Illiberal Secularism:

A Critical Approach to the Study of Social and Religious Governance in Liberal Democracies

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Abstract

Taking note of the emergence of illiberal forms of governance across Western Europe, a liberal and democratic region, this thesis endeavors to unravel one particular manifestation of this tendency, illiberal secularism. Specifically, it asks how secularism has been discursively (trans)formed in political contexts so as to allow for the emergence of illiberal forms of social and religious governance. To address this question, this thesis analyzes the discursive enactment of ideological secularism by Italian state actors in three cases—the Crucifix, the Burqa, and the Charter cases. Building on critical and discursive perspectives, this thesis argues that secularism is an ideology that shapes thinking and action and provides a conceptualization of, and an answer to, the problem of diversity. Thus, it proposes to study secularism as a political category that works as a stake in, and as a means through which contemporary contests over religion and diversity are conducted. In methodological terms, these considerations lead to a combined analytical endeavor, which focuses on both the conceptual grammar of secularism and the discursive practices through which state actors (re)construct this ideological formation. Conducting conceptual and critical discourse analyses, this thesis reveals the argumentative structures and the main ideational and relational assumptions of Italian state actors' discourses. It demonstrates that, in all three cases, these actors revise secular–religious demarcations in ways that expand the secular power of the state over the religious realm and, moreover, allow for the revision of liberal entitlements and for the resetting of the boundaries that define the political community. Notably, this thesis finds that it is through the secularization of Christianity, the culturalization of liberalism, and the othering of Muslims that some state actors reconcile secularism and illiberalism, thereby promoting practices that restrict and violate important liberal values and achievements, such as religious freedom and political unity.

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List of Abbreviations

AN: Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance)

CAPI: Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

CEI: Conferenza Episcopale Italiana

CESNUR: Center for Studies on New Religions

DC: Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democratic Party)

DHA: Discourse-Historical Approach

ECJ: European Court of Justice

ECHR: European Convention on Human Rights

ECtHR: European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)

EU: European Union

FI: Forza Italia

IA: Integration Agreement

IDOS: Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS (Study and Research Centre IDOS)

ISTAT: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (National Institute of Statistics)

LN: Lega Nord (Northern League)

OLIR: Osservatorio delle Libertà ed Istituzioni Religiose (Observatory of Religious Freedom and Institutions)

PPI: Partito Popolare Italiano (Italian Popular Party)

TAR: Tribunale Amministrativo Regionale (Regional Administrative Tribunal)

UAAR: Unione degli Atei e degli Agnostici Razionalisti (National Association of Atheists and Agnostics)

UCOII: Unione delle Comunità e Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia (Union of Islamic Communities in Italy)

UK: United Kingdom

UMI: Union of Italian Muslims

UNAR: Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (National Office against Racial Discrimination)

USA: United States of America

Part I: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations on Ideological Secularism

Western societies are living in an "anxious age," an age in which "ugly fears and suspicions" contribute to disfiguring their long-standing liberal and democratic self-image (Nussbaum 2012, 2). Right-wing extremism, intolerant and discriminatory legislation, the demeaning treatment of immigrants, refugees, and minorities: these developments evince what appears to be a forsaking of liberal and democratic forms of governance. Worrisomely, these illiberal tendencies appear to come from both the outside and the inside of liberalism and related forms of governance.

Martha Nussbaum (2012) is not alone in taking note of this intolerant turn in the West. Gray (2000, 21) discusses liberalism as a "species of fundamentalism", whilst Casanova (2004) and Woodhead (2013) talk about "illiberal secularism"; Ahdar and Leigh (2005, 3) notice increasing "restrictions upon religious freedoms", whereas Ambrosini and Caneva (2012) point out the emergence of "institutionalized forms of intolerance"; Dobbernack and Modood (2013, 2) investigate "muscular liberalism" and the "weaponization of toleration", while Mouritsen and Olsen (2013, 128) look into the "diminishing space of tolerance in liberal societies". Despite their different wordings, these labels and descriptions indicate the existence of a trend of increasing hostility toward religion and, more broadly, toward social and cultural diversity in the West. Illiberal secularism in Europe—the object of inquiry of this thesis—is a constituent part of this wider trend. Its existence points to the complex context in which current contests over the governance of religion and diversity occur.

Understanding contemporary religious controversies and encroachments upon religious freedoms requires more than simply looking at legal disputes, institutional arrangements, and situational factors. Inasmuch as such occurrences are immersed in a broader context of "Western anxiety", analysts of religion and politics cannot ignore intricate interconnections between, first, religion and other spheres of life, and second, between domestic and international affairs.

In a global context of social and economic distress, interrogations concerning social and religious pluralization surface, as well as inquiries into the ways devised by Western European governments to manage the continent's increasingly diverse social fabric (Casanova 2004; Allievi 2005a).[1] Moreover, developments elsewhere, such as civil wars and the empowerment of extremist groups, implicate the West and contribute to the politicization and even securitization of themes such as immigration and pluralism. As a consequence of these developments, terms pertaining to the traditional liberal and democratic lexicon, especially secularism and citizenship, become contested and raise yet another set of difficult questions to both academics and political actors.

One could certainly go on identifying subjects and questions related to the current state of "Western anxiety" and the oft-problematic governmental reactions to it. However, what is relevant to remark here is that in virtue of this context, authors engaged in the study of religion and politics have been unable to treat these topics separately from other pressing social issues.

This difficulty in isolating the object of study is not, however, surprising or negative. First, religion tends or endeavors to pervade the totality of social relations. This means that despite Europe's secularized character, religion has never been strictly confined to the private sphere; rather, it has always interacted in complex ways with the institutional, political, social and economic domains. In this light, analysts ought to focus on the role religion actually plays in politics, and not simply accept church–state separation as a given. Second, more than a means to manage religion, secularism may be thought of as the first framework devised by liberal states to deal with social diversity—in this case, religious dissent (Zucca 2012; Turner 2013). Together, these two points suggest that the current context of change and anxiety has simply reinforced interconnections between religion and other social and political issues which have been there all along. If so, investigating illiberal secularism involves an interdisciplinary and broad analytical effort.

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[1] Both Casanova (2004) and Allievi (2005) argue that social diversification and religious pluralization have been closely related matters in Western Europe. They discuss how the overlapping otherness of foreigners, immigrants, religious individuals, and Muslims has helped to politicize debates over diversity and integration on the continent, even though predominant views of these subjects do not correspond with reality.

In effect, scholars analyzing religion and politics since the early 1990s have disregarded rigid disciplinary boundaries and widened their lines of inquiry. Social scientists, particularly in politics and sociology, have rediscovered religious variables and actors, as well as their direct and indirect consequences for diverse fields and levels of analysis.[2] Furthermore, the attention payed to religion has generated a renewed interest in terms that had been thus far taken for granted, such as secular, secularism, and secularization.

Today, looking into religion and politics is looking into a highly variegated field of analysis. Still, the resulting academic patchwork has retained some cohesiveness thanks to the unceasing exchange of ideas between scholars—their different disciplinary backgrounds and ontological/epistemological beliefs notwithstanding. Political scientists and sociologists have benefited from the contributions of political philosophers, theologians, legal scholars, historians, and anthropologists—and *vice versa*.[3] If, on the one hand, this collaborative interaction has created a fruitful scholarly environment for the study of religion and politics, on the other hand, it has made it a challenging task to grasp and assemble the burgeoning literature on the subject matter.

Part I of this study endeavors to make sense of this productive field of analysis and to provide a justification for the terminological, theoretical, and methodological choices made in subsequent chapters. To this end, the first chapter revisits the main academic treatments of the notions of secularism and liberalism and attempts to localize this thesis and its goals within this broad literature. The second chapter turns to the theoretical foundations of the social identification, with a view to

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[2] Social disciplines have approached religion differently throughout the past century. Anthropology has never disregarded the social significance of religious beliefs and practices. Despite this, anthropologists have failed to take secularism into consideration (Asad 2003). Sociologists and political scientists, in turn, had by and large assumed that religion was an epiphenomenon and one which would eventually disappear (or cease to be of public significance). In fact, when these scholars did take religion into consideration, they focused on describing and explaining this "modernizing" societal change. For a brief account of God's comeback in political science and international relations, see, for example, Bellin (2008). For a review of the trajectory of religion in sociology, see Casanova (1994).

[3] In this regard, it suffices to think about the dialogue established between three of the most prominent scholars in the field: anthropologist Talal Asad, political theorist Charles Taylor and sociologist Jose Casanova. Similarly, the Social Science Research Council's blog on Religion and the Public Sphere, The Immanent Frame, provides an excellent illustration of the ongoing academic exchange in the field, as well as of the interdisciplinary perspectives currently adopted by most analysts of religion and politics. The blog may be found here: http://blogs.ssrc.org/

defining theoretical and analytical instruments used in the thesis, notably the notion of social boundaries. Finally, building on this theoretical edifice, the third chapter delineates the methodological framework used to investigate illiberal secularism in Part II, a framework that is based on both critical discourse analysis (CDA) and conceptual analysis. It also states in detail the research questions guiding this thesis and presents the case studies examined in Part II.

Part II of this thesis investigates the discursive enactment of secularism, trying to identify transformations in the ideational, relational, and identity dimensions of meaning, including in conceptual networks, that may help to understand the emergence of illiberal forms of governance of social and religious diversity. More specifically, it investigates these forms of governance and the discourses of governmental actors in one specific Western European country, Italy. By analyzing three different, but related cases concerning the governance of religious diversity in the country—the Crucifix and *Burqa* controversies, and the Charter of the Values of Citizenship and Integration—Part II aims not only to understand the emergence of illiberal secular discourses and practices, but also to put the theoretical and methodological edifice devised throughout the following three chapters to proof, especially the notion of ideological secularism as a political category and cluster concept, the meaning and formation of which may be elucidated by looking at politics *in*, and *over* discourse. If this edifice does contribute to elucidating illiberal secularism, it may then be applied to other Western European case studies in the future, thereby helping to understand contemporary illiberal governance trends in liberal and democratic states and other political entities, such as regional blocks.

Chapter I: Secular, Secularization, and Secularism: defining reality, privatizing religion, and governing diversity

The purpose of this study is to critically investigate illiberal secularism or, more specifically, how illiberal discourses, practices, and policies toward religions have been made thinkable and possible in Western Europe, a region marked by the prevalence of liberal and democratic forms of governance. Thus, this thesis aims to look specifically into the governance of religion and diversity on the European continent. Such an objective diverts the analytical attention to first, the notion of secularism, and second, the notions of religious freedom and liberalism. Whereas the former term is typically thought to subsume the intricate institutional and legal frameworks put in place by Western European states to interact with religious actors and institutions, the latter couplet is normally used in reference to the fundamental rights afforded to individual citizens by sovereign European states.

Although these definitions cannot be deemed erroneous, secularism, religious freedom, and liberalism entail discussions that are more complex than these straightforward explanations suggest. In this light, the first part of this chapter introduces the notion of secularism and kindred terms, notably secular, secularization, and the post-secular, in order to better define the notion of ideological secularism. The second part, in turn, discusses religious freedom and liberalism and attempts to bring the ideas of secularism and (il)liberalism together.

A cursory glance at the booming literature on religion and politics indicates that to ask questions about secularism and the governance of religion in Europe is to ask questions about the alleged comeback of religion or de-privatization of religion (Casanova 1994; Casanova 2006a; Thomas 2003); the process of secularization and its validity in Europe (Berger 1996; Stark 1999; Gorski 2000; Davie 2006); the relevance and role of religion in social and political life (Audi 1989; Rawls 1997; Connolly 1999; Habermas 2006; Taylor 2007); the evolution of church-state relations and attending institutional arrangements (S. Ferrari 1988; Stepan 2000; Fox 2008); the process of religious pluralization and the growing importance of Islam in Europe (Allievi 2005b; Roy 2006;

Meer and Modood 2009); the challenges currently faced by the secular state (Berman et al 2013); and the governmental promotion of religious freedom, both domestically and internationally (Hurd 2012; Annicchino 2013). And these are just a few prevalent lines of academic inquiry. Perhaps, however, pervading and generating these inquiries is a set of more fundamental questions regarding the very nature of secularism. After all, what is secularism? What is the relationship between secularism and similar terms, such as secular, secularization, and the post-secular? Shall these terms be used interchangeably, or do they denote different processes? And how are they related to religion?

The importance of defining these terms and their interconnections goes beyond the traditional academic concern with terminology and variable operationalization. Notions such as secular and secularism have been taken-for-granted for long and, thus, represent more than nominal references to an intricate reality which must be disentangled before scientific inquiry. These terms are a part of the dominant metanarrative used by the Western world to think about reality as such. In other words, they may be considered "concepts of politics", which "do not simply provide a lens through which to observe a process that is independent of them…they are themselves part of that political life—they help to constitute it, to make what it is" (Connolly 1983, 180).

Therefore, it does not suffice to state at the outset of this study what is meant by the words secular, secularism, secularization, and religion. This exercise would likely be arbitrary and biased, in that it could replicate questionable assumptions about religion and politics. More specifically, it could lead to the essentialization and reification of social entities and phenomena studied. A few words on these problems are in order here, especially since understanding their operation and potential implications is crucial to grasp the emergence and evolution of a scholarship that is largely critical of secularism. Moreover, as further explained below, such understanding is important to locate the objectives of this thesis within the broader literature on secularism.

Essentializing techniques reduce the multifarious and evolving characteristics of a social group to a few central, stylized features, which are said to incorporate the group's putative essence (Bottici and Challand 2010). Consequently, cultures, civilizations, religions may be treated as though

they were homogeneous entities: the Muslim civilization, the extremist culture, the secular West. The resulting representation of the entities concerned is typically misleading (Said 1998).[4] Essentialization is closely related to reification, which happens when social products are taken for granted, that is, when they are treated as naturally given in the world. Thus, it "implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world, and, further, that the dialectic between man, the producer, and his products is lost to consciousness" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 54).

