts of race and religion to the foreground of International Relations research. In particular, scholars have sought to recover the racialized and imperial beginnings of IR as an academic discipline in the early-20th century. This article contributes to this growing body of work by analyzing both race and religion as conceptual tools of scientific imperial administration—tools that in the 19th century classified and divided the global periphery along a continuum of civilizational and developmental difference. The article then applies this framework to the case of French, and more broadly, European, relations with populations in the Ottoman Empire, particularly within the Syrian Provinces. As described throughout this article and the case study, Europeans used the language of race to contribute to religious hierarchies in the Syrian provinces in the mid- and late-19th century, having a lasting effect on discussions of religion in IR and international politics.

Since its consolidation as an academic discipline in the 20th century, International Relations (IR) scholarship has largely been silent on the role of race and religion in shaping global politics—a silence that a wealth of recent scholarship has diligently been trying to address. The recent literature on religion in IR is primarily situated in the post-September 11th context and concerned with questions of how to understand the emergence of religious, primarily Islamic, non-state actors in the international system. It has also highlighted the problematic enterprise of analyzing religion as a causal factor in international politics. On the other hand, recent critical scholarship on race in IR analyzes the foundations of IR as a discipline in the early-20th century. However, these growing bodies of literature largely treat race and religion as fundamentally distinct and unconnected concepts—the former being characterized through biological inheritance, a visible marker of difference, while the latter treated as a private, cultural practice. Challenging this separation, we argue that both race and religion were socially constructed by the same 19th century European forces of science and expansion and continue today to mark international difference and hierarchy. This shared origin between the two concepts can be observed in their deployment, which is politicized and embedded in categorical assumptions to mark difference between communities. Examining race and religion together allows us to evaluate the two as interlinked parts of the same ideational framework that emerged in the 19th century to underpin ideologies of civilizational difference and imperial governance.

This article aims to situate IR's current struggles to understand race and religion in 19th century European conceptualization and use of religious and racial difference as tools to categorize, order, and in many cases rule the international. In essence, to comprehend the interlinked histories of race and religion, we need to go back further than the early-20th century origins of IR as a discipline to the 19th century globalization of certain ideational hierarchies that brought the discipline into being. We connect historical shifts of the 19th century to the contemporary politics of religion, secularization, and rational governance. In doing so, this article reveals systematic religious categorizations that were embedded within racial hierarchies. First, we explore recent scholarship on religion and race in IR and argue for a need to examine 19th century European relations with the periphery to understand how racial and religious hierarchies were embedded in the beginnings of IR. Second, the paper situates the interconnected development of racial and religious categories as a scientific and rational method to catalogue, study, and improve the natural and human world. This scientific drive to categorize societies as well as the natural world had implications for imperial practices as European expansionism reached its zenith. Finally, the article applies its arguments to the case of European relations, specifically France, but also Britain and Russia,[1] as they concern racial and religious hierarchies in the mid- and late-19th century with the Ottoman Empire and the Syrian provinces. These hierarchical racial and religious assumptions persist and influence everyday politics and IR. Specifically, this article examines the racialization of religion to facilitate European relations with the global peripheries and the impact this colonial toolkit has had on the contemporary discipline of IR.

From its beginnings, mainstream IR in the early-20th century assumed that religious motivations and worldviews have a limited effect on politics in the liberal, democratic West, but has become an irrational and problematic force in the periphery that the secular West must address. This article challenges this division by examining the continuing significance of a particular discourse that emerged in the European colonial peripheries and the construction of the fanatical Muslim in contrast to the enlightened Christian.[2] This religious construction became entangled in racial hierarchies that measure civilizational capabilities against biology. Following from this, we suggest that 19th century European efforts to spread ideas of rational state-centric order to the global peripheries through

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[1] British, Russian, and specifically French influence in the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire had a lasting impact on the post-colonial independent state in the region (See Maalouf 2004; Salibi 2005; Hakim 2013).

[2] Feras Krimsti (2014) highlights British and French perceptions of the Muslim population as fanatical in the Syrian provinces and evidence of this narrative is prevalent in the correspondence between Ambassadors, Consuls and their Capitals.

imperial practices necessarily imposed their underlying assumptions on the imperial fringes, amplifying sectarian realities through a program of racialization and division.

While other social science disciplines were products of similar imperial discourses and racialized knowledge, as Duncan Bell puts it, in IR, "there has been no moment of historical reckoning, of reflection on this deeply compromised historical lineage and what it entails for contemporary scholarly practices" (2014, 2). Critical scholarship has begun to challenge IR's disciplinary assumptions (Weber 2016; Vitalis 2015; Wilcox 2015; Sterling-Folker 2014; Anievas, Manchada, and Shilliam 2014), and the following is an addition to the many voices already calling for such a reckoning. If notions of race and religion are foundational pillars of both international relations as a phenomenon and as an academic discipline, then even as the language of racial or religious difference disappears from our scholarly lexicon, their ideational imprint remains embedded in the concepts the discipline uses and the assumptions we hold. Excavating these legacies allows us to situate our own epistemic enterprises and move towards a more nuanced and historically-informed understanding of current international power structures and hierarchies.

Religion in International Relations

Following the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, IR scholarship was surprising ill-equipped to provide an explanation for the political internationalization of radical-extremist religious actors, particularly Islamist actors. A proliferation of scholarship has since worked to address this lacuna, by integrating religion—as a cultural and as a deeply political causal force in global politics—into existing IR theories and paradigms (Snyder 2011; Nukhet and Fox 2013). Nukhet Sandal and Jonathan Fox identify several ways in which religion might influence international politics: as an identity; a worldview; a marker of legitimacy; a state doctrine; and a subnational and transnational non-state religious group motivated by individualistic concerns. However, such explanations are analytically problematic as identities, worldviews, perceptions of legitimacy, and state doctrine are not empirically distinct categories but operate together even within specific religious categorizations such as Islamism. Additionally, scholars have argued that drawing a direct causal link between political action and religious identity replaces an actor's agency with an essentialized and ahistorical understanding of how identity translates into action. Cecelia Lynch's neo-Weberian approach and Scott Thomas' mimetic analysis of the religion-violence nexus in a 2014 *Millennium* forum are two examples of sociologically-driven and context-specific analysis that challenges the direct causal link between religion and violence. Viewing religion as an essentialized and functionalist causal variable suggests an objective knowledge of the *other* without fully taking into account the positionality and situated knowledge of the actor in question.

Those who analyzed the gap in IR scholarship have noted that not only neorealism and neoliberalism have failed to theorize on religion in international politics, but constructivism, whose emphasis on norms and identity provides a natural intellectual place for theorizing religion, has also largely neglected to do so (Snyder 2011; Philpott 2002; Katzenstein and Byrnes 2006). This silence has been attributed to secular assumptions that religion is a dangerous aberration that must be corrected in both the phenomenon of international relations and the objective study of that phenomenon as a 'social science'. The relegation of religion to a domestic rather than international concern traces its origin to the rise of the Westphalian state system which divided the pluralist international sphere of many religions from the hierarchical domestic realm of religious uniformity (Blaney and Inayatullah 2000; Sheikh and Crone 2014).

The 18th century European Enlightenment further subsumed religion as a private rather than public and political matter. Moderate strains of Enlightenment political thought advocated a divorce between matters of conscience and of public policy—rather than deny religious truths, they separated religion as a non-political concern. This privatization of religion is reflected in IR scholarship where we rarely interrogate Western scholars' religious worldview as a source of positionality. For example, Martin Wight's religiosity deeply shaped his intellectual engagement with pacifism, power politics, and imperialism, and yet this aspect of Wight's scholarship is rarely mentioned (Thomas 2001, 906-7).

Perhaps the Enlightenment's radical strains more honestly characterizes the shift as an elevation of human authority over the divine as Enlightenment confidence in human rationality's ability to address all the world's ills necessarily leaves little room for God(s) (Owen and Owen 2010, 18). Indeed, the political act of separating religion from the state, and the social sciences, was itself a marker of political authority not only internally but internationally (Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011, 24; Hurd 2004, 240; Farr 2008). While there are exceptions such as the Crimean War (1853-1856) and *The Troubles* of Northern Ireland (1968-1998) where European Great Power politics encountered religious narratives, there has also been a concerted effort to explain these conflicts through the paradigm of rational power politics rather than through religious narratives (Slade 1867, 63-74; Goldfrank 2013; McKittrick and McVea 2002).

Various theoretical approaches have sought to explain the development of secular state policies and the rationalization of politics. These theoretical interventions include modernization, civilizational, and rational choice approaches. Modernization theory proposes that as a society's industrial and economic capacity develops and grows, the importance of religion in politics will decline (Norris and Inglhart 2004, 8; Inglehart 1997; Inkeles and Smith 1976). This theory problematically places societies on a continuum with religiosity as an indicator of modernity. Civilizational approaches to secularization similarly adopt essentialist assumptions that focus on the appropriate standards of religiosity and religious teaching as a marker of a society's civilizational advancement. It argues that religious communities will secularize differently because their socio-political frameworks are interpreted from religious texts. These approaches are embedded in discourses of difference, particularly between Western and Muslim societies (Lewis 1990; 1991; 1996; 2003; Huntington 1993, 22-49; Lapidus 1975). Finally, the rational choice approach attempts to explain religiosity and secularization as a matter of individual preference in response to a particular set of environmental constraints. While this final approach returns agency to the individual or communal actor, it is unable to fully explain the rationality behind state-religion relations and state policies on religious practices (Olson 1985; Gill 1998).

Some validity can be attributed to the above approaches but they neglect a critical appraisal of their own theoretical assumption. Each approach adopts narratives of difference that subject particular religious beliefs and *levels* of religiosity or secularization to normative hierarchies that elevate one as more advanced than another. While secularization is equated with rational politics, secularization in Europe developed from Christian paradigms that maintain binaries of civilized and uncivilized, good and bad, light and dark (Kuru 2009, 6-38; Asad 2006). Religiosity did not develop alone or in isolation as an international marker of civilizational difference and progress. As the next section will argue, racial categories also developed in the 19th century as an indicator of international hierarchy.

Race in International Relations

Despite being a foundational concept for the academic discipline of IR, race has been largely and strangely absent from IR scholarship (Chowdhry and Nair 2004; Vitalis 2015; Crawford, Ling, Nexon, Sabaratnam 2016; Anievas, Manchada, and Shilliam 2014). Some have maintained that while race began as a central international concern and a lynchpin of imperial administration, it became side-lined as a domestic concern and migrated away from IR's core competencies. Others have argued that IR's positivist turn pushed the discipline to investigate abstract causal principles and away from constitutive concepts such as race that required scholars to hold different methodological commitments (Vincent 1982; Doty 1993; Krishna 2001). Yet others point to the empirical absence of racial discourse in the conduct of international politics. However, as scholars have established, despite race being formally absent from international institutions and practices, a form of neo-racism persists through discussions of culture, civilizational advancement, and economic and political development (Short and Kambouri 2010; Gruffydd Jones 2014).

One notable exception to IR's lack of engagement with race is the English School. As a Montague Burton Professor of IR at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) from 1930 to 1963, Charles Manning's scholarship problematically supported racial administration and apartheid in

South Africa. John Vincent's 1982 article on race and IR contends that to understand the racialization of international politics, we must examine the past two centuries of European imperial history. Previously, the general term race was used to describe any group of people such as "the wives and daughters of our London shopkeepers", but what he terms the 'racialization' of the world emerged "because the expansion of Europe coincided with the elaboration of the idea of racial inequality" to explain the divergence Europeans saw between themselves and conquered peoples (Vincent 1982, 659). In the 19th century, race emerged as a scientific and imperial organizing principle as thinkers including Charles Dilke and Arthur de Gobinau cast race in Social Darwinist terms. Hence, race was not a pre-colonial indigenous concern. Rather, race as a rigid and hierarchical category came to dominate identity in the periphery through the expansion of European power. Therefore, the "colour-consciousness of Africans or Asians…stems from the dominance of European who were conscious of their whiteness" (Vincent 1982, 662; Miyano Kopelson 2014). In the 20th century, while race as a scientific and biological category has largely been discredited, it lingers on in social science through global hierarchies that trace their origins to legacies of colonialism.[3] Following Vincent, English School-inspired scholarship has gone on to fruitfully explore the 'Standard of Civilization' that drove socio-historical processes such as state formation and imperialism that forged modern international society (Gong 1984; Keene 2003; Zarakol 2011; Yao 2018).