These techniques have problematic implications, notably they tend to promote depoliticization, especially when liberal terms support their operation (Connolly 1983, 1995, 1999; Mouffe 2005; Brown 2009). By promoting a depoliticized, post-political or nonfoundational view of society, these techniques do more than simply disguise the historical character of social formations; they also cover the workings of power in producing these formations. Therefore, political and scholarly positions that rely on essentializing and reifying techniques underplay both history and power in their accounts of the world (Brown 2009).

When it comes to religion and secularism, it is noteworthy that together, these techniques have for long helped to depoliticize discourse on the governance of religious life in Western Europe. Thus, religious and secular identities have become, or rather, have been considered innate and unchangeable, whereas existing secular institutions have been typically presented as neutral and set in stone. That these scholarly faults are easily detectable in the early works on the global resurgence of religion[5] indicates the necessity of adopting a perspective on religion and politics that is both more critical and dynamic, that is, a perspective that allows for the analysis of the historical embeddedness, political deployment, and productive operation of the terms studied.

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[4] Said (1998), for instance, criticizes Huntington's (1993) depiction of the Islamic civilization not only for being reductionist, but also for being negatively biased against Muslims: it is "as if what most matters about it [Islam] is its supposed anti-Westernism...you get the impression that that's all they are thinking about is how to destroy the West, bomb it and destroy the whole world really" (Said 1998, 4).

[5] As noted in the previous footnote, Huntington's (1993) "The Clash of Civilizations" has been extensively criticized for essentializing religions and the notion of civilizations, most notably by Said (1998). Juergensmeyer's (2003) *Terror in the Mind of God*, first published in the early 1990s, has been similarly charged. In the same way, Appleby (2011), co-director of the "Fundamentalist Project", launched in the early 1990s to understand the phenomenon after which it was named, has taken note of the problem of reification in academic endeavors concerned with fundamentalism, secularism, and religion.

Several authors have, of course, taken up the challenge of analyzing the secular and kindred terms. Because of these scholarly efforts, it is now possible not only to distinguish between secular, secularism, and secularization, but also to identify the most commonly used definitions of these terms and their chief social and political implications. The next sub-sections introduce these terms and corresponding meanings, relying on a critical strand of the literature on secularism. As it is shown, these open definitions try to defy the faults of essentialization and reification, thereby, allowing religion and secularism to be understood more dynamically.

The Secular

The history of "the secular" is well known and, at first sight, rather straightforward. Pertaining originally to theological discourse, the term *saeculum,* from which the word secular derives, applied to profane time and indicated a period of waiting, to be concluded upon Christ's return to Earth (Taylor 1998). Thereafter, its deployment was gradually expanded to new contexts. Notably, following Saint Augustine's distinction between the City of God and the City of Man, secular came to refer to worldly affairs, as opposed to religious ones—a division rooted in the fear that profane concerns would have contaminated the sacred sphere. Moreover, the term was adopted in churchly vocabulary to designate members of the clergy engaged in this-world's matters. After the Protestant Reformation, the term's meaning was further distanced from its religious origins: it was thenceforth primarily used to denote the transfer of property, functions, and institutions from the Church to laymen (Taylor 1998; Taylor 2011; Calhoun et al 2011). Overall, then, from conveying a Christian demand of distance between ecclesiastical institutions and the state, the content of the term was progressively altered, in a semantic transition that culminated in its reverse usage: it now expresses the emancipation of the state and its institutions from spiritual guidance and authority (Asad 2003).

In accordance with this transition, over the past century or so, "secular" has also been used to signify reality, the factual dimension of the world, freed from any sort of religious inspiration or

sensibility (Hurd 2004, Calhoun et al 2011). In fact, for most of the twentieth century, the term was unproblematically used as a neutral and rather straightforward adjective and noun. As an adjective, it was used to describe an essential feature of Western Europe, well summarized in Berger's (1996, 5) description of a "massively secular Euro-culture." Characterizations of this sort, however, have served essentialization purposes: they have helped to reduce the varied and dynamic religiosity of European populations to a unique representation, said to reflect the *modern* essence of the continent (Bottici and Challand 2010). As a noun, in turn, the term has served reification purposes. Thus used, the term denoted a self-standing and objective sphere of life—that of reality. Nevertheless, this usage disregarded that religion and "secular" are not entities naturally given in the world; rather, they are and have always been the result of society's ordinary practices and interactions. In short, they are not only concepts of politics, but also social constructions (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Notwithstanding these issues, until recently, "secular" was unproblematically considered a neutral and passive term used to designate a clear-cut and separate domain of social reality, a domain from which something called "religion" was absent (Calhoun et al 2011). In the meantime, religion was primarily described and analyzed as though it were an obvious and readily observable phenomenon, a matter-of-fact that could be clearly differentiated from the secular domain of social and political life (McCutcheon 2003; Fitzgerald 2011). Accordingly, it has typically been represented as an external and troubling influence on a predominantly secular reality. Seemingly innocuous, these uses have been, however, productive: they have influenced many fields of state activity, as well as prevalent modes of scientific inquiry. In this light, Charles Taylor's (2007) description of modernity as "a secular age"—that is to say, a period of history in which being secular is not just an option, but the natural condition of human life—seems to capture a defining feature of Western thought.

Despite the hegemonic power of this conceptualization, since the late 1980s, a more critical line of scholarship has emerged, which has taken issue with the prevalent definition of "secular" and its underlying assumptions. Following the so-called resurgence of religion, authors with diverse disciplinary backgrounds—ranging from anthropology to legal studies—have adopted a critical

stance toward the dualistic "this-world-the-other-world" perspective and worked in collaborative ways to untangle *the* secular and *the* religious.[6] This shift in scholarly thinking has led to the creation of new threads of research, which go beyond the concern with the process of secularization. Examples of these newly formed research groups may be found under the titles "politics of secularism", "modes of secularism", and "critical secularism", even though unifying labels have not been agreed upon thus far (Jakelic 2010). In the enterprise of contesting the secular, seminal contributions have been written by many authors, including Talal Asad, Charles Taylor, and Jose Casanova, all of whom have opposed, to some extent, the simplistic secular–real equation and denounced the instability, and thus, impossibility of a clear-cut division between a secular reality and religion.

In line with the above-quoted passage, Taylor (2007, 3) purports that the secular is "a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual or religious experience and search takes place" (Taylor 2007, 3). Similarly, Casanova (2009, 1049) defines the secular as "a central modern category...to construct, codify, grasp, and experience a realm or reality differentiated from "the religious"". Asad (2003), in turn, argues that "secular" is an epistemic category or, in other words, "the epistemological domain in which history exists as history" (Asad 2003, 43). Together, these arguments suggest that although the secular is indeed related to something called religion, it is more than the space in which real human life occurs. To clarify these similar theoretical views, it is interesting to mention the work of Mavelli (2012), who building on Taylor (2007) and Asad (2003) and borrowing from the oeuvre of Michel Foucault, puts forward the existence of a secular *episteme*, that is, a secular system of concepts and classifications within which all thinking and action take place. By resorting to the notion of *episteme*, Mavelli (2012) is pointing out that the secular, as an epistemic category, has contributed to shaping not only state activities and modes of scientific inquiry, but also modern subjectivity, sensibilities, knowledge, and practices. It has, thus, fundamentally conditioned Western European modes of being and knowing.

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[6] For an overview of the burgeoning and varied literature on secular, secularism, and secularization, see Jakelic (2010).

This is not to say that the secular formation predates social and political actions of human beings—saying so would be tantamount to reifying the secular. On the contrary, as Asad (2003) notes, the secular, in its multiple configurations, has been formed and transformed over time as a result of the coming together of different sensibilities, concepts and practices, in ways that have often been discontinuous and contradictory. Albeit relying on a more traditional historical approach, Taylor (2007, 95) too is skeptical about developing a straight, causal account of the secular. He clarifies that his is a "zig-zag account, one full of unintended consequences". Thus, even though the term's etymology and hegemonic character suggest a linear conceptual evolution leading to semantic maturity and stability, the secular, understood as a "context of understanding" or an "epistemological domain," is "neither singular in origin nor stable in its historical identity" (Asad 2003, 25). Hence, power and history matter in understanding the secular formation and its hegemonic character.

Furthermore, if the roads towards the current secular "context of understanding" have been as tortuous and inadvertent as suggested by these authors, the modern narrative of a universal, progressive and teleological process of human development, flowing from primitive religion to modern secularity (Casanova 2009), cannot be deemed tenable. These critical observations not only undermine twentieth-century modernization claims, but also imply that a fundamental prerequisite of modernity should no longer be taken-for-granted: the process of secularization.

Secularization

Like "secular", the term secularization has undergone complex etymological transformations. Despite its multiple historical meanings, secularization has typically denoted the process of "making worldly", that is, of converting into civil the originally ecclesiastical functions of persons, objects and institutions (Casanova 2006a). Accordingly, the term has also been used in reference to a number of factual, historical developments, such as church-state separation, religious privatization and the process of functional differentiation of the religious, political, economic and social spheres (Casanova

2006b; Asad 2006). In this respect, it is important to remark that secularization has played a fundamental role in the history of the contemporary secular condition. Two moments of this historical development deserve mentioning: The Early Modern period and the past couple of centuries.

Regarding the first moment, it is noteworthy that, at first, neither the establishment of a secular–religious division, nor the Augustinian conceptualization of two separate cities, that of man and that of God, lead to the cancellation of religion's role as a system of classification of the social world. As Casanova (1994) clarifies, the institutionalization of this "double dualism"[7] did not mean that faith had instantly lost its epistemological status; rather, as Aquinas' theology suggests, faith and reason were thenceforth thought of as equally valid epistemological foundations of two separate systems of classification, both of which led to one single truth—that of God (Casanova 1994; Mavelli 2012). It was only with the empirical-historical process of secularization that faith's status was disavowed, and the churchly system of classification faded away (or retreated to the private realm). In its place, a uniquely secular *episteme* emerged, according to which knowledge and, thus, the real world could only be that which was secular, empirical, and rational. Consequently, religion ceased to be "the all-encompassing reality" in which human thinking and action took place; the secular, of course, reclaimed that position for itself (Casanova 1994, 15).

This brief historical overview indicates that secularization was more than the legal passage of functions, property, institutions from ecclesiastical authority to civil rule. It was also a process that ran deeper into the social fabric, generating the conditions of possibility of what is now unproblematically called secular reality. Secularization accomplished an "ideological inversion:" in virtue of its operation, the secular—originally a part of theological vocabulary, as argued—became "the ground from which theological discourse was generated (as a form of false consciousness) and from which it gradually emancipated itself in its march to freedom" (Asad 2003, 192). In virtue of

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[7] Casanova (2004, 14) refers to a "double dualism," instead of simple dualism, because, according to him, Medieval Christian theology foresaw more than merely a secular and a religious realm; it created a tripartite division, which was based on a secular–religious separation in this world, as well as on a this-world–other-world separation. The Church, with its sacramental nature, occupied both worlds, and thus, assumed the role of mediator between them.

this "ideological inversion", it is now Western secular modernity that conceives and delineates the notion "religion", both as a historical category and as a concept that may be universally applicable.

However important, the powerful workings of secularization have not been exhausted in the Early Modern period. Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, secularization played a similarly central role in the history of the secular. More specifically, in this second moment, the appropriation of the word by political actors and social scientists has brought forth new and productive meanings to it. Additionally, it has generated much confusion as to what secularization is and as to which social processes constitute it.

Inspired by the revolution in thinking brought about by the Enlightenment, theories of secularization started to emerge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the objective of explaining the then ongoing compartmentalization of social life and, by implication, the place religion was to occupy in modern societies (Casanova 1994). In fact, Aldridge (2000) suggests that classical sociology was firstly instigated by concerns related to religion and its role in modernity. However, drawing primarily on the Western European experience and adopting strict rationalist standpoints, the founding fathers of contemporary social sciences—notably Comte, Weber, Freud, Durkheim, and Marx—thought of religion in primarily reductionist ways. First, most of them assumed that as societies evolved, religion would gradually fade away and eventually disappear. Science would arrogate to itself religion's place as *the* system of understanding and means of achieving knowledge about the world. Second, most of them held an instrumental view of religion, and accordingly, attributed its existence to functions external to its doctrines, such as supporting the capitalist ideology (Marx) and promoting the social integration of individuals (Durkheim). Despite its strict rationalism, this early scholarly thinking on religion remained tacitly committed to a Judeo-Christian view of time, which conceived history as a linear progression towards a desired final goal— the Kingdom of God, in Christian doctrine, and modernity, in the then nascent sociological discipline (Aldridge 2000). Because of this deep-rooted and unchallenged understanding, the notion of

secularization undertook an evolutionary turn: it was believed to go hand in hand with modernization, as though the latter process both generated and depended on the former (Fox 2013).

Theories of modernization were built upon evolutionary assumptions, which theorized that the differentiation of spheres of life and the specialization of functions—alleged markers of modernity—resulted from a number of interlinked economic, social, cultural and political transformations, not least of which was the process of secularization (Madeley 2009). These theories subscribed to Enlightened understandings of religion as an irrational force in the world, and thus, foresaw no place for its transcendental sensibilities and inspirations in truly modern societies. Secularization was bound to occur everywhere at some point in time, since the whole world was thought to be marching toward modernity. It is remarkable, however, that by interlocking secularization and modernization, social thinkers have actually imbued the former process with a novel meaning, namely: the decline and, in some cases, the disappearance of religious beliefs, in both societies and individual minds.[8] This meant, in short, that modern individuals were expected to "outgrow belief in the supernatural" (Stark 1999, 249). As Casanova (2006a) contends, this meaning was especially appealing in twentieth-century Western Europe, where the process of "making worldly" and that of religious decline were believed to be intrinsically connected (with the latter thought to be a secondary consequence of the former).