Similar to Vincent's analysis, Tilden Le Melle's work maintains that while ethnocentrisms have always been a mainstay of human societies. Racism as the systematic division of social and political rights and privileges based on "a worldwide ideological and mythological phenomenon" was the "creation of 18th and 19th century Europeans" (Le Melle 2009, 78). Hence, in the 18th and 19th centuries, racial difference emerged as a measurable, observable, and therefore scientific truth about global politics. Consequently, rather than a trans-historical universal concept, racism as an explicit way of distinguishing global political hierarchy was a specifically modern and European phenomenon. This article follows Le Melle's emphasis on race as a constructed notion that combines social and biological realities by understanding race as "a group of people who are socially defined on the basis of phenotypically similar (and dissimilar) characteristics" (Le Melle 2009, 77). This understanding acknowledges race as a co-constituted and fluid concept forged through a process of mutual engagement between the West and the periphery. In doing so, this paper seeks to interrogate the process through which historically contingent European ordering principles such as race and religion became embedded in global discourses and practices in the 19th century underpinning early conceptualizations of the international.

More recently, critical scholars have attempted to redress the absence of race and racial theorizing in the discipline. Robert Vitalis' recent work has done much to recover the race-infused beginnings of IR as a discipline (Vitalis 2010; 2015). A recent edited volume on reconceptualizing IR theory around race frames issues around W. E. B. du Bois' 1903 statement that "the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line". The editors stressed that even though formal racism is no longer found in international political institutions, the legacies of racial difference is ever-present in IR's racialized history. In Errol Henderson's contribution to this volume, he argues that "white supremacism" informs the foundational concepts of IR theory, such as the social contract and anarchy. Branwen Gruffydd Jones contends that underneath the scientific objectivity of analysis on state failure in Africa, there lurks a racialized imperial discourse of civilizational standards (Anievas, Manchada, and Shilliam 2013; Henderson 2014; Gruffydd Jones 2008, 2014). Formal and explicit racism is, generally, no longer accepted, but racialized ideas and practices continue to shape international politics today.

While this emerging body of scholarship explores the role of race in 20th century international politics and the emergence of IR as an academic discipline, few researchers go further back in history to the 19th century origins of race as a global and totalizing hierarchy born of scientific theories of biological

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[3] Scholars have critiqued Vincent in that his work "gives the impression that with the 'scientific/biological' turn, the concept of race and nature of racism have progressed towards a more complete, rational articulation that remained unchanged ever since" (Short and Kambouri 2010, 271).

and civilizational difference. The interactions following from the 19th century expansion of European international society into the global peripheries were framed by a scientific characterization of the other, where racial difference and ethnic categorizations were used by Europeans to divide, order, and control. Examining race and religion in the context of the 19th century expansion of European international society will allow us to interrogate the two concepts as related and often co-constitutive hierarchical markers of difference.

Science, Progress and Imperialism in the 19th century

While independently, race and religion each offer fertile ground for critical IR research, this article proposes the two should be examined jointly in order to understand the co-constitutive and co-implicated dynamics between the two concepts. Specifically, we contend that racial characterizations reflected the intellectual undercurrents of the 19th century, that facilitated colonial classifications, divisions, and control. When race could not be discerned, religious identities were used as markers for applying racial hierarchies and characterizations. Through this line of argumentation, we maintain that the origins of IR as a discipline draw implicitly from these mutually reinforcing 19th century hierarchies, which continue to underpin how IR theorizes and categorizes the international in the 21st century.

The long 19th century, as Eric Hobsbawn termed the period between 1789 and 1914, is seldom a focus for IR scholars, who typically concentrates their historical attention on World War I as the origins of the current international system. IR scholarship that does address the 19th century largely focuses on great power conflicts at the heart of Europe rather than expansion and interaction in the global peripheries (Jervis 1985; Mitzen 2013; de Carvalho, Leira, and Hobson 2011). In their recent book, Barry Buzan and George Lawson contend that in the 19th century, a global transformation transpired that reconfigured the international from a polycentric world into a core-periphery order (2015, 1). This transformation fundamentally reshaped global order and continued to structure international relations into the 21st century. Both material and ideational forces shaped the global transformation. The industrial revolution and steam power altered perceptions of geographic distance by improving transportation and communication by land and by waterways. Along with the radio and telegraph, these technologies opened up the world by increasing the frequency and intensity of interactions (Buzan and Lawson 2015, 70-77). Further, Buzan and Lawson follow others in situating the consolidation of the sovereign, territorial state in the social, material, and technological context of the 19th century (2015; Reus-Smit 1999; Osiander 2001; Branch 2011). They argue that during this period "administrative and bureaucratic competences were accumulated and 'caged' within national territories" and these competences developed alongside imperialism as European powers expanded outwards (Buzan and Lawson 2015, 6).

In addition to the forces behind industrialization and rational state-building practices, Buzan and Lawson propose that the ideology of progress rooted in "Enlightenment notions of classification, improvement and control" was one of the central processes that propelled the global transformation (Buzan and Lawson 2015, 3, 97). The Enlightenment describes the period in European intellectual history from the mid-17th century to the turn of the 19th century when prominent thinkers embraced the notion that through rationality, human society can progress toward emancipation.[4] The Scientific Revolution which emerged alongside the Enlightenment, underscored the optimism that through reasoning, society can conquer nature and therefore improve itself. Philosopher Baron d'Holbach sums up Enlightenment faith in science to bring human progress when he wrote in 1779 that "if error and ignorance have forged the chains which bind people in oppression, if it is prejudice which perpetuates those chains, science, reason, and truth will one day be able to break them" (Israel 2010, 36). Here, d'Holback insinuated that the enlightening forces of rationality will sweep away oppressive

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[4] As with all intellectual movements, it would be wrong to view Enlightenment thinking as a single homogenous strand—differences include national variations, views of the divine and a split between moderate and radical strains. These strains eventually culminated in the intellectual dissonance of the French Revolution (Israel 2009). Here, we attempt to describe an Enlightenment ethos that makes a specific argument about society's relationship with nature.