To be sure, Western Europe did undergo deep secularization, however understood. Even though secularization acquired at least three different meanings in the twentieth-century sociological literature, all of them have been applicable to the region. First, as mentioned, until the 1970s, secularization referred mainly to the thesis that as societies modernize, religion gradually disappears "both in society and in the minds of individuals" (Berger 1999, 2). Nowadays, sociologists

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[8] This presentation of secularization theory is simplistic and reductionist. More than referring to one single theory, the term secularization has come to denote a sociological debate, a paradigm, and a research program. Scholarly interest in the process has resulted in several theories concerning religious change, and not all theories advance the propositions of religious decline and disappearance. Gorski (2000), for example, identifies at least four basic academic positions regarding religious change, namely: disappearance, decline, privatization, and transformation. Despite this theoretical richness, the present section is less interested in recounting in detail the academic debate on the issue than in pointing out the real-world consequences of scholarly engagements with reality.

acknowledge that this prediction is valid exclusively for Western Europe, where substantive declines in belief and church attendance have been well documented (Berger 1996; Casanova 2006a; Davie 2006). Second, secularization has also typically referred to the process of religious privatization, an idea still widely accepted and defended in Europe. A third and related meaning has been the differentiation of secular spheres of social life—the state, the economy, the society—from religious principles, norms, and institutions. Needless to say, in Western Europe, the precept that religion should be kept at a distance from other domains of life is not only generally accepted, but also deeply incorporated into institutional arrangements (Berger 1996; Casanova 2006b).

All in all, according to sociological standards, Western Europe is indeed secular. Nonetheless, currently, social scientists acknowledge that the region is the global exception rather than the rule (Davie 2006; Berger, Davie and Fokas 2008). As Berger (1999, 2) puts it, "the world today...is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever". In this light, it has been argued that the problem of most twentieth-century accounts of secularization is that they simply do not fit the data: neither did modernization outside of the European continent lead to a decay of religious belief and participation—the United States being the case in point—nor did religion lose its prominence in the international public sphere (Berger, Davie and Fokas 2008). Notwithstanding this, the secularization thesis had a strong hold on the sociological discipline for decades, particularly in Europe. This long-standing dominance begs the following question: did secularization function "an analytic tool or a value judgment?" (Swatos and Christiano 1999, 211). In other words, was it descriptive category or was it productively normative?

Casanova (2006b, 17) seems to lean toward the second answer—productively normative—when suggesting that secularization has become a "self-fulfilling prophecy" in Western Europe. According to the author, it is because local populations as well as political and institutional actors tacitly bought into the idea that modernization leads to secularization that the process of religious

decay advanced unchallenged on the continent.[9] Furthermore, Casanova (2006b) reasons that if this is the case, European secularization must be explained differently from what has been hitherto proposed by sociological accounts. He suggests that, instead of being understood as a result of rationalization, urbanization, economic development, amongst other modern processes[10], secularization should be approached as evidence of the "triumph of the knowledge regime of secularism" (Casanova 2006b, 17).

Casanova's choice of words in this passage is noteworthy for two reasons. First, the author introduces a new term, secularism, and thereby, takes this discussion a step forward. However—and this is the second point—Casanova also takes the discussion a step backward by using the expression "knowledge regime", which strongly echoes Foucault's work. Considering this brief Foucauldian leaning in Casanova's (2006b) writing, it is possible to identify a connection between his arguments and a couple of notions introduced previously: that of secular *episteme,* advanced by Mavelli (2012), and that of epistemic category, put forth by Asad (2003). Casanova (2009, 1051) supports this theoretical connection in a different article by referring to secularism as "an epistemic knowledge regime", which is tacitly "held and phenomenologically assumed as the taken-for-granted structure of modern reality, as a modern *doxa* or 'unthought'". By defining secularism as such, Casanova (2009) seems to agree with Mavelli (2012) and Asad (2003), to whom secularism is first and foremost a political doctrine. This doctrine has been made possible by the impingement of the secular *episteme* on modern subjectivity, ways of knowing, and practices. Further, it has helped to form a homogeneous body of citizens by "redefin[ing] and transcend[ing] particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion" (Asad 2003, 5).

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[9] This is a simplification of Casanova's argument. In his 2009 article "The Secular and Secularisms", Casanova elaborates on this idea of secularization as a self-fulfilling prophecy. He clarifies that secularization in Western Europe has been phenomenologically mediated by the historical experience of "having overcome religious irrationality," which is in turn closely related to a secularist stadial consciousness. The latter, he continues, is indebted to Enlightenment thinking, and in line with this tradition of thought, approaches Europe's secularizing experience as a positive one, as evidence of a process of maturation, of human flourishing. Thus, the author attributes to this modern stadial consciousness the responsibility for having reinforced the connection between secularism and modernity. See more in Casanova (2009).

[10] For a list of the alleged general causes of secularization, see Bruce (2009).

Secularism

The contention that secularism is a political doctrine (Asad 2003; Mavelli 2012), an ideology (Casanova 2009; Kuru 2009), a "modality of political rule" (Mahmood 2006, 329), or an "expression of the state's sovereign power" (Agrama 2010, 500) may sound odd and misplaced considering the secularism's centrality in the liberal and democratic tradition of Western European states. In fact, commonsensical knowledge suggests that defining secularism is a straightforward task, and one that has nothing to do with ideological and political alignments. Conventionally understood, secularism is the separation of church and state, an institutional principle that is crucial for the maintenance of social peace and public order in contemporary liberal democracies. More specifically, secularism is about keeping religious inspirations in the private sphere, and accordingly, behaving reasonably in the public square (Rawls and Habermas' early work corroborate this view).

Although this definition resonates with contemporary legal and political understandings of the term, it has recently been contested by the global de-privatization of religion and the religious pluralization of Europe. These developments have generated additional questions, concerning, for instance, the definition of religion, the boundaries between public–private and religious–secular, and even, the meaning of "reasonable". These and other questions indicate that an ordinary definition of secularism is insufficient from both an empirical and a theoretical standpoint. The remainder of this section discusses additional usages, contents, and implications of secularism. Following this discussion, the definition of secularism prioritized in this thesis is clearly stated.

To begin with, it must be clarified that the commonsensical response replicated above should not be deemed erroneous. Currently, secularism is indeed an institutional component of Western liberal and democratic states, even when national constitutions do not include the term secular or one of its cognates, such as laic. In legal and political speeches, for instance, secularism is typically used in reference to, or alongside the notions of church–state separation, state neutrality, and religious

freedoms. This ordinary definition contains elements that serve as interesting starting points for an academic analysis of secularism. Two such elements may be mentioned here. First, as suggested by the idea of separation, secularism is "a stance to be taken about religion" (Bilgrami 2011, 2). Second, as suggested by its public character, secularism is a primarily *political* stance, after all, it is confined to the polity or, put differently, to the political realm (Bilgrami 2011). Nonetheless, as with the terms secular and secularization, several social scientists have recently found this ordinary definition to be insufficient to analyze contemporary phenomena concerning religion and its governance. As argued above, when secularism is understood as a given and stable institutional trait of modern nation-states, scholars risk reifying the term and losing sight of its broader implications.

In this light, social scientists have adopted perspectives on secularism that, albeit different, share a commitment of critical engagement with reality. This critical posture may be perceived in a common concern with the discontinuous, historically contingent evolution of the concept of secularism within its original cradle, Western Europe (Hurd 2004). The revival of secularism's historical and cultural embeddedness helps to counter the depoliticizaton of the secular–religious debate, often attained via essentialization and reification techniques. Hence, when authors such as Asad (2003), Casanova (2006a), and Taylor (2007) approach secularism as a historical condition, they question right from the outset the commonsensical notion that secularism is merely a universal, stable, and procedural arrangement meant to uphold individual freedoms and equality in the face of religious diversity. This is because historical also means contingent, social and, more importantly, political. Thus, these and other authors mobilize history and power to counter attempts to depoliticize an inherently contentious world (Connolly 1983; Mouffe 2005).

Another interesting point raised by these critical accounts is that secularism, enacted primarily but not only by citizenship, has served the wider purpose of dealing with diversity as such (Asad 2003). For one thing, its liberal solutions to the problem of bringing a plurality of conceptions of life under the purview of one single authority have served as blueprints for dealing with other types of communal identities (specifically on religious freedom, see Ahdar and Leigh 2005). Thus, the

literature produced by this critical line of scholarship suggests that secularism has been more than simply a stance about religion; it is, more broadly, a *political* stance about societal *diversity*.

Considering history has not been the sole strategy adopted by critical authors. Several of them have also pointed out the unstable, politically dynamic character of secularism in present-days. To this end, they have demonstrated, for example, that strict institutional separation and neutrality do not exist in practice, not even in the French republic (Bauberot 1998). Focusing on the socio-political dimension of secularism, Connolly (2011) has similarly remarked that most contemporary modes of thought and operational practices cannot be deemed strictly secular or religious. Notably, our routine micropolitics—expressed, for example, "in the interplay of gestures, words, music, images, rhythms, and story tokens on the media"—incessantly breaches the secular–religious boundary as well as the line separating public and private realms (Connolly 2011, 649). These critical accounts indicate that commonsensical views about the proper place of religion (and other differences) in the public sphere find little correspondence in political practice and everyday experience.

At this point, it is interesting to reiterate that it is by adopting *critical, historical and political* perspectives that these scholarly accounts succeed in avoiding the reification of secularism and the essentialization of religion and other forms of social and political identification. Once it becomes clear that the stance taken by secularism vis-à-vis religion is neither uniform nor lasting, the meaning of neither terms can be taken-for-granted. Inasmuch as secularism is considered a politically dynamic conception, any analysis of it needs to problematize its history and content. This also implies that secularism must be considered political in more than one sense: in addition to referring to the polity, as emphasized by Bilgrami (2011), secularism must be so regarded because it is continuously defined and re-defined in public contests, particularly in those contests over the governance of religion.

In taking note of the term's contested character, Starrett (2010, 635) suggests that secularism may be understood as "an essentially contested concept," the meaning of which cannot be definitely settled or agreed-upon because it "represent[s] [an] important moral categor[y] and because [it] constitute[s] the terms in which the debate is carried out." This reading indicates that secularism

functions as both a *stake* in, and a *means* through which contemporary political battles over religion are conducted.[11] In fact, in considering the term's participation in such battles, social scientists, especially those interested in politics, have shifted their lines of inquiry: instead of focusing on what secularism is or should be—questions typically raised by political philosophers—they have started to investigate what secularism *does* (Agrama 2010). Despite their different methods and perspectives, scholars looking into this practical aspect of secularism seem to agree that it is a political doctrine, which functions as both a worldview and a peculiar means to govern religion and, more broadly, social and cultural diversity (see, amongst others, Asad 2003; Hurd 2004; Mahmood 2006; Casanova 2009; Agrama 2010). This double role suggests that secularism may not only be presented as a neutral, liberal, and rational doctrine that effectively solves the problem of diversity but may also function as a (problematic) carrier of the secular *episteme* and of the projects of statehood and secular modernity.

At this point, it is possible to return to the discussion regarding the definition of secularism, and to the odd idea that it may be approached as a political doctrine. The foregoing considerations suggest that the complexity generated by this discussion is in part related to secularism's double role: it is presented to us as an ideal (Connolly 1999), but it functions as a modality of political rule (Mahmood 2006). Moreover, these roles seem to be intrinsically intertwined, a fact that certainly troubles analytical endeavors. This is because secularism appears to play simultaneously normative and pragmatic roles in modern societies: on the one hand, it is invoked to describe and illustrate what reality ought to be, and on the other hand, it functions as a powerful means of achieving specific political goals of the state. The following elaborates on these roles and their interconnections.

Secularism may be considered an ideal insofar as it puts forth "an idealized vision of political life that "strains metaphysics out of politics" and "dredges out of public life as much cultural density and depth as possible" in order to secure the authority of public reason and a rational morality" (Scherer 2011, 623). In accordance with this view—which is inherently controversial—adherents of

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[11] As it is discussed later, this statement is compatible with the view put forth by critical discourse analysts on the central role played by discourse in political disputes.

secularism are typically committed to transforming and limiting political life in specific ways. Interestingly, in virtue of its ideational force, secularism emerges as a "statecraft principle," as put by Casanova (2009, 1051). This practical implication of secularism's ideational force is, of course, related to the second role of secularism as a mode of political rule.

Despite its claims, secularism is not a neutral political doctrine; rather, it has contributed to shaping modern practices and modes of thinking, including the ideas of what constitutes religion and which spaces may legitimately be called private and public (Hurd 2004; Salvatore 2006). In other words, secularism "instantiates the epistemic idea of the secular" (Mavelli 2012, 69). Secularism has helped to enforce secular worldviews and, thereby, to delineate a particular type of authority, the political authority of the sovereign nation-state (Hurd 2004). As Hurd (2004, 237) contends, even "though secularism purports to stand outside the contested territory of religion and politics, it does not. Secularism is located on the spectrum of theological politics!". Thus, the division between religion and politics does not precede the enactment of secularism—it is a consequence of it.

That the political authority delineated by secularism is currently above and beyond alternative types of authority—flowing from other individual and communitarian identifications, such as religious ones—is partly attributable to secularism's role in the formation of national societies and liberal citizenship. It is no surprise, then, that current problems concerning secularism are related to interrogations concerning social diversification, immigration, and citizenship. If, on the one hand, secularism contributed to the breaking of religiously-established bonds between individuals in the Early Modern period, and thus, to the dismantlement of what had been the Medieval basis of community life, i.e. religion, on the other hand, it helped to integrate society through the development of nationalist doctrines and the establishment of a homogenizing type of citizenship—one which, as argued before, replaced people's particular identities by a unifying experience (Thomas 2003; Mavelli 2011; Asad 2003). The relationship established between secularism and citizenship is particularly interesting: the latter's equalizing/homogenizing power is connected to the former's ability of transcending the diversity that characterizes the social body. Thus, it may be argued that secularism,

as a mode of political rule, has and continues to help sovereign states to establish themselves through the governance of religion and, more broadly, of diversity—a point returned to in Part II of this thesis. Based on the foregoing, it is plausible to suggest that secularism frequently appears as a stake in contests over religion and politics not only because it is an ideal, but also because it is a powerful means through which the sovereign power of the state operates.