feudal practices based on familial and religious ties and that religious superstition will be displaced from political life by ties to the state.[5]

Despite the rise of Romanticism in the late-18th century, the influence of Enlightenment thought on society did not disappear. In his book *The Age of Wonder*, Richard Holmes outlines the brief historical moment at the turn of the 19th century when scientific and romantic sensibilities joined forces in what Samuel Taylor Coleridge termed in 1819 as the "Second Scientific Revolution" (2009). Holmes situates this period between James Cook's 1768 voyage and Charles Darwin's 1831 expedition. Other historians have also detailed this second surge of European scientific progress that combined with Romanticism to construct a narrative of human progress that dominated 19th century thinking (Watson 2010; Bellone 1980). Through scientific and rational thought, society not only held the key to understanding nature's secrets but possessed the tools to reconfigure the world—a switch from scientific curiosity to proactive interference, and what Ian Hacking termed the laboratory style of reasoning ((a) Hacking 2002; (b) 2002, 190). As the 19th century advanced, this proactive style of scientific progress extended globally through state-building and imperial practices and expressed itself with Europeans' increasing interests in classification of both nature and society at home and abroad.

Racial and Religious Difference: the Imperial Catalog

This laboratory style of reasoning inspired European scientists to catalog both the natural and social worlds in order to create a hierarchical taxonomy of difference with a view to reconfigure and control. At the atomic level, they weighed and organized the universe with the first periodic tables published in 1869 by Russian Dmitri Mendeleev and in 1870 by German Lothar Meyer. Museums and World Exhibitions displayed collections of natural and cultural artefacts celebrating the wonders of the earth's exotic locales. Categorizing the natural world quickly spread into the categorization of human society as anthropology, ethnography, and statistics sought to order and improve the human condition within the state and beyond (Hacking 1990; Franey 2001). This rational enterprise was particularly prominent in the imperial periphery where the same scientific methods were used to catalogue both the untamed peoples and the geographies Europeans encountered. The co-implication between the natural and social sciences, and empire, quickly grew as explorers sought to analyze exotic plants, animals, and societies in unknown lands at the fringes of empire. Colonial networks of plant enthusiasts curated growing botanical gardens across European capitals, filling these plant museums with exotic flowers and lucrative tropical crops (MacKenzie 1988, 37; Brockway 1979, 450). In a discussion about the 19th century Victorian craze for orchids from the New World, novelist Leslie Marmon Silko remarked to historian Ellen Arnold, "You have the conquistadors, the missionaries, and right with them were the plant collectors" (Silko and Arnold 2000, 164). Explorers raced to be the first to discover a river's source, an unknown species, or a native tribe with the added bonus of naming the discovery, such as the *Rhinoceros oswellii* named after Cotton Oswell, one of David Livingston's companions (Donovan 2012, 41; MacKenzie 1988, 39). Collecting and cataloging as an imperial practice was applied to human societies as well as plants and animals. While botany and fossil-filled cabinets of curiosities had enthralled European publics since the 17th century, the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 spurred heightened debate surrounding human evolution and inspired the first theories of scientific racism (MacKenzie 1998, 36). British scientist Francis Galton coined the term *eugenics* in 1883 to describe the science of racial improvement through the manipulation of racial traits (Stepan 1991, 1). Negro Villages or Human Zoos in late-19th century World Fairs placed 'native' and 'primitive' societies on display as anthropological curiosities, exemplifying growing notions that racial variations equated to moral and civilizational difference.

Interestingly, controversy surrounding Darwin's theory of evolution dislocated religious dogma as it elevated racial difference. Both created civilizational hierarchies between racially inferior political structures weighed down by religious superstition and Enlightened European secular states. However, despite widespread formal secularization in the 18th and 19th centuries that distanced scholarship from

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[5] Some such as historians of German unification argued that in the late 18th and 19th centuries, the displacement of religion from public life created a void which was then filled by nationalism (Wehler 2003).

theology, religious-infused assumptions continued to shape 19th century European scientific and social scientific theories. One example is Newtonian physics, which assumes the scientist stands at a fixed point with a God-like view of creation as the universe revolves around (Kurki 2015, 790). Another prominent example is social contract theory, in which John Locke argues the world was given by God to be used "by the industrious and rational" (Henderson 2013, 82). This sets up a hierarchy between the rational, industrial West that ought to inherit God's bounty and the irrational and indolent barbarians that squandered God's bounty—a civilizational hierarchy that, as our case study will show, was then grafted onto racial and religious categories in the European periphery. Indeed, as Elizabeth Hurd contends, Western secularism was not the antithesis of religion but analogous to it, deriving from and competing with religious worldviews (2009). Hence, the ambition to catalog and improve human diversity through science developed from a uniquely European intellectual context that upheld a continuum of rationality and civilizational standards through hierarchies of racial categories and religious creed.

Therefore, in the 19th century, Enlightenment notions of scientific progress became a political agenda to tame not only the natural world but also rationally govern society (Scott 1998; Drayton 2000). This occurred domestically in the form of statistics and early bio-control and internationally through imperial administration (Foucault 1969; Hacking 1992; Drayton 2000), the Standard of Civilization (Gong 2002; Zarakol 2011), and the rise of international law (Hobson 2012; Sylvest 2008; Pitts 2012). The notion that society can intervene actively in nature to improve it, combined with 19th century technological and scientific advances, developed into a pervasive Western confidence, one that assumed society's ability to "control nature and improve not only the human condition but the human stock" (Buzan and Lawson 2016, 36). This confidence was not only directed internally at Western society. Scientific activism also mingled with chauvinism to inform colonial practices, transforming racial and religious difference into policy instrument for imperial administration.[6] As Emil Torday wrote in 1913 on his views of the natives along the Congo River, "it is only by studying a man that you can understand him and only by understanding him that you can rule him" (Youngs 2006). Hence, 19th century notions of human progress and rationality transcended the boundaries between nature and human society, and between the domestic and foreign, to have international force to shape order and political authority.

The drive to classify and order both the natural and social universe animated 19th century European imperialism—and colonial authorities used both racial and religious categorizations to do so. The next section will focus on French imperial practices in the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire, as well as discuss instances of British and Russian interference, to provide an empirical illustration of how both categorizations were applied to core-periphery relations. Once applied, these categories took on path-dependent logics that reconstituted identities in this region in ways that continue to shape political discourses and practices today. Here, we wish to highlight that imperial projects were not unidirectional, totalizing, and uncontested acts of imposition but rather uneven and fragmented authorities (Benton 2010). Further, colonized peoples themselves also retained agency in these processes as they resisted or welcomed the reconstructed and reconstituted identities emergent from these imperial practices.

The Ottoman Empire and the European International Society

As European international society expanded its influence into the global peripheries in the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was perceived as weak in comparison. It was assumed that its weakness was a consequence of the Ottoman Empire's lack of centralized order and a natural inability to be modern. Due to Europe's growing dominance and the evolving international legal order based on that dominance, European powers' relationship with the global peripheries, particularly the Ottoman Empire, was not one of equals, but one of subordination. This hierarchical relationship that developed between Europe and the Ottoman Empire was economic and coercive, providing opportunities to the

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[6] Divide and rule dynamics are a hallmark imperial forms of world order (Nexon and Wright 2007). Also see Barkawi (2010) regarding the use of IR as a policy science for imperial governance.

European powers to pursue geo-political interests. This relationship operated within a socio-political framework derived from scientific racism. Despite its efforts to modernize and reach parity with European powers, the Ottoman Empire failed to achieve the Standard of Civilization established by Europeans. Continual failure to meet this Standard, despite the Ottoman's reforms program, gave credence to Western classifications of the Empire as backwards and uncivilized due to its Muslim character.

The reforms of the 19th century centered on the functions and role of the state, including political institutions, social order, and the economy. Modernization altered the role of the Sublime Porte[7] in relation to the communities within the Ottoman Empire by restructuring their relationship through centralizing institutions that paralleled those in Europe. The reforms resulted in heightened domestic communal tensions and the dissemination and construction of knowledges and practices that altered the social field of the Ottoman Empire and changed the domestic means of production and consumption. For example, the 1839 Hatt-I Sherif, proclaimed by Sultan Abdulmecid I on November 3, sought to establish "a social order such that modern rights of citizenship would be guaranteed, inferior government would be eliminated and both Muslim and non-Muslim subjects would enjoy the same personal rights" (Beydilli 2001, 92; Findley 1989, 31; Davison 1954, 847). The reform was supported by Britain, in return for the concessions made on trade and the "right to advise the Sultan in Syrian affairs because, with the exception of France, they had helped him recover [the] province" from occupying Egyptian forces (1831-1841) (Sedivy 2010, 99). The Sublime Porte was willing to oblige if that meant inclusion in European international society as an equal member with the right to territorial sovereignty and non-interference (Mardin 1969; Findley 1980; Davison 1963; Emecen 2001, 92). The role that the European powers began to play in the Ottoman Empire in advising the Sublime Porte, and the hierarchy established by the European powers within European international society, did not only impact the reforms being promulgated in the Ottoman Empire, but also impacted society in the Syrian provinces. Prior to the reform movement, which the Sublime Porte perceived as necessary for modernity and progress, the Empire and society was governed by principles of tolerance rather than equality. A shift in practice following the reforms enabled the racialization of religious identity (Tritton 1930; Wismar 1927). The Tanzimat[8] and administrative reforms of the 19th century were created with European concepts and ideas in mind, most notably secular notions of equality and citizenship, which had developed in the European Enlightenment. Equality and citizenship, viewed through a European lens of rational governance, displaced accepted practices of tolerance and impacted how sectarian identities were racialized in the Syrian provinces.

Equality before the Law: A Game of Hypocrisy

In the first instance, the persistent call from Europeans for formal equality under Ottoman administration and laws may appear to be progressive and non-threatening. However, the transgression of norms of communal and political tolerance by ideas of equality altered the relations between religious and political communities, requiring a reorganization of society. In addition to the changing relational dynamics between sectarian and communal groups, European states consistently violated formal equality in practice. The various religious groups, being considered equal before Ottoman administration and law, were not treated as such by the European foreign dignitaries. Instead, European consuls throughout the Ottoman Empire developed relations and alliances with the various religious groups, ultimately changing the balance of power within the Empire by facilitating the construction of identities based on a common creed while applying hierarchies based on scientific racism.

The pressure European powers placed on the Ottoman Empire to institutionalize equality as an organizing principle was applied through an expression of continued concern for minorities within the Ottoman Empire. When these reforms failed to produce equality as European powers had envisioned,

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[7] The Sublime Porte, also referred to as the Porte, was the central government of the Ottoman Empire (Findley 1980, 5).
[8] The Tanzimat was a period of reform in the Ottoman Empire, inclusive of the reforms from 1839 until the promulgation of the constitutions in 1876, although sometimes argued to have concluded in 1871 (Findley 1980, 378).

these powers, including France, Britain, and Russia, began to deepen direct relations and alliances with various communities. The formation of these alliances by external actors created unofficial protectorates based on and justified by ideas of civilizational commonality. The French, for example, sought to protect the Catholic communities within the Empire, and the Maronites more specifically. The Russians on the other hand viewed it as their divine right to intervene on behalf of the Eastern and Greek Orthodox communities. The British sought to balance these alliances through more loosely based and, in comparison, a largely hands-off approach with the Druze and the Muslim communities (Liverpool Mercury 1861, 6; Outrey 1861; de Heidenstam 1864). British attempts to secure an alliance with Muslim communities, and in particular, the administration in the Sublime Porte, was justified on the premise that Britain, itself, was a Muslim Empire encompassing "nearly 100 million […] Muslims" in India (Layard 1879, 5).