The Post-secular

Over the past decade, scholars have increasingly payed attention to the post-secular. The prevalence of this notion alone suggests that it should be included in this terminological overview. Although debates on the post-secular have emerged in response to changing political realities, the term has been largely confined to the halls of academic institutions. Thus, the definition of post-secular has been primarily a subject of intellectual contestation. Moreover, while the post-secular has gained much currency, some scholars have preferred to not to abandon the secular vocabulary, discussing current events as the result either of a crisis of specific secular arrangements or of the emergence of alternative ways of being secular. Regardless of terminological preferences, the emergence of the "post-secular" (or of new ways of being secular) is said to refer to real-world transformations, that is, to changes in prevailing social and political perceptions, discourses, and policies. These transformations have also led to new trends in the governance of religious diversity.

Several scholars have employed the term post-secular descriptively to narrate a global process of religious resurgence, which has presumably undermined deep-seated secularization beliefs (Mavelli and Petito 2012; Gorski et al 2012). In Western Europe, this post-secular condition is said to mirror several factual transformations, such as religious pluralization, the emergence of new forms of religiosity, and the re-invigoration of traditional religious identities, including Muslim and Christian ones (Bader 2012). Despite the contested empirical validity of these descriptive accounts, they suggest that the secular metanarrative of modernity, once widely held, is no longer dominant.

Currently, scholars and political actors largely acknowledge that religion is here to stay and, consequently, attempt to grapple with this rediscovered reality. In this context, another employment of the post-secular has gained currency: the term has emerged as a call for novel ways of integrating religious perspectives into politics, especially among scholars (Boy 2011; Mavelli and Petito 2012).

Habermas (2005) has been the first proponent of this normative understanding of the post-secular. After 9/11, concerned with the alienating and morally ambiguous conditions of modernity and their repercussions to democracy, he revived Böckenförde's (2006, 68) dictum[12] and inquired: what, beyond the abstract "love for freedom", is to bring social bodies together under the uncertain and plural circumstances of secular modernity? It is interesting to remark that this articulation of the problem mirrors the traditional articulation of the problem of diversity and bespeaks the inadequacy of stringent secularist stances in the face of new drives to social and religious pluralization.

It was in trying to grasp this challenging reality that Habermas (2008) coined the term post-secular. This notion has included an acceptance of the tenuous and controversial character of secular–religious boundaries, as well as a recognition of the public value of cultural and religious traditions. According to Habermas (2005; 2008), the normative import of these traditions—endowed, as they are, with lively pools of identity and morality—helps to nurture and to restore the unifying bond of liberal democracies. In virtue of these powerful resources, Habermas (2005; 2008) suggests that the liberal secular state should open itself to religious inputs, even in politics. Religion, he argues, contributes to strengthening that unifying societal culture, which lends legitimacy and support to the political community. Therefore, the post-secular turn inaugurated by Habermas (2008) acknowledges religion's worth and officially re-inserts religion in the public and political spheres.

The post-secular, however, has not been purely an intellectual exercise. It finds correspondence in several developments in the West, which suggest the emergence of a somewhat more open, inclusive, and accommodating approach to the governance of religious diversity (Bader

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[12] Böckenförde's (2006, 68) dictum reads "the liberal secular state lives on premises that it cannot itself guarantee".

2012). Recent laws, policies, and corporate practices have recognized religious demands for public recognition. Moreover, in Western Europe, Christian traditions and identities have been revived and reassembled in novel ways. To be sure, most of these changes did not come about without some degree of cultural conflict. Furthermore, some of them involved only partial change (for example, cases where rights afforded to majority religions were extended to new religious minorities). Still, together, they have led to new practices of religious governance or, as some argue, to the development of new varieties of secularism, such as inclusive or "moderate secularism" (Modood 2010).

This emerging post-secular imagination seems to be informed by a "multicultural sensibility" (Modood 2013), which requires prevailing social boundaries—between religious and secular, public and private, self and other—to be revised. Thus, governance practices and discourses that are more welcoming of religious diversity have surfaced, although they have not always been predominant. Therefore, this post-secular turn seems to pluralize the public sphere and the political domain with a view to overcoming the limits and ambiguities of liberal types of secularism.

Nevertheless, the post-secular, too, has been criticized. Although post-secularism—the political doctrine derived from this new, post-secular view—does conceive of modes of governance that are more open to the contributions of religions, critical studies show that this is not always the case. In Europe, for example, one aspect of this chiefly intellectual post-secular imagination has recently gained popular assent, namely: the acknowledgment of the role played by Christianity (and, to some extent, Judaism) in the formation of secular modernity and liberal democracy (Braidotti et al 2014). Several European public figures, including scholars and politicians, have recently rediscovered this Judeo-Christian heritage, especially considering the challenges of pluralism (A. Ferrari 2009a).

As stressed by Braidotti et al (2014), this rediscovery of religious roots has led to the belief that there is a special link between Christian religions and modes of thinking that are secular and rational. This newly acquired historical awareness has been translated into the popular idea that secularism and its philosophical and institutional achievements are a "distillation of Judeo-Christian precepts, notably respect for the law...individual person, the autonomy of the self, moral conscience,

rationality, and the ethics of love" (Braidotti et al 2014, 2). As a consequence of this idea, these religions have been often featured in political and academic narratives as though they had been the conditions of possibility for the emergence of rational thinking and practice (see, for example, Siedentop 2011). However, this notion of post-secularism may become problematic.

Regardless of the historical validity of the claim that Christianity and Judaism contributed to Western European development, the political usage and potential implications of this claim are problematic, notably because they may contribute to formulating and/or reinforcing exclusionary discourses. When the cultural identity of Europe is associated to certain religious traditions, secular and cultural lines of demarcation meet, making it harder for "foreign" religions to integrate into a European continent that is liberal, rational, and secular because it is, or has been Christian.

Another problematic aspect of this notion of post-secularism is that it tends to essentialize religious identities, and to narrowly redefine the category of religion. Since Christianity is considered the foundation of liberal and secular values, this religious tradition is often approached as though it were the moral or normative register of Western Europe. Supporting to this instrumental approach is the view that Christian moral beliefs merely "took on a new secular life" with the rise of liberalism (Siedentop 2011, 197). From these ideas, it follows that Christian religions are, below their comprehensive and encumbering structures, ultimately civil, rational, and reasonable. However, such characterizations reproduce secular modes of thinking, in addition to defining religion in narrow and demanding ways, which may even undermine Christian self-understandings.

All in all, this particular notion of post-secularism does not overcome the issues faced by secularism: it may still lead to essentialization and social exclusion. Moreover, insofar as it functions as a political doctrine, post-secularism does not appear to differ significantly from the conceptualization of secularism presented previously. Given that conceptualization, practices and discourses currently identified as post-secular appear to be mere varieties of secularism, which do not conform with strict liberal understandings of the framework. Thus, while it is important to consider

the discursive and pragmatic roles that the post-secular and post-secularism play in contemporary debates over religion and politics, this thesis is still primarily concerned with secularism.

Institutional, Philosophy and Ideological Secularism

Given the theoretical character of the foregoing discussion, this section attempts to elucidate the notion of secularism that guides this study. To begin with, it should be reiterated that this thesis is primarily concerned with secularism, and not with the secular, the post-secular, or the process of secularization. The previous sections elaborated on these themes and hopefully clarified that, despite their intrinsic interconnections, these terms may be considered separately. Furthermore, from the discussion above, one may reasonably contend that secularism is a multiplicity of things: an institutional arrangement, a liberal ideal, a political doctrine, a modality of political rule, *etc*. While none of these definitions is completely adequate—the propriety of such judgment would depend on the matter investigated—they must be distinguished and assembled in a meaningful way if secularism is to serve as an object of analysis and/or a heuristic device.

To deal with the multifaceted character of secularism, it is useful to refer, once again, to the bursting literature on the topic. A brief examination of this body of work allows the discernment of three related, yet different conceptualizations of secularism (which overlap in certain places and at some points in time). The first of these may be referred to as "institutional secularism." As the name indicates, this conceptualization is material and formalistic, in that it approaches secularism as a cluster of constitutional principles, a set of arrangements of church-state relations, and a constellation of laws and policies. Put differently, it refers to those principles, institutions, laws, and policies which ensure the dissociation of theocratic and civil authorities. Academic contributions working with this definition are typically legal or political studies interested in conflicts of values, laws, public policies and policy-making (Koenig 2007; Minkenberg 2007; Stephan 2011; Zucca 2012).

Second, one may also identify a form of "philosophy secularism" within the literature on religion and politics. Associated with prominent figures, such as Rawls (1993; 1997), Audi (1997), Habermas (2006), and Böckenförde (2006), this strand of literature chiefly discusses normative matters: what is secularism? What ought it be? How shall its benefits be sustained and/or maximized in the face of deep pluralism? From these normative accounts, secularism normally surfaces as a liberal ideal and achievement, responsible for promoting the common good in communities composed of individuals who adhere to diverse conceptions of the good life. Until recently, secularism was thought to have attained this difficult objective by privatizing religion, as well as other types of collective identifications, and by encouraging citizens to adopt reasonable, often non-religious, stances when participating in public debates. These philosophical articulations of secularism are related to the institutional version of secularism insofar as they provide the latter with the principles which underlay the establishment of secular institutions. It is, thus, no accident that legal considerations are normally proceeded by philosophical ones.

Third, many authors put under scrutiny a sort of "ideological secularism", that is, a tacit or explicitly held worldview or doctrine about politics and the proper place of collective identities, especially religious ones, in the political realm. This is first and foremost a doctrine about *the political*—its formation, authority, legitimation, composition, and limits. It is important to recall, however, that this doctrine is not only about the political, but is itself political, in that it results from historically contingent political processes, processes through which the secular–religious divide has been formed and transformed. Hence, as argued previously, ideological secularism instantiates the secular *episteme*: it carries out and problematizes its secular political projects; it (re)defines, tames, disciplines, and governs religion as well as other social and political differences. It goes without saying that this third conceptualization overlaps with what has been said about secularism in the previous section—that it is a socially constructed political doctrine and that, as such, it may serve as a statecraft principle, an ideal, and a mode of enacting sovereignty. In this light, philosophy and

institutional secularism may be said to participate in the workings of ideological secularism inasmuch as they aid the enactment of its power, rulings, and authority.

This thesis is concerned with the last, ideological conceptualization of secularism. It asks: how, from being a liberal way to deal with diversity, has secularism become a conspicuously illiberal mode of political rule? How does this shift become thinkable and possible in Western liberal democracies? Before delving into this discussion, it is important to spell out the reasons why the word "ideological" was preferred to describe this third type of secularism.

Despite the negative connotations with which the term "ideology" has been imbued, its usage in this study is not meant to convey any negative assessment of secularism. Following Freeden (1996, 2003), to whom ideology stands alongside political philosophy as an important genre of political thought, the term is to be read as denoting those prevalent forms of political thinking used by actors to give meaning to the world and to each other's behavior.[13] This view suits the critical social constructivist perspective adopted in this thesis, in addition to shedding light on the non-material aspects of social practice, particularly discourse. In fact, critical discourse analysts are also fond of the term, not least for its ability of revealing the political and productive character of language. Both points are better explained in subsequent parts of this thesis.

What is important to retain from the foregoing is that ideology corresponds to the ideational macro-structure used by human beings to make sense of, and to act in the world and that this structure is formed and transformed through social practices, including language use. Furthermore, so conceived, the notion of ideology re-connects secularism, understood as a political doctrine, with the other two conceptualizations mentioned. Both institutional and philosophical secularism participate in the unceasing construction of secularism as a political doctrine. Institutions may, for example, be

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[13] This view is compatible with, yet slightly different from that adopted by Ahmed Kuru (2009) in his *Secularism and State Policies Toward Religion*, since it does not differentiate between culture and ideology. Whereas Kuru (2009) focuses on ideologies as "formal, explicit and relatively inconsistent and held by people within a given institutional setting" (Hanson 2003, 356 as quoted in Kuru 2009, 10), this thesis is also interested in more informal and implicit aspects of the governance of religion, including conceptions of self and other, and relational and expressive views of actors engaged in political contests.

approached as the most tangible expressions of the notion of secularism (and thus, of politics, religion, diversity) prevalent at a particular place and point in time.

Moreover, in this light, ideological secularism may be said to correspond to a form of political thinking about the government of diversity, especially of a religious type, which has helped nation-states to enact their sovereign power throughout the past centuries. It is, thus, a view of the political and, at the same time, a means through which the political is conceived. In other words, it is by asserting authority over the "different", the "particular", the "diverse", and by confining it to an allegedly private domain—functions performed primarily by liberal secularism—that the political delineates its own space and establishes its own power. That which is not considered "different", "particular", or "diverse" is a constituent part of the political community, it is, thus, the "national" the "civil", the "citizen", amongst other terms. In this light, it also becomes more evident how "philosophy secularism" has assisted the enactment of "ideological secularism:" much of the early work of liberal philosophers replicated the power regime established by secularism and, thereby, helped to advance the prevailing secularization narrative (Connolly 1999).

Throughout the past century, authors, such as Rawls and Habermas, postulated that individuals *qua* citizens should not bring their private reasons to public debates, and by the same token, defended that religions should act as civil religions, that is, they should refrain from encroaching upon the political domain and abide by liberal principles and laws. Due to their defense of such strict liberal positions, Connolly (1999, 20-22) suggests that these authors have participated in the story told by twentieth-century secularization narratives. Such narratives, he continues, have become the "dominant self-representation by secularists in several Western states." This argument is remarkably similar to that advanced by Casanova (2009), to whom secularization had become a self-fulfilling prophecy in the West. Hence, by looking at secularism as an ideological doctrine, it is possible to connect not only the three types of secularism discerned, but also the notions of secular, secularism, and secularization—all while maintaining a useful distance between these terms.

Secularism: analytical or political category?

The foregoing discussion raises a number of methodological issues. Notably, it remains unclear how secularism, understood as an ideology, may be approached as an object of analysis. To be sure, the previous sections provide some analytical guidance. First, this thesis is interested in ideational aspects of political engagements with religious diversity—a concern which justifies looking into "ideological secularism". Second, it is interested in how ideas are formed and transformed, as well as in what such ideas do. These concerns are compatible with the politically dynamic view of secularism presented above. Third, since ideas are taken seriously, an interpretative framework of analysis is essential. In line with this requirement, this thesis investigates ideological secularism by analyzing discourse, not least because political contests in liberal democracies are typically conducted via language use. These clarifications may serve as starting points to address some of the methodological issues related to the study of ideological secularism. In what follows, some of such issues are identified and addressed. This exercise is a first step in explaining how secularism is studied throughout this thesis.

A first methodological problem has been raised by Bowen (2010) and Starrett (2010, 628), both of whom suggest that secularism's "usefulness as an analytical concept is suspect" because it partakes in political struggles over the governance of religion. Furthermore, such political embeddedness means that secularism is subject to the particularities of the cultures and societies that mobilize it, and thus, cannot be viewed as one single concept. Together, these points have generated much confusion in the scholarship addressing secularism, a situation well illustrated by the indiscriminate and convoluted usage of the secular vocabulary by scholars.

A second and related methodological problem is that often, when religious rights, beliefs, and practices are at stake in political disputes, a host of additional issues surface which, at first sight, have nothing to do with either secularism or religion. In this respect, it suffices to recall the multitude of themes raised in recent Western European religious controversies, which have included, *inter alia*,

gender equality, immigration, immigrant integration, social cohesion, foreign policy, animal's rights, freedom of expression, and the usage of public space. In some cases, the word secularism barely makes it into public debates, even though religious regulation is at stake. Likewise, disputes about themes with no explicit or direct connection to religion, such as foreign policy, often turn into arguments about religion and politics. These thematic entanglements further complicate endeavors to delineate a clear object of analysis, gather relevant material, and undertake data examination.

Regarding the second issue—the fact that political battles appear to exceed, elude, and even efface secularism—only a few theoretical points may be made at this early point of the discussion. As contended, this thesis does not adopt a restrictive understanding of secularism as merely a doctrine about religion. To be sure, secularism typically manifests itself and gains material expression as a stance about the transcendental. However, one of the arguments defended thus far has been that secularism should be considered more broadly, as a doctrine about politics. In accordance with this wider take on the issue, it may be reasonably argued that secularism is concerned with the management of the diversity (a feature pervasive in every social body). Therefore, secularism may be said to be inseparable from matters related to the plural composition of contemporary societies. Consequently, it should also be seen as standing alongside other conceptions of politics, such as liberalism and multiculturalism. The idea of cluster concept, discussed in the next section, is introduced with the purpose of taking account of this complex constitution of the term.

Turning to the first methodological issue, a more detailed discussion is in order. In taking note of the confusion caused by the indiscriminate usage of the term secularism, Bowen (2010) suggests that the problem of most studies on religion and politics is that they attempt to explain more than one object of study at a time, namely secularism as a historical condition and current problems of religious governance. Scholars are, understandingly, tempted to consider the many and notorious troubles faced by the West in the governance of religion. However, according to Bowen (2010), they often try to do so by investigating secularism as a historical condition, which came about as a result of particular intellectual and social-political developments. In doing so, these scholars fail to appreciate that

current governance problems are socially and politically rooted in very specific regimes and dilemmas, some of which have little to do with abstract and historical theorizations of secularism.

Bowen (2010) contends not only that these are two different objects of study, but also that they require diverse and separate types of analytical engagements. Whereas the secular historical condition calls for a historical genealogy of the type conducted by authors such as Asad (2003) and Taylor (2007), governance problems require a primarily political and legal analysis of contemporary political contexts and institutional arrangements (Bowen 2010). Bowen's (2010) criticism of current scholarship raises valid and important methodological issues. Yet, in light of secularism's dual role, his argument also raises the question of whether it is in fact possible (and desirable) to separate historical secularism and religious governance.[14]

To obtain a better grasp of this question, it is elucidative to consider some parallels between Bowen's (2010) objects of study and the dual function of secularism. It is due to secularism's historical role on the formation of state sovereignty, the "rise of Enlightenment rationality," and "the development of the division of labor" that contemporary political actors can mobilize secularism to their advantage, to deploy the concept to achieve particular political outcomes in the governance of religion—all without ever having to abandon the seemingly neutral and liberal aura of their ideal secular positions (Bowen 2010, 681). It is noteworthy, for example, that in each of the historical passages mentioned, secularism gained ground at the expense of religion: first, secularism was at the basis of state sovereignty because religion was considered inherently violent; second, it provided the fertile ground upon which Enlightenment thinking could flourish because religion was deemed irrational; and third, it allowed for the specialization of functions and division of labor because religion was to be confined to the private sphere. Contemporary understandings of religion, frequently mobilized in governance battles, may only be grasped in light of this "secularizing" past.

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[14] Bowen (2010) does not contend that the historical process which led to the secular formation is not important to the understanding of contemporary political problems. He recognizes that the two objects of study may be linked in certain types of research. However, in light of governance problems' specificity and strong contextual embeddedness, he calls for a more down-to-earth approach. According to him, the establishment of linkages between specific, real-world issues and abstract notions must follow and not precede analytical engagement with the reality in hand.

Building upon this correspondence, Bowen's (2010) argument may be evaluated as both correct and limited. Bowen (2010) is right in pointing out that analysts interested in governance problems should start out from the particular context in which political battles are imbricated, instead of emphasizing abstract notions of secularism. Likewise, he has a point when purporting that "precisely because the historical trajectories producing current regimes also produce their ideologies, prominent ways of speaking about state and religion cannot serve as bases for analyzing state and religion" (Bowen 2010, 681). However, it is exactly this second point that makes his argument limited. Bowen's assertion seems to imply that concepts which are less contentious, and thus, more neutral than secularism are readily available to those studying religion and politics. While it is true that secularism has recently become a particularly controversial term, Bowen's (2010) argument appears to support a couple of untenable positivist dichotomies, which suggest that purely analytic—as opposed to synthetic—and descriptive—as opposed to normative—concepts may be identified and used to investigate governance problems. In other words, Bowen (2010) ignores that political concepts, regardless of their putative position in such dichotomies, are necessarily open and formed from moral points of view, which are, in turn, socially and politically established (Connolly 1983).

In effect, if secularism is a stake in, and a means through which contemporary political battles over religion are and have been conducted—a contention with which Bowen would most likely agree—it is difficult to justify the abandonment altogether of secularism. In this respect, it is important to recall that discourse is a fundamental form of social practice nowadays, especially in liberal democracies: not only does it help to construct reality, but is also a powerful means to do so (Wodak 1989; Fairclough 2001a). From this viewpoint, it may be reasonable to analyze a governance problem by looking into the terms of debate as such. As long as the latter are not considered fixed, abstract notions, but are rather approached as politically dynamic and productive concepts—which shape the context in which political battles occur and are transformed in such occasions—it seems plausible to begin a research on governance problems by connecting such problems to secularism understood as a historical condition. As critical discourse analysts contend, to examine language, it

does not suffice to play attention to the situational context in which utterances are delivered; the wider institutional, sociopolitical and historical contexts must be taken into consideration as well (Fairclough 1992, 1995). In the case of religious governance issues, this implies that some understanding of secularism as a historical condition is necessary, even if analysts should not impose such readings upon any reality beforehand.

To understand the governance of religion in liberal democracies, it is of utmost importance to understand what secularism does, how it is deployed, by whom, and with what purposes. Based on this conclusion, it is possible to rephrase Bowen's (2010) assertion: it is precisely because secularism is a prominent way of speaking about religion and politics that its ideological underpinnings must be investigated. Contemporary problems of religious governance cannot be fully grasped otherwise. And there is no better way to understand secularism's operation, (trans)formations, and implications than by examining the *political discourse* and the *politics of discourse* that surrounds the concept. In such endeavor, understanding secularism as a *historical condition* might be important, but understanding secularism as a contemporary *political condition* is indispensable. Note that secularism does lose, as it were, its analytical purchase, for it no longer serves as a genuine category of analysis (one that picks out distinctive features of social products and processes). While this loss might seem troublesome to positivists, it serves well critical analyses, insofar as the latter are committed to assessing reality in a reflective manner with the purpose of disclosing the political character of taken-for-granted social structures. From the foregoing, secularism emerges as a political category.

The objective of the present thesis may be re-stated considering this discussion. This thesis aims to understand how an illiberal sort of secularism has been made possible in conspicuously liberal and democratic societies by examining discursive aspects of contemporary political battles over the governance of religious affairs. To this end, it recognizes the importance of taking account of institutional and situational features of the contexts under examination. It also acknowledges the importance of avoiding reification and depoliticization of the terms analyzed, especially when they coincide with those terms typically mobilized by actors in political contests. It does so, however—

and what follows is both a claim and a guiding line of this thesis—without losing sight of the productive roles that items of the secular vocabulary, including secularism and religion, play in societal debates over religion, politics, and the governance of social diversity. Therefore, this thesis should be approached as a contribution to that line of scholarship that is critical of secularism, particularly when it presents itself as neutral, procedural, rational, and universal. Accordingly, it too attempts to disclose secularism's inherently political nature. The focus of this thesis is political, not historical and genealogical, even if the latter are important to understand our current condition.

Thus, that secularism is mobilized and deployed in current political disputes does not constitute a problem *per se.* This study adopts a critical constructivist perspective: it avoids approaches that depict secularism as a static and neutral framework and takes interest in what secularism does when placed at the center-stage of political contestation. In fact, this study is interested in the transformations undergone by ideological secularism during such contestations. More specifically, it is concerned with politics as carried out in discourse as well as with the politics of discourse (Connolly 1983).

Secularism, A Cluster Concept: Essential Contestability and the Politics of Discourse

In order to clarify what is meant by politics of discourse, it may be helpful to refer, once again, to Freeden's (2003) conceptualization of ideology, to the notion of essentially contested concepts, and to the premises of critical discourse analysis. Albeit different, these accounts share not only the view that reality is socially constructed and that language is an important part of this enterprise, but also that all social construction, whether discursive or not, is necessarily political. Hence, unlike many liberal political theorists, these authors repudiate abstract conjectures of a pre-social world, devoid of culturally- and socially-established bonds, in which autonomous individuals may go about their business unconstrained. Instead, in their accounts, individuals are introduced right from the outset as actors embedded in specific situational, social, and cultural contexts. This embeddedness implies that

their desires, thoughts and actions are always and necessarily mediated by particular identities and worldviews—in short, social embeddedness implies diversity.

Since the social body is pervaded by diversity, contestation may be identified as a permanent feature of society. Simmel (1904) argues that absolute social cohesion does not exist: "groups require disharmony as well as harmony...and conflicts within them are by no means altogether disruptive factors. Group formation is the result of both types of processes" (Coser 1998, 31). Similarly, Moufee (2005, 4) argues for the acknowledgment of "the ineradicability of the conflictual dimension in social life". In such unremittingly conflictual contexts, politics presents itself as the domain in which individuals strive to achieve their goals, understood as survival or otherwise. In this domain, a set of political views is labeled ideology, although these are neither clear-cut nor stable (Freeden 2003). Here, it is possible to appreciate why social products are also political products: these products come about as a result of power disputes and often materialize worldviews put forth by powerful members of society. Resorting to the concept of hegemony to explain the dynamic that reigns the political realm, Mouffe (2005, 17) defends that we should acknowledge "the hegemonic nature of every social order and the fact that every society is the product of a series of practices attempting to establish order in a context of contingency." This is, of course, no different for language.

Critical discourse analysts contend that language is invested with power as well as with ideological representations, and thus, contributes to the production, sustenance and modification of social relations of power. Since a variety of linguistic elements bear the traces of political contests, language cannot be considered a neutral system of symbols. It is in virtue of language's political role that it has been argued that words, such as secularism, are both a stake in and a means through which political disputes occur. As a matter of fact, in liberal democracies, politics primarily takes place in and over language (Fairclough 1992; 1995; 2001a). It is in this second sense that this study is interested in the politics of discourse. Based on these considerations, the remainder of this section elaborates on how secularism, understood as an ideology, may be approached.

Central features of languages, words are often mobilized and instrumentally deployed in political contests, both because they convey ideological meanings and because they may be imbued with novel, politically productive meanings. The political significance of words is related to their power to impart ideas or, put differently, concepts. Drawing on the idea that words are signs which connect signifier and signified, that is, form and meaning, Freeden (2003) observes that concepts are for ideologies what words are for languages: building blocks. In this light, he argues that investigating political concepts is important to examine ideological formations. Freeden's (2003) view builds upon a whole tradition of political thinking on "essentially contested concepts", inaugurated in the 1950s by W.B. Gallie (1956). While the particularities of this debate do not concern directly this thesis, a few of the insights advanced by William E. Connolly (1983) in his *The Terms of Political Discourse* might be helpful in our discussion on how to study secularism.

Like Freeden (2003) and to critical discourse analysts, Connolly's (1983) starting point is the contention that language, especially that used in politics, is not a neutral means of conveying meaning. Rather, concepts are always and necessarily carriers of types of political thought and practice, that is, those thoughts and practices which are hegemonic at certain places and times, to use Mouffe's (2005) vocabulary. Hence, as suggested previously about ideology, political concepts set the limits for political action and reflection. If this is the case, then, conceptual revision and political change must be intrinsically related (Connolly 1983).

Although prevailing political concepts are said to bound thinking and action, this seemingly structucturalist claim is qualified by the idea that the underlying constitution of political concepts, i.e., the criteria and morality that inform them, are never fully shared by social actors (Connolly 1983). All meanings conveyed by language are plural. Difference, diversity, and pluralism play a central role in explaining why this is the case: "politics involves a form of interaction in which agents adjust, extend, resolve, accommodate, and transcend initial *differences* within a context of partly shared assumptions, concepts, and commitments" (Connolly 1983, 6, italics mine). Once again, politics is presented as the field in which the ineluctable diversity of the social body is somehow handled.