Such alliances gave the European powers a foothold against each other, but also a means to increase their own prominence within the Ottoman Empire by negotiating with the Sublime Porte on the political and economic position of these communities. By forging these alliances, the European powers who had actively promoted equality within the institutions of the Sublime Porte had begun to obstruct equality by elevating the status of their preferred community. On January 26, 1840, the French consul in Damascus wrote that the promise of equality under the law had created a schism in the social fabric. The admission of individuals to the civil administration irrespective of religious belief further dislodged Muslim prominence and placed the Christian minority into the structure of power. This move negated the relative autonomy enjoyed by Christians and diminished the socio-economic status of the Muslim population (Comte de Ratti-Menton 1840; Emecen 2011, 92-93; Devereux 1963, 24; Hetslet 1875, 1002, 1243-1248; Hatt-ı Hümayun 1856; Davison 1963, 55-57; Temperley 1932, 410). Similarly, the chief official of the Russian Orthodox Church, Porfirii Uspenskii, noted that relations between Christians and Muslims under the conditions of equality had become extremely antagonistic, leading to the outbreak of violence (Hopwood 2014, 133-134).

Antagonism and violence between Christians and Muslims further justified preferential treatment to allied communities by external powers, creating multiple sources of authority within the Ottoman Empire. The shift in domestic communal power led to the eruption of violence in, most notably, Aleppo in 1850 and Mount Lebanon and Damascus in 1860. These events led to further demands by the foreign powers acting in the name of allied religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire by requesting additional protections for them. Justifying these demands on the Ottoman Empire and the protections offered to the religious minorities, the external powers made arguments and used discourses that can be likened to the hierarchization of racial characteristics (Ulerry 1840; Palmer 1992, 112). European expansion into the Ottoman Empire, and in particular Syria, led to the production of knowledge based on European experiences of modernity. This resulted in the export of order and a reorganization of society and governance in the Syrian provinces, including the racialization of sectarian identities in order to explain the inability of the Muslim government and population to achieve benchmarks, including equality, established by France, Britain, and Russia.

The Racial-Sectarian Production of Knowledge: Early racialized-sectarianism and its continuity

Defining and demarcating racial difference based on physical features in the Syrian provinces proved to be difficult for the European powers. Instead, they focused on sectarian identities to differentiate the civilized from the uncivilized. The qualification of 'Arab' as a race had hardly any significance, due to a lack of prejudice with regards to skin color amongst the population. As French military captain, L. de Torcy noted: "it is difficult to distinguish between race, as much of the primitive population has bred with the Arabs and even the uniqueness of the Turks has nearly disappeared in Syria" (1880). This section highlights how the civilizational associations used to understand racial hierarchies were applied to sectarian identities.

The French administration in Syria framed their interference in Ottoman affairs and with the Catholic populations in Syria within the paradigm of a unique form of racialized sectarianism that

characterized Muslim communities as fanatics, uncivilized, and violent. On the other hand, the Christian population was viewed as an extension of European civilization, better able to accede to a European benchmark of modernity due to their belief in a *true* God (Murad 1844). According to this point of view, the Christians of the Syrian provinces were most similar to the Europeans and therefore of a different civilizational status than their Muslim counterparts. The characterizations of the two religious communities attributed ideas of scientific progress to their creed based on social and biological realities, using racialized measurements to mark difference between Christians and Muslims (Le Melle 2009).

This inability to distinguish the populations based on race in the Syrian provinces, as European powers had done elsewhere in the global peripheries, led to the adoption of sectarian categorizations as a stand-in for European racialized conceptions of civilization. Although the racial assumptions were understood through scientific language, racial hierarchies in colonial governance were products of religious knowledge. In colonial America, Bernard Romans, in reference to the indigenous populations, is quoted as saying "God created an original man and woman in this part of the globe, of different species from any in other parts […] a people not only rude and uncultivated, but incapable of civilization". The colonizers accepted the indigenous populations as part of the human race, however, their 'savagery' and 'barbarianism' were attributed to a lack of rationality, an attribute that was linked to belief in a Christian God (Horsman 1975, 154). Christianity was viewed as the only 'true' religion and to profess faith in another God was equated with 'barbarism' and 'fanaticism' (Bentivoglio 1856; Conroy-Krutz 2015). In order to rectify the socio-biological deficiencies of the indigenous *other*, those involved in imperial and colonial governance believed that it was necessary to 'cross the breed' of the population, thus reshaping the indigenous population's biology in order to civilize them. These practices would bring 'lightness' (whiteness) into the uncivilized human, to rid them of their dark skin along with their fanatical ideas (Horsman 1975, 154).

The ecclesial similarities between the French and the Maronites helped the Archbishop of Laodicea, Nicolas Murad, compare Christian nobility in the Lebanese mountains to European nobility, arguing that a particular civility existed among the Christian races (Murad 1844). In doing so, Murad elevated the Christians and engaged in the construction of an identity used by the Maronites and the French as a political tool for decades to come, relying on the politics of difference to serve a specific set of interests. Later, this sense of superiority evolved into the national myth that the Lebanese Christians are descendants of the Phoenicians. For the political mission of France in the Syrian provinces, it became necessary to ensure that the allegiance could be safeguarded on the premise that the Maronites – in particular – were civilizational *cousins* to the Catholics in France (Salibi 2005, 171-173). Similarly, Russia was interested in maintaining comparable relations with the Orthodox community in the Ottoman Empire, including in the Syrian provinces, and most notably in the Balkans.

France and Russia, the two European powers who predominately forged relations based on sectarian identities, leading to the categorization of different religious communities within hierarchies of civilization, believed that the Muslim communities were of a lower civilizational status. By creating this hierarchy, the European dignitaries slandered the Muslim communities as *fanatical*, systematically dismissing their plight in the Empire without consideration for their grievances and arguing that their inability to become civilized and to achieve modernity was biological (DeLaFour 1860). In one such example, after an uprising in Aleppo on October 17, 1850, on the second night of Eid al-Adha, much surprise was voiced, in dispatches written by foreign consuls back to their capitals and ambassadors, with regards to why Aleppo had been the center of a revolt. The uprising consisted of Muslims attacking Christian communities, with no apparent reason other than ethno-sectarian hatred ("From Aleppo mostly about the Insurrection" 1850; Morrisson and Snyder 2000; Sen 1997; Lichbach 1989). The reports on the Aleppo revolt were framed largely through language that tethered violence to religion, whereby the *fanatical* Muslims attacked the Christian population. The perception of the European dignitaries, though not completely false, was devoid of nuance. The revolt was Muslim-led and it did target the Christian population. However, as Bruce Masters argues, not all Muslims participated in the revolt or the attacks, and it was solely the Muslim population of the city's Eastern quarters that attacked the Christians of the Judayda quarter, made up largely of Uniate

Catholics. By contextualizing the uprising, it is evident that the Muslims of the Eastern quarter had, for some time, not been represented in local politics while the Uniate Catholics had benefited from European interference, resulting in overrepresentation (Masters 1990, 3-5).