In this regard, it is interesting to mention that Connolly is a radical pluralist, to whom the protean character of human life stems from the plurality that marks both the self and society (Martin 2010). Therefore, the impossibility of establishing a unique conceptual framework for politics, or at the very least a rational consensus—as liberal authors would want it—is given by the irremediable diversity that marks both the social fabric and individual selves.[15] This means social stability can only be provisional and thus, that it will eventually vanish. Even in a self-proclaimed plural society, new drives to pluralization are likely to erupt and unsettle the established order, as it may be currently observed in parts of Western Europe (Connolly 1995). Thus, conceptual contestation is an ineluctable part of politics because, as Simmel (1904) and Mouffe (2005) argue, disharmony and hostility are as foundational to society as harmony and reciprocity. Still, not all political concepts are equally contestable; nor are they simultaneously subject to contestation.

Drawing upon Gallie's (1956) notion of essentially contested concepts, Connolly (1983) holds that a concept is likely to become essentially contested when three specific conditions are met: first, when the concept is appraisive, that is, when its attribution to a practice conveys a value judgment; second, when it is internally complex, that is, when many and diverse criteria must be articulated in order to characterize the practice described by the concept; and third, when the concept is open, that is, when its rules of application may be interpreted in a variety of ways and accorded different importance, especially under novel social circumstances. Despite his reliance on Gallie's (1956) original notion, Connolly (1983) addresses some issues with his original conceptualization, thereby, enriching his ideas. Notably, Connolly (1983) puts forward the complementary notion of "cluster concepts", which, as discussed below, is useful to think about secularism and kindred terms.

"Cluster concept" may be considered a logical derivation of the internal complexity of contested concepts. Specifically, it is related to the idea that if, first, conceptual meanings are plural

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[15] Connolly originally published *The Terms of Political Discourse* early on in his career, in 1974. Thus, his pluralist ideas are present in the book only in an embryonic state. Notwithstanding this, it is interesting to spell out the link between the notion of conceptual contestability and Connolly's radical pluralism because it helps to clarify the relation between concepts, ideology, conflict, politics, and diversity.

and, second, a host of criteria apply in conceptual definitions, then, each of the criteria established to define a contested concept ought to be contested as well. In every attempt to specify the conditions under which a concept is properly applied, novel concepts are brought into discussion. Thereby, it becomes evident that their character, too, is complex and open. In defining power, for instance, one will most likely mobilize the notions of authority, legitimacy and coercion, only to discover that these ideas, too, are subject of disagreement. Considering these intricate conceptual grammars, Connolly (1983, 14) contends that to make a concept intelligible, "we must display its complex connections with a host of other concepts to which it is related; clarification of the concept...involves the elaboration of the broader conceptual system within which it is implicated".

The image of a cluster of concepts brought together, however imperfectly, under the umbrella of a single contested term may be used to approach secularism as well as to understand its unstable interconnections with other vocabulary items and political issues. Secularism may be thought of as a contested "cluster concept" in that "the meaning and implications of secularism are simple only in appearance. Although...definitions [of secularism] all contain elements of truth, none alone exhausts the meaning of the term" (Maclure and Taylor 2011, p.3). In short, "secularism should be thought of in the plural rather than in the singular" (Jakelic 2010, 49).

As mentioned, Starrett (2010) uses Gallie's (1956) notion of "essentially contested concepts" in reference to secularism, arguing that in virtue of secularism's contested nature, scholars should be skeptical about its usefulness as an analytical concept. Since this latter point has already been addressed, subsequent comments concentrate on Starrett's (2010) categorization of secularism as an essentially contested concept. By adopting the notion of essential contestability, Starrett (2010) endeavors to achieve a number of goals: first, to reveal secularism's elusive and fluid character; second, to disclose the impropriety of any clear-cut division of the social world into secular or religious[16]; and third, to demonstrate that the concept's unfixedness is one of its essential traits.

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[16] In light of the contested nature of secularism, Starrett (2010) argues that the secular–religious dichotomy is false. While agreeing that social products and practices fall in either side of this dichotomy in a rather inconsistent and apparently

According to him, this trait is indeed a central one: unfixedness is said to establish the import of secularism by incessantly generating conflicts that re-enact the secular–religious opposition. In other words, by endlessly raising a question to which no satisfactory answer may be provided and by organizing a range of possible but insufficient responses to this question, secularism establishes its own significance and guarantees its own survival. Needless to say, this is never innocently done: attributing either secular or religious labels to the world is "a peculiar kind of practice that serves a purpose for particular kinds of people" (Starrett 2010, 646).

In this respect, it is informative to draw a parallel between Starrett's (2010) and Agrama's (2010) arguments. Building upon different conceptualizations, Agrama (2010, 501) theorizes secularism as a "problem-space", which must be seen in "terms of the ensemble of questions, stakes, and ranges of answers that have historically characterized it". Like Starrett (2010), Agrama (2010) also accuses secularism of generating indeterminacy, thereby, assuring the continuous rise of what seems to be the founding secular question—i.e., where should the line between religion and politics be drawn? In attempting to solve this problem, political actors define and allocate crucial stakes: the fundamental rights and freedoms of those under their authority. To be sure, if secularism is, in fact, an "essentially contested concept", as argued by Starrett (2010), or a "problem-space", as suggested by Agrama (2010), it cannot become depoliticized or decontested perennially. Attempts to do so will inevitably fail to hinder the conceptual indeterminacy of the term "secularism", in that there is no definite and rational answer to the question of where the line between religion and politics lies (or to whether there should be a line in the first place). In trying to answer this question, political actors tend to reignite the very problem secularism purports to answer (Agrama 2010; Starrett 2010).

It is interesting to include Agrama's (2010) contribution in this discussion not only due to the correspondence between his and Starrett's arguments, but also due to his focus on secularism as an

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arbitrary fashion (rather than due to something intrinsic to them), this thesis does not uphold the claim that the dichotomy is false. Insofar as it mediates social thinking and practice, the secular–religious divide must be deemed real because it has ideational as well as material implications.

expression of state's sovereign power. By bringing together these two theoretical insights, Agrama (2010, 502, his italics) convincingly argues that "what best characterizes secularism is not a separation between religion and politics, but *an ongoing, deepening entanglement in the question of religion and politics, for the purpose of identifying and securing fundamental liberal rights and freedom*". Further, he argues that this entanglement is related to the expanding regulatory capacity of modern nation-states. Hence the authority of secularism is first and foremost dispensed by the state, with the purpose of governing those individuals subject to its care, primarily via citizenship.

Toward a Conceptual Grammar of Secularism

This theoretical digression is useful to start conceiving of secularism as a cluster concept. It has been argued that secularism is an ideology and that, as such, it consists of a whole system of ideas, which limits thinking and practice in specific ways. These ideas are subsumed in political concepts over which contestation is a perennial possibility, notwithstanding the (provisionally) hegemonic character of concepts. But, how is the conceptual grammar that defines ideological secularism to be identified? It is not possible to provide an exhaustive and definite list of concepts and criteria that constitute what is now known as secularism, not least because it is a contingent formation. Yet, attention to the strands of literature discussed above may provide clues toward a fuller conceptual grammar of secularism.

The notion of grammar has now been used a few times in a manner that is rather unconventional and should, thus, be elucidated. Connolly (1983) borrows the term from Wittgenstein's (1986) later thinking, best developed in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Grasping Wittgensteinian "grammar" might, thus, contribute to getting a better hold of the notion of cluster concepts, and to understanding how such a notion may be used in the study of ideological secularism.

Wittgenstein's (1986) philosophy is extremely intricate and his later writings are, in Connolly's (1983, 248) words, particularly "elusive". The present discussion does not require, however, a full-

blown understanding of his thinking, but merely of a few central points which have informed the work of Connolly (1983)—and that of Freeden (2003) and some critical discourse analysts. Wittgenstein's (1986) usage of grammar does not correspond to the orthodox, linguistic meaning of the term, which simply designates the rules guiding language use. The concern that ushers his philosophical endeavor is much broader than that of conventional linguists: he wants to elucidate the relationship between words and the world (Pitkin 1972). His notion of grammar serves this objective, in that it is thought of as the relation established between a word and the uses to which this word is put in the world. In this view, the idea that language has a unique essence is left aside in favor of the image of language as an open and contingent system, formed by a plethora of practices. In this sense, the meaning of words and expressions is given in practice, by their use in language-games, such as describing, denying, speculating, and affirming (Grayling 2001). Thus, Wittgensteinian grammar

> does not relate a name to an object by teaching us the distinguishing features of that kind of object; it relates, "we might say, various concepts to the concept of that object....Grammar, one can say, establishes the place of a concept in our system of concepts, and thereby in our world. It controls what other concepts, what questions and observations, are *relevant* to a particular concept (Pitkin 1972, 119).

Conceptual grammar is, in short, what affords intelligibility to any expression and, by implication, to the world. Connolly's (1983) notion of cluster concepts builds upon this view, and accordingly, emphasizes the importance of envisaging internal complexity as a trait that sets contested concepts in relation to other similarly contested concepts. These relations are, of course, conventional inasmuch as they result from ordinary language practice. In this light, secularism, understood as an essentially contested concept, may only be grasped within its specific grammar. This implies that it is insufficient to track direct discursive deployments of the word secularism itself, as though its ideological power were nullified in its nominal absence. An ideological formation consists, as argued, of a whole system of ideas, and thus, it is important to track ideas that embody and enact secularism, after all, secularism is a political doctrine and not merely a vocabulary item. From this standpoint,

even discussions that appear to elude secularism—egg. gender issues, immigration and integration— may be of relevance to those studying its ideological import. Although delineating a complete conceptual grammar of secularism is an enterprise doomed to failure, the foregoing suggests that some of its aspects may be revealed by paying close attention to pragmatic dimensions of language. Accordingly, one should ask: to what uses can secularism be put?

Contingent as it may be, secularism was shown to perform at least two related roles: it is an ideal and a modality of political rule. This dual role sheds some light on the constellations of ideas that orbit the concept of secularism. By looking at the uses to which the concept is put in political theory and practice, it should be possible to start delineating its conceptual grammar in the West. The remainder of this section attempts to identify some of these concepts by referring to academic and legal uses of the term. It should be remarked, however, that the identification of a broader constellation of concepts requires the analysis of secularism being put to use.

As discussed, secularism has ideally been about keeping religious inspirations at bay when it comes to public matters, the alleged objectives of this separation being to ensure respect for freedom and equality as well as the maintenance of political unity and stability. Performing this separation and reaching these objectives involve the mobilization of a bundle of concepts, most of which pertain to the liberal philosophical and legal lexicon. Church–state separation, state neutrality, the principles of tolerance and equality, the rights to religious freedom and freedom of conscience, and the notion of public as opposed to private realm: all of these concepts pervade the discourse of those who try to approach secularism from a scientific or political standpoint.

Some philosophers and political actors further complicate secularism's grammar by requiring that separation and neutrality be replicated in lower levels, i.e., by citizens and religious institutions engaging in public debate. In other words, they require more than institutional separation; they demand that "religions" and "citizens" conform to the notions of "civil religion" (Gentili 2006) and "rational religious people" (Audi 1997). From these contributions, a whole different set of conceptual criteria emerge to define secularism: reasonable, rational, procedural, universal, and so on. Hence,

the authority of public reason and rational morality become essential in all "levels" of political life, from the individual to the state level (Connolly 1999).

The concepts listed above seem to share a liberal undertone, which indicates that the political domain delineated by secularism in the West has been informed, above all, by liberal conceptions of life. Liberalism and secularism are indeed intertwined in complex ways, although they cannot be said to exhaust each other.[17] Still, liberal secularism has strongly informed secular regimes in the Western world. Such observation complicates matters, in that liberalism is an extremely contested ideological formation, as the next subsection of this chapter briefly shows. At this point, however, it is important to hint at a conceptual grammar of secularism and to highlight concepts that enact its power.

The concepts mentioned occupy different positions in secularism's grammar. In line with the distinction between ideal and modality of political rule, some of these concepts reflect principles (egg. equality, freedom), whereas others are more operative (egg. separation), functioning as means through which certain objectives are to be achieved (Maclure and Taylor 2011). Put differently, some appear to refer to final goals (egg. political stability, unity, democracy), whilst others designate the processes through which these goals may be effectively pursued (egg. public-private separation). Others yet precede these very processes by providing the epistemological prerequisites (egg. rationality, truthfulness, logic) without which secular goals and means would be inconceivable.

Based on the foregoing, it seems plausible to draw a somewhat artificial, but useful three-fold distinction within the conceptual grammar of secularism, one between foundational, purposive and operational concepts. The first sort of concepts, foundational, are those that, much like rationality, provide the basis of the regime of knowledge instantiated by secularism. They are, thus, more closely associated to the notion of secular. In fact, they are primal to the definition of secular *episteme*. Purposive concepts are, in turn, those which refer to the goals pursued by the secular state. Modernity

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[17] There are different "regimes of secularism", informed by different conceptions of political community. Maclure and Taylor (2011), for example, identify "republican secularism" and "liberal-pluralist" secularism. Kuru (2009), in turn, discusses "passive" as opposed to "assertive" secularism. Modood (2012) talks about "political secularism" and distinguishes between a "moderate" and a somewhat more "radical" strand of it.

is perhaps the best example of this second type of concept. This notion also indicates that purposive concepts are best thought of as a part of what has been termed secularization narrative. This is because they inform secular projects by providing them with a set of desired goals. At last, operational concepts are performative: they go about handling diversity, defining the political, dispensing the secular authority. They are, in short, the pragmatic concepts with which this thesis is more directly concerned. To be sure, all concepts may become performative in language use. However, it is necessary to conduct discourse analysis to detect such purpose. Subsequent chapters of this thesis undertake this step, thereby helping to enrich this first view of secularism's grammar.

Still, if secularism is a doctrine about the political, about how to handle the diversity that inhabits selves and pervades social bodies, then this thesis ought to be concerned first and foremost with concepts that carry out this political project in practice, especially at state-level. In other words, it is important to examine the concepts through which secularism is enacted. As argued by Asad (2003) and others, the state often exercises the power of secularism via the concepts of citizenship and religion, with the ideas of public and private playing a central role in defining all three concepts, i.e., secularism, citizenship and religion. In its bids to determine what is political and, thus, what is under its purview, the sovereign state mobilizes concepts that pertain, as it were, to different levels of analysis, ranging from the individual to the institutional level. By resorting to prevalently secular conceptions of public, civil, citizenship, and institutions, the state creates boundaries which define the extent of its own secular and political rule. Considering the centrality of the concepts of citizenship, religion and public in such governance enterprise, this section makes initial comments on each of these (contested) concepts.

When it comes to citizenship, secularism contributes to the drawing of boundaries between community and individual and between public and private agency. Such boundary-drawing acts are tantamount to creating selves and citizens, respectively. *Qua* individual citizens, agents may be subjected to the political authority of the state. To guarantee its continuous authority, the latter needs not to rely exclusively on its principles and institutions, but may also legitimately attempt to shape

the "qualities and attitudes of its citizens", including their sense of identity (Kymlicka 2002, 285). This is done via manifold practices, which take place in several sites, such as the school, the hospital, the public forum, and the church (although it worth underscoring, yet again, that this thesis is interested in high-level governmental practices, conventionally understood). In each of these sites, a prevalent conception of citizenship will be conveyed, be it secular or not. On the consequences of such regimes of practice, one finds that they contribute to shaping freedoms and rights, as well as individuals' sensibilities and ways of being in the world. What is more, while concepts of rights and freedoms are at stake in moments of boundary-drawing (Agrama 2010), their inherent contestability also helps to delineate prevailing conceptions of citizenship and secularism. Struggles over rights may, thus, impinge upon prevailing notions of secularism—and *vice versa*. Muslims in the United Kingdom (UK), for example, have been able to take advantage of the "multicultural" opportunity structure of the country to advance their own claims of rights (Modood 2012). This has not been without consequences for hegemonic conceptions of citizenship and secularism.

The same is valid for the notion of religion. By circumscribing the domain on which certain inspirations, sensibilities, experiences and practices may legitimately dwell, the sovereign state defines, in diverse sites, what is political, public, social, civil, thereby setting these notions apart from what is religious, particular, private, uncivil. This act of boundary-drawing does not simply define religion; more than that, it contributes to defining what counts as identity, culture, and difference in the political community. As Part II of this thesis shows, the act of labeling inspirations or practices as either religious or cultural has important implications for their acceptability in the political domain. In more stringent versions of secularism, identity does not belong to the political and the homogenizing force of citizenship is said to be founded upon principles of justice (Rawls 1997). Recently, however, the definition of religion appears to interact in less clear-cut ways with the notion of identity, as discussed in the section about the post-secular. In some cases, religions may be emptied of their religious component to serve as an allegedly neutral element of unity for the political

community—in a move that serves the purposes of sovereign states. Like citizenship, then, religion is contested, and this contest compounds the problem of delineating secularism's grammar.

Both concepts are also dependent on the public–private dichotomy. The distinction between these spheres is important because, where liberalism is hegemonic, the public sphere often mirrors the representation of the political domain. Moreover, public and political are intrinsically related to the notion of legitimacy: attaching the label "political" to a practice turns it into a legitimate field of practice of the sovereign state.[18] "Political" religion is a case in point. First, political and public religion are oftentimes deemed equivalents. For instance, headscarves and other religious dresses have been accused in several occasions of being political, even though their usage has rarely been accompanied by actions that would have justified such a classification (Scott 2007). Thus, it seems that their mere public presence determines their political character. Second, in such cases, notwithstanding the importance of the principles of neutrality and separation, liberal and secular states are called upon to discipline and regulate religious practices and life. In the headscarf case, this call culminated in legislation restricting the use of garment in some European countries. Again, one ought to bear in mind that, much like citizenship and religion, public and private are contested concepts which interact with the political and with secularism in complex ways. Note, for example, in the case of religious dresses, that discourses on *ostensible* religious symbols complicate substantially attempts to draw a line between public and private as well as attempts to equate public and political.

This brief and simplified account of secularism's conceptual grammar, especially of what has been referred to as operational concepts, demonstrates that secularism has no essence; it is better approached as a part of living, and therefore, analysts ought to pay attention to its actual social uses, or to "the ways of living of which it is a part" (Gaus 2000, 16). Hence, in accordance with the Wittgenstein's and Connolly's views, secularism is a cluster concept that partakes manifold and contingent language-games and that applies to "constellations of actions and utterances related in

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[18] Cavanaugh (2009), for example, argues that the concepts derived from the secular–religious dichotomy, such as religion, often have the ideological function of legitimating certain practices and powers, whilst delegitimating others.

complicated and crisscrossing ways" (Gaus 2000, 19). Together, these constellations of actions and utterances help the state to govern diversity, to define its field of political activity, and to establish its continuous sovereign authority. As noted in passing, secularism's practices and discourses are not alone; they overlap in complex ways with liberalism and illiberalism.

Religion and (Il)liberalism

"Illiberal" is an unexpected qualifier to the word "secularism": for some, its usage may be confusing, for others, it is fully inappropriate. This is because secularism is typically thought of as a constituent part of liberalism. That the two go together is a tacit, but widely accepted fact. Therefore, it is not rare to spot ambiguous and interchangeable usages of the two terms. For instance, even though considered a nineteenth-century product (Gaus 2000; Geuss 2002; Freeden 2003), liberalism is often described "as a solution to the religious conflicts of sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries" (D'Costa et al 2013, 2), a reconstruction that lumps together the early histories of secularism and liberalism. Notions such as "secular liberalism" and "liberal secularism" are also freely employed in academic and political discourses, causing little, if any, puzzlement. These expressions are often so kindred that even experienced political philosophers have difficulties distinguishing between them.[19]

Both liberalism and secularism have been portrayed as ways of coping with pluralism, separating the private and public spheres, fostering toleration and political stability, promoting equality, *etc*. From this standpoint, resorting to the adjective "illiberal" in reference to secularism does sound misleading and paradoxical: such characterization seems to forcefully dissociate secularism and liberalism, in addition to suggesting that an organic part of liberalism betrays its most sacred values and purposes. Notwithstanding the plausibility of this nexus between secularism and

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[19] Laborde (2005, 305), for example, starts up her article "Secular Philosophy and Muslim Headscarves in Schools", by listing what she identifies as the "key principles of liberalism," namely "separation between public and private sphere, religious toleration and equality before law." Interestingly, these very same principles could be (and probably have been) used to define secularism. Most likely, such definition would cause no surprise what so ever.

liberalism, the fact that it is often accompanied and reinforced by a link between religion and illiberalism should warn analysts against accepting its validity at face value (Woodhead 2013).

Like secularism and liberalism, religion and illiberalism are thought to be almost inherently related. No wonder, then, that the "resurgence of religion" worldwide has been depicted and approached by some as a "problem," a "regression," a return to the past (Hehir 2012; Woodhead 2013).[20] Thus, identifying which aspects or elements of religion are deemed problematic to liberalism and why may shed some light on the notion of "illiberalism". The remainder of this chapter attempts to elucidate the notions of liberalism and illiberalism that inform this thesis, as well as their relations to the concepts of religion and secularism. Starting from a sketchy view of liberalism, the discussion moves on to liberalism's take on religion and secularism. This conceptual clarification provides the ground upon which the notion of illiberalism logically stands.

For the purposes of this chapter, liberalism, like secularism, is considered an ideological formation, which informs both Western ideals and modes of government. Thus, the adjective "liberal" is not to be attributed merely to a tradition of thought, to specific political groups or parties, or to a certain type of institutional configuration. Again, resorting to authors such as Gaus (2000), Freeden (2003) and Ryan (2007), liberalism is broached as an ideology, which structures prevalent modes of thinking and acting in the West. Woodhead (2013, 93) warns analysts that such characterization runs the risk of depicting liberalism's rich and contingent structure in "bloodless" and abstract ways, i.e., in ways that fail to take account of its history, forms of life, and so on.

While this thesis welcomes this warning—after all it wants to avoid essentialization/reification—it purports, differently from Woodhead (2013), that the notion of ideology may actually help analysts to avoid these faults. By emphasizing the necessarily contingent and contested character of ideological formations, this characterization enables analysts to look into

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[20] That religion and its resurgence have been approached as a "problem" is evident in several intellectual contributions to the field of political science and IR, the most well-known of these being Huntington's (1993) "The Clash of Civilizations?".

liberalism as a part of Western "forms of life", to use Wittgenstein's terms. Therefore, in resorting to the notion of ideology, the objective here is not that of enclosing liberalism in a narrow and abstract conceptual box; on the contrary, the idea is to recognize and, to some extent, grasp liberalism's manifold and disputed character and its impingement on ways of thinking and acting in the world. Needless to say, it is beyond the goals of this thesis to delineate a conceptual grammar of liberalism. Yet, so long as liberalism overlaps with and informs secularism, touching upon some of its principal conceptions is indispensable. Additionally, liberalism, in its different forms and manifestations, is still the dominant ideological formation in the Western world.[21]

Despite the many instances of conceptual slippage between the terms "liberal" and "secular", secularism does not automatically guarantee liberalism (D'Costa et al 2013). In fact, Woodhead (2013, 97) bluntly proposes that "secularism is illiberal," whereas Casanova (2004) suggests that secularism might became illiberal under certain circumstances. Similarly, Connolly (1999) points out that the effects of secularism may be intolerant and discriminatory and, in observing kindred effects, Scott (2007, 102) talks about "absolutist, intransigent secularism". However, before delving into a discussion on the illiberal character of secularism, it is important to have a better grasp of liberalism: after all, what is it that secularism does not automatically guarantee? What does it mean to say that a certain practice or discourse is (il)liberal? In order to make such appraisive judgments, scholars and political actors must resort to assumptions which depend on liberalism's own normative structure, and thus, on specifically liberal understandings of what is tolerant, non-discriminatory, and so forth. All of these assessments, thus, are "internal critiques", inasmuch as they rely on normative standards derived from the conceptual framework of liberalism itself (Stahl 2013). If so, liberal meanings, uses and value judgments must be known if the notion of illiberal is to make any sense.

As a political ideology, liberalism seems to be much broader, pervasive, and contested than secularism—although they certainly cross paths in several occasions. Whereas the term secularism is

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[21] Geuss (2002, 320), for example, contends that liberal ideas "constitute the final framework within which our political thinking moves." This is not to agree, however, with "end-of-history" types of arguments.

mostly reserved to conversations that concern religion and diversity, liberalism is raised in a variety of contexts, ranging from societal debates on economic policy to interpersonal discussions on individual qualities. This broad use of the term implies that liberalism's conceptual grammar (if it is thought of as a cluster concept) is much larger and intricate than that of most political concepts, including secularism. Although liberalism is composed of multiple and contradictory strands, Gaus (2004) notices that the word has hardly been accompanied by qualifiers (with a few exceptions, such as the notions of *classical* liberalism and *neo*liberalism). While this lack of qualifiers has generated confusion and debate as to what liberalism is, it has also helped to convey an impression of ideological cohesiveness, as if something, an essential core held the whole liberal conceptual structure together.

This thesis rejects the claim that concepts have essential and immutable cores. In agreement with Gray (2000, 26) and Ryan (2007), it argues that "liberalism is not the kind of thing that has an essence", and by implication, that we ought to talk about liberalisms, using the plural rather than the singular form. Yet, one can reasonably contend—as many political philosophers do—that dominant conceptions of liberalism, as currently conceived in the West, share family resemblances, i.e., conceptual traits that crisscross most practical usages of the word and allow for analyses of the conceptual core of liberalism (Gaus 2000; Gray 2000).

As a result of these endeavors, the concepts of freedom, toleration, neutrality, equality, rationality, individualism, and universalism have been said to pertain to, and to define the liberal grammar. What is interesting in this regard is that these concepts may be considered ideals, inasmuch as they partake in a normative narrative that conceives of liberalism as a value achievement, and accordingly, as a goal to be pursued. Thus, this collection of concepts resembles what Woodhead (2013, 93) has called "a bloodless abstraction of liberalism", in that their ideal character yields a tendency to ignore the uses to which liberalism and related terms are put in political practice.

Still, it is relevant for this discussion to pause briefly at liberalism understood as a value achievement, because it represents the chief normative standpoint from which social practices and discourses are assessed in the West. However, the purpose here is not to spell out or replicate the

dominant interpretation of liberalism and its ideal concepts; rather, some understanding of this abstract conception of liberalism is necessary because illiberalism is an appraisive term that cannot be apprehended outside of the liberal normative frame of reference. Since this thesis is interested in the governance of religious diversity, the following discussion focuses on liberalism's interpretation of, and relation to religion. It asks: what is it about religion that from an ideal liberal viewpoint makes it so that religious commitments are deemed illiberal? What normative standards are used to make such assessment? By briefly considering the liberal critique of religion, it should be possible to discern normative standards used by liberalism to define illiberal beliefs, practices, and discourses.

Although many political actors and thinkers have highlighted religion's faults, there is not one unique critique of religion. The Enlightenment critique has certainly inspired contemporary thinking and practice on religion, however these arguments are neither amenable to summarization, nor directly transferable to the contemporary context—not least because the modern category of religion was not yet available to these intellectuals. So, it is not only that "liberal's political concerns have been altered over the past three centuries", but also that what counts as "religion" has been formed and transformed throughout the same period (Ryan 2007, 361). Even if the time frame of the liberal critique is circumscribed to the past few decades, it is hard to identify a unique reason for relating religion to illiberalism. Difficulties in defining religion remain and contemporary liberal philosophers have taken a myriad of stances on the value of religious resources to the political community. It is relevant to remark that, despite this diversity, even thinkers that concede some space to other-world inspirations in the political and public spheres tend to assume that religion is somehow problematic to the liberal state. The relevant question here is: why is this so? In other words, why is religion deemed a problem?