Perceptions that Christianity equated inherently with rationality and civilization, requiring security and better representation, in opposition to Muslim fanaticism and barbarism, resulted in the relative diminishment of Muslims' status. Thereafter, sectarian identities became hierarchized and categorized in a fashion that paralleled racial encounters. Racialized hierarchies and classifications of sectarian identities emerged from corresponding worldviews: an assemblage of a Christian understanding of the world and assumptions relating to progress, modernity, and biological capability. Even when the Christian community had become embroiled in scandal and misconduct, accused of not maintaining the same level of belief as their Muslim counterparts, the French consul, M. Bentivoglio, argued that the Christian religion "is the only good and true religion" (1858; 1856). Transgressions committed by the Christians were excused because of their belief in a Christian God that translated into the possibility of being civilized. Adherence to the Christian faith by the indigenous populations in the Syrian provinces provided a necessary civilisational similarity for the French as a marker of rationality.

Racial hierarchization of sectarian identities had a continuous impact on social and political relations. The association between the French and the Christians of Syria (and Lebanon), particularly the Maronites, and the construction of an identity based on their inherent civilized character became so embedded in self-identification that in 1911 a Lebanese migrant residing in Australia sent a letter to the then Prime Minister. In the letter the migrant argued that Lebanese should be classified as Caucasian: "…they [the Lebanese] are as white a race as the English. Their looks, habits, customs, religion, blood, etc., are those of Europeans but they are more intelligent" (MacKay and Batrouney 1988, 667). Hence, 19th century racial characterizations continued to inform the co-constitution of Christian and Muslim religious identities as a hierarchy. This hierarchy persisted in the self-identification of individuals, and the separation of Christian and Muslim religious identities became entangled in opposing histories of origination, civilization, and rationality (Hage 2004).

Sectarian identities that developed within racialised frameworks were internalized and became entrenched in domestic and international politics. The manifestation of racialized characterizations of sectarianism within the domestic political environment is most evident during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) when sectarian and ideological identities were amalgamated and reinforced through violence (Hage 1992; Makdisi 1996; Ofeish 1999). On the other hand, racialized sectarianism in international politics continues to propagate a sense that Muslims are by nature fanatical, barbaric, and lack the ability to be civilized. This has been evidenced through the public discourse of the war on terror following the September 11th attacks, United States President Donald Trump's Muslim Ban, and the Syrian refugee crisis which has displaced humanitarian efforts in favor of a fictionalized and exaggerated clash of civilizations. What can be deduced from a critical examination of these imperial encounters was the production of knowledge based on racialized hierarchies that were justified by notions of biological inheritance (Stapleton and Gingras 2016).

The racialization of Islam as producing uncivilized people, and Christianity, as its opposite, as being tied to civilization has grown to the extent that in the heightened moments of struggle in Iraq against Da'esh, the American media has become focused on the plight of Yazidis and Christians. The celebration of rescued Christians and their migration to Europe with the help of Glenn Beck and Johnnie Moore, as well as the Belgian government's insistence that only Christian refugees from Syria be provided safety in Belgium, highlights the continued disparity in treatment of people from the same territory. This disparity exposes the realities of continued hierarchization of religious creed developed through practices of 19th century colonialism (Effron 2015; Jalabi 2014; Culik 2015; Hafez 2015). This has sidelined the dangers faced by Muslim communities, who are viewed with skepticism, framed by a belief that they are naturally inclined to terrorism, fanaticism, and ideologies aligned with the goals of Da'esh. The consequence has been the continued racialization of religious identities within international politics and in the Middle East region.

International Relations and Racialized-Religious Hierarchies of the 21st Century

The historically interlinked and co-constituted nature of race and religion in colonial practice and in framing the foundations of modern international politics alerts us to two important implications for IR as a discipline. First, we cannot continue to study concepts such as race and religion in isolation without acknowledging the highly interconnected histories of these markers of colonial difference. The 19th century interactions between the European powers, specifically France, and the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire, reveals the co-constitution of race and religion in the imperial catalogue. Intersectional inquiry is essential to uncover the co-evolutionary processes that brought IR's scientific categorizations into being and continues to drive IR's penchant for ordinal scales and rankings. Second, we must continue to interrogate the foundations of IR as a discipline, challenging the myth of the establishment of IR in the post-1919 context as an objective, rational, and scientific discipline. Acknowledging the darker beginnings of the discipline rooted in 19th century conceptualizations of race, religion, and other markers of colonial difference will produce better analytical tools for our discipline to understanding the puzzles of violence and difference in today's international politics.

In the contemporary production of the discipline, race and religion as linked and often co-constituted markers of colonial difference inform Western conceptualizations of modernization and state development. While liberal international discourses no longer list race and religion as markers of hierarchical difference,[9] the assumption remains that human societies can and should be measured and ranked in objective and scientific catalogues that separate the more advanced from the less advanced; societies worthy of international aid from those who are not (Sen 1997; Bellamy 2014; Alesina and Dollar 2001). The legacy of the imperial catalogue continues to underpin international political practice through yearly assessment projects such as the Fund for Peace's Fragile State Index, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, and the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index. In doing so, these scholarly and political practices conflate a number of important underlying processes with the truth of a parsimonious numerical representation. Nineteenth century scientific assumptions still underlie IR's predilection for simplifying complex analytical landscapes into two-by-two charts and indexed assessments of state performance in peace and war (for example, see De Mesquita 1981; Maoz, Terris, Kuperman, Talmud 2007; Oneal and Russett 2015).While these conceptual shorthand can be useful, the danger is in accepting them as an objective truth against which all social actors must be ranked and measured, and those who are deviant must be corrected.

By excluding religion as a racialized marker of hierarchical difference in international politics, and combined with methodological tools that focus on measurable and comparable variables, IR has ignored the history of religion in the imperial catalogue and skirted around religion as a racialized and hierarchical marker of difference. This includes Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*, where he declares that "the people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man." Huntington follows this passage with a remark on how "North African immigration to France generates hostility among Frenchmen and at the same time increased receptivity to immigration by 'good' European Catholic Poles" (1993, 25). Yet, he foregoes analyzing hostility and receptivity as part of established colonial histories that placed societies in hierarchies dependent on their civilizational attributes.

Similarly, scholarship on Islam and democracy questions the ability of majority Muslim countries to apply liberal democratic frameworks. This scholarship, focused on questions of theology, the treatment of women in society, and sustained authoritarianism, asserts an intellectual paternalism that erases diversity in practices and interpretations of Islamic texts and implies an inherent inability to be secular, modern, or liberal (Karawān 1997; Esposito and Obert Voll 1996; Fish 2002; Nasr 2005;

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[9] Critical scholarship on race has become increasingly prominent, bringing racial hierarchies back into discussions of political action and inaction, including the *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* conference issue (45.3) on Racialized Realities in World Politics.

Tadros 2012; Khan 2003). Michael Steven Fish argues that Muslim societies are not prone to higher levels of religiosity, communal violence, or that interpersonal trust is lower in these societies, but that the subordination of women in Muslim societies, based on Islamic interpretations, has resulted in a democratic deficit (2002, 5). Critically, Fish fails to account for the existing agency of Muslim women in society and politics, where a long history of female empowerment and political activity does exist.[10] While he considers the exclusion of women from political life in Muslim countries as the result of theology, he fails to draw the same tenuous link between Christian theology and the exclusion of women in the West from capitalist enterprise and patriarchal organizations that continue to subordinate the role of women and devalue female work (see for example, Orloff 1993). By examining Muslim societies in this manner and through a scientific methodology that treats the subject as an exception, Fish's argument foregoes nuance and places Muslim societies within the imperial hierarchy, unable to attain 'civilized' status.

Most notably, this imperial catalogue of race and religion is apparent in studies on fundamentalism and terrorism. Where there is a near complete absence of scholarship on Christian terrorism and even less on white terrorism (Rapoport 2013; Pratt 2010; Telfair Sharpe 2000), focus on the global south, specifically Muslim bodies and Muslim majority countries, is abundant. Richard Jackson highlights the problems of discourses on 'Islamic terrorism', noting the highly politicized nature of the category and terminology. Despite his acknowledgment of core assumptions developed from the "archive of orientalist scholarship on the Middle East and Arab culture," his genealogy of the study of Islamic terrorism only goes as far back as 1984 (2007, 398-399),[11] ultimately failing to engage with the colonial history of categorizing Muslim as racialized, violent, barbaric, and fundamentalist in the 19th century. The fundamentalist Muslim is a category that is often reproduced in contemporary scholarship, attaching violence to religious interpretations, rather than examining colonial legacies, oppression, forced displacement, and consequences of contemporary imperial interests (Venkatraman 2007). Although there are scholars that have addressed these issues in favour of relying on Islam as a variable for violence (Romero 2007), the continued use of 'Islamic terrorism' or 'Islamic fundamentalism' reproduces the connection between fanaticism and Islam as a racialized characteristic.

Conclusion

This article examined the scholarship on race and religion, and the construction of sectarian identities within racialized hierarchies of the 19th century. Rather than discrete areas, we maintain that both race and religion were part of the same European imperial toolkit used to order, categorize, and rule 'less civilized' populations in the global peripheries. The development of racial hierarchies through this specific European framework of social and biological realities established categorizations of difference that justified activities based on moral and biological superiority. Unable to establish racial characteristics among some populations, led to the emergence of a hierarchy of creed that became racialized.

By examining the case study of European interference in the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century, we argue that the enforcement of European conventions regarding equality was indeed subverted by European practices that exhibited preference for the Christian population; this was justified by the idea that Christians formed inherently superior and more civilized societies. This took on many forms, including the physical and legal protection of the Christian population, and the vilification of Muslim populations as backwards, uncivilized, and fanatical. The language and treatment directed at the Christians and Muslims were not solely used in times of

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[10] Qur'anic stories of powerful women - that express more than the moral character necessary for Muslim women to follow - highlight women as important characters of change and progress (Lamrabet 2016), These narratives are further entangled in histories of female governance in the Middle East, including the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century when the Imperial Harem became known as the 'Sultanate of Women' (Peirce 1993).

[11] Jackson details the study of Islamic Terrorism as a development that emerged from studies on Religious Terrorism, following from David Rapoport's article 'Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions' (1984).

struggle, but continued throughout the intensifying European colonial project, and became pervasive through violent incidents that threatened European interests. Ultimately, the staying power of the language used by Europeans in the Ottoman Empire reflected their practices, whereby Muslim majority populations lacked political representation in favour of Christian over-representation, as was the case of Aleppo in 1850 with the Unitary Catholics and the Maronites in Lebanon – carrying through to the 20th century. Despite the failures of the Christian community, their misconduct was later excused by the claim that they were of the only true and good religion. Christians who maintained a likeness to the French with regards to a particular belief system were treated as morally and biologically superior, ready to tame the natural and social environment in which they inhabited. This meant that others, based on religious identity, were displaced from their economic, political, and social environments. The racialized religious hierarchies produced during colonial encounters, as argued in this article, took on path-dependent logics, evident in the practice of international politics and which have informed research agendas in the discipline of IR.

The language of civilization and progress was implicated in scientific racism that created hierarchies based on religious belief entangled with ideas of race. These hierarchies developed through the deployment of colonial governance and its tropes of secularism and civilizational progress, and are reflected in everyday discourse, political decision-making, and political science and IR scholarship. These hierarchies are also revealed in a critical analysis of the construction of the Muslim, how it is continually ravaged by notions of barbarianism, backwardness, and fanaticism. Indeed, the Muslim is put on display to be mocked and feared, while discursively lambasting Islamo-cultural practices as backwards and illiberal. These knowledges are further replicated in the social sciences through research programs that question the possibility of Muslim integration in Western societies, the compatibility of Islamic doctrine and democracy, and arguments that highlight radical Islam as exceptional in studies of terrorism and fanaticism.

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