It may be argued that the negative bias of liberalism toward religion partly stems from the notion of critique, which is considered, in and of itself, secular. Brown (2009) observes that, in present days, "critique" and "secular" are closely associated, a correspondence that supports the presumption that every critique is inherently secular. It is thanks to this "Enlightenment presumption" that the two

terms are so tightly bound up (Brown 2009). If to criticize is to uncover error by means of reason with the purpose of arriving at the truth, then criticizing is a secularizing act; it is, in other words, an act committed to demystifying a (purportedly objective) reality. Hence, from any critical standpoint, religious beliefs and conduct will always and necessarily be deemed erroneous. Therefore, the liberal critique of religion is intrinsically secular: it is informed by a regime of knowledge that divides the world into two separate realms, that of secular reality and that of religious illusion. In accordance with this dichotomous take of the world, legitimacy and authenticity are conceded exclusively to the secular sphere, which must be free of religious inspirations. Critique plays a central role in this secularizing endeavor (Brown 2009).

Thus, regardless of whether liberal authors recognize the potentially positive import of religion, most of them still assume that public religion is or might become a problem in liberal and democratic societies; after all, whereas the secular realm is associated with modernity, freedom, and rationalism, the religious one is depicted as traditional, archaic, irrational, violent and unreal (Brown 2009). In fact, many contemporary social and political troubles are said to be attributable to the very character of religion. More specifically, intellectuals and political actors ordinarily resort to three alleged characteristics of religion to try and explain its problematic qualities and disposition to coercion and violence, namely: absolutism, divisiveness, and irrationality (Cavanaugh 2009). Notably, as Cavanaugh (2009) points out, these features are often mobilized to substantiate the "myth of religious violence", that is, the fear that if religious go public, bigotry and bloodshed will follow.

Although not all liberal thinkers would explicitly support this myth, it is interesting to inquire why they remain fearful or suspicious of religion, even when they acknowledge its importance. Why do liberals require, for instance, secular filters to be put in between religious beliefs and their outward manifestation? What was Rawls (1997) assuming about religion when he formulated *The proviso*, according to which religious arguments are only permitted into the public sphere if accompanied by corresponding public reasons? What was Habermas (2005; 2006) thinking when he required that

religious views be submitted to a process of secular translation before entering institutional debates? In sum, why do liberal thinkers always call for the circumscription of religion's sphere of action?

In revising the work of some contemporary political theorists, Cavanaugh (2009) observes that many of them accept, either implicitly or explicitly, the historical narrative which underpins the "myth of religious violence". In particular, Cavanaugh (2009) points out that they lend full support to the argument that the liberal state solved the problem of violence, caused primarily by religious dissent. By accepting this narrative in full, these theorists appear to presuppose that religion does possess one, if not all aforementioned characteristics, and thus, that liberal peace and order are likely to be compromised if religious doctrines and practices go public. This fear corresponds to what Bader (1999, 598) identifies as "an old Lockean fear that public and political religions inherently threaten political unity and stability". For example, Rawls (1997) contends that comprehensive worldviews, both religious and nonreligious, do not suffice to guarantee the endurance of a political community precisely because they tend to be irreconcilable and unreasonable.

Based on the foregoing, it seems reasonable to argue, following Brown (2007) and Cavanaugh (2009), that one of the sources of the liberal critique of religion is the latter's purported absolutism, its alleged inability of overcoming disagreement, and its dissonance with the prevailing conception of rationality. However, the dogmatic, dissentious and unreasonable character of religion is not deemed problematic solely due to its potentially negative collective implications: it is also considered troublesome from an individual standpoint.

Religion is often accused of infringing the chief value of, and point of accord amongst liberals: the primacy of individual liberty. It is not difficult to see why, together, the aforementioned characteristics may interfere with the autonomy of human beings and, thereby, hinder their flourishing. Yet, it is important to this discussion to specify the reasons raised by liberals for charging religion with encroachment upon individual freedom. It is, after all, in respect to this individual dimension that the adjective "illiberal" is normally used. Religious beliefs and practices, especially those that do not conform with a Western type of religiosity, are frequently judged to be "non-liberal",

"illiberal", "intolerant", not to mention other terms that carry condemnatory connotations, such as "fundamentalist", "dogmatic", and "fanatical". Although such value judgments are easy to encounter in political theory and action, there is no consensus as to what a "illiberal" or "non-liberal" culture, society or religion is. To understand what these terms designate, it is interesting to briefly investigate the literature on illiberalism, i.e., that part of the liberal scholarship which studies illiberal groups and the challenges such groups pose to the liberal state and theory.

According to Kymlicka (1995, 94), the qualifier "illiberal" may be attributed to groups which "far from enabling autonomy, simply assign particular roles and duties to people, and prevent people from questioning or revising them". Rosen (2002, 804) complements this description by clarifying that illiberal groups are typically "structured along patriarchical, theological, racist, classist or homophobic lines". Therefore, it seems that different social groups, including religious ones, are regarded illiberal when their members are prevented from freely choosing their life styles, i.e., they cannot carry on their lives by their values and beliefs. Thus, despite the plurality of worldviews that pervades these social groups, individuality is not allowed full expression, unless it is in conformity with the dominant worldview of the group. Inasmuch as freedom is restricted in the name a collective ideal or project, liberals contend that these groups breach the autonomy and dignity of individuals as human beings. Needless to say, religion is believed to undertake such illiberal quality easily.

According to liberalism, when in public, religion—endowed with its dogmatic character and pretense to provide unique and definite answers to the mysteries of human life—leads believers to adopt standpoints which are irreconcilable with those of non-believers. Moreover, believers tend to try and impose religious values and principles upon the whole of society.[22] In this scenario, public reason is said to be unattainable due to religion's *fundamental* political positions (Ralws 1997). Therefore, authoritative religious figures ought to resort to *coercive* means to guarantee overarching obedience to religious norms and rules. Public, or worse, political religions are seen as potentially

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[22] This perspective seems to replicate the three alleged characteristics of religion identified by Cavanaugh (2009).

fundamentalist and coercive precisely because they attempt to impose their doctrines on persons who reject them. In this regard, two questions are relevant: first, are coercion and fundamentalism foreign to liberal political orders? In other words, are they specific to religious communities and orders or, in Rawls' (1997) terms, to comprehensive worldviews? Second, how are illiberal groups to be treated in liberal and democratic societies?

When it comes to the use of coercion, it should be recalled that all sorts of ruling authorities (democratic, theocratic or otherwise) must resort to forceful means to ensure the stability and endurance of the political order. To different extents, all regimes compel their subjects to abide by the law, regardless of whether these subjects consider the established authority just, right, or good. This is also true of liberal democracies, marked as they are by the "fact of pluralism". The liberal state is hardly devoid of coercive means, which range from the police to everyday micropolitics. What is the difference, then, between liberal and theocratic social groups or political orders?

Liberals acknowledge that the coercive power of the state restricts a primordial right of human beings, that to freedom. Coercion, they claim, is always a moral evil, never a moral good (Wolterstorff and Cuneo 2012). And yet, coercive legislation is necessary, or else political association would most likely cease to exist. This is because even among fully informed, rational people, disagreements abound. In light of this inexorable need of coercive means, but in accordance with the liberal reservation toward the use of such means, liberal intellectuals have attempted to establish the conditions under which state coercion may be deemed acceptable.

One of the most fundamental problems addressed by liberal thought has been precisely that of "fix[ing] some moral limits to the power of government" (Larmore 1990, 339). Contemporary liberal thinkers, such as Larmore (1990), Audi (1997), and Rawls (1997) argue that coercion should be used solely in cases where an adequate basis is provided for their employment. These thinkers are, in short, justificatory liberals (Eberle 2002). Put simply, they require citizens to provide a *public* justification for their preferred coercive laws. This is done out of respect for fellow citizens. Although justificatory liberals disagree over the appropriate grounds for public justification, they tend to agree

that religious convictions do not qualify as proper bases for coercive legislation (Eberle 2002). Rawls (1997), for example, argues that coercion may be considered legitimate if reasonable and rational citizens endorse its usage. Reasonableness and rationality serve to ensure that the grounds for public justification are shareable. Therefore, the consent of each and every reasonable and rational citizen— the aggregation of which is said to result in an "overlapping consensus"—lies in the heart of the liberal state's legitimacy and power. Encompassing consensus and legitimacy: these are the features that distinguish liberal forms of coercion from illiberal ones.

As mentioned, according to Rawls (1997), religious convictions are neither "reasonable" nor "rational"; rather, they are considered *fundamental* reasons, based on comprehensive doctrines. So long as they are unable to gather overarching support from a plural social body, religious beliefs are deemed inappropriate bases for the state and its laws. This is not to say that all religions and religious people are unreasonable. The latter adjective is used in reference to those comprehensive doctrines "in which reasonable political values are overridden" (Rawls 1997, 802). More specifically, unreasonable religious doctrines are those which approach different conceptions of life as erroneous and attempt to impose by force their own understanding of what is right and good (Rawls 1997; Gray 2000). Again, inasmuch as they do not allow for value-pluralism, they breach individual freedom and are, thus, considered illiberal. The liberal state allegedly escapes similar accusations: first, it is said to rely on a "overlapping consensus", which is not founded on any one comprehensive doctrine; and second, it purportedly allows comprehensive doctrines to thrive, especially in the private sphere. The belief–conduct or action–belief dichotomy upon which liberalism is based is said to allow the liberal state to protect the religious freedom of each citizen, while remaining neutral toward their different conceptions of the good (Moens 1989; Malik 2011). But what fate does the liberal state assign for groups considered illiberal or insufficiently reasonable? Should these groups be tolerated?

As with every other issue addressed by liberals, different thinkers provide different answers to these questions: whilst some argue for accommodation of illiberal groups, others contend that the liberal state cannot grant freedom to communities that undermine the autonomy of their members

(Rosen 2002; Riley 2007). It is precisely the treatment of those groups that the liberal state judges to be illiberal that is of interest here: liberalism's normative difficulties and practical contradictions in dealing with such cases demonstrate its own structural limits and, consequently, allow for an "internal" or "immanent critique" of the type put forward by Connolly (1999), Scott (2007), Woodhead (2013), among others. Liberalism's internal limits and contradictions, which become particularly noticeable when the question of "unreasonable groups" is put forward, has many sources, starting from the problematic but often taken-for-granted assumptions that hold up its normative structure. Notably, these assumptions result in an in-built negative bias toward religious bodies and ideas. The first of these assumptions has been commented upon previously, namely: the secular regime of knowledge that underpins and generates liberal ideas and critique (Brown 2007).

From the standpoint of the secular *episteme*, believers and their practices always appear less than rational and modern. Religious convictions often seem to be illusory relics of the past. Liberal thinking, informed as it is by a powerful secular regime of knowledge, does not admit that certain sensibilities and practices elude its rationally devised explanatory framework. Consequently, these human experiences as well as the religious vocabulary and wisdom they inspire are disavowed; they are approached as signs of error, backwardness, irrationality, illusion. The problem with such debasing assessments is that they end up mimicking the same practices they are meant to criticize:

> It is a mark of an illiberal regime that conflicts of value are viewed as signs of error. Yet, liberal regimes that claim that one set of liberties—their own—is universally legitimate adopt precisely that view. They treat conflicts among liberties as symptoms of errors, not dilemmas to which different solutions can be reasonable. Liberalism of this kind is a species of fundamentalism, not a remedy for it (Gray 2002, 20-21).

As Gray (2002) eloquently points out in this passage, liberalism's pretense to function as the ultimate benchmark for the rightfulness of political associations is not that different from the claims of religion to the truth. In the end, neither is neutral, even if the impersonal language adopted by liberal authors suggests otherwise. The objective, rational standards of judgment of liberalism are

illusory. As critical theorists remind us, "there is no view from nowhere". The problem at issue here is, in short, the epistemological foundations of liberal thinking, which prioritize a secular, rational, empirical type of knowledge at the expense of other religious, traditional, indigenous knowledge. Notwithstanding the apparent neutrality of this choice—because this secular knowledge purportedly reflects what is objectively real—its justification is untenable, insofar as human take on reality is always mediated by social meanings, which are contingent, historical, and pervaded by the workings of power. This implies that there is no "Archimedean point", detached from all moral perspectives, from which to liberals may "unencumberedly" gaze at the world. Accordingly, it is difficult for liberalism to sustain that it provides merely procedural means to solve conflicts of values in societies marked by deep pluralism. Campos (1994) remarks that conflicts of values cannot be resolved by rational means, since values depend on subjective moral imperatives, most of which are not amenable to rational appreciation. Liberalism should not arrogate to itself the primordial right of judging other cultures. It, too, is informed by, and based upon substantive values and moral imperatives. In short, liberalism ought to recognize the limits of its own rational epistemology.

On the consequences of this critique, one has that liberal thinkers should not deem liberalism superior to alternative worldviews, not at least from the outset.[23] When liberalism does claim superiority, it approaches so-called illiberal beliefs and practices as erroneous and attempts to instill its own values and practices into groups considered illiberal. In doing so, liberalism does not act any differently from other fundamentalist formations: it infringes the autonomy and dignity of these groups and their members.

Two arguments have been used by liberal authors to defend the use of coercion in such circumstances. The first of these arguments builds on the aforementioned belief–action distinction and defends coercion by pointing out that inner beliefs are not touched upon by liberal policies—it is

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[23] This is not to deny that liberalism is better suited than alternative worldviews to address certain societal matters. The point made here is that such an argument would have to be substantiated on different grounds. In short, the idea that liberalism is neutral, non-foundational, anti-perfectionist should give way to a more substantive defense, one that privileges liberalism's positive achievements rather than its alleged neutrality.

their external manifestation that is targeted. However, it is difficult to disentangle the two parts of this dyad. Doing so requires one to adopt a rigid conceptualization of religion, which often reflects a narrow understanding of the phenomenon, and assumes that the disapproval and/or prohibition of one's practices will not hurt her autonomy, personhood, and belief system (Moens 1989; Malik 2011; Brems and Peroni 2015). The second argument, in turn, goes back to the discussion on justificatory liberalism. It purports that so long as rational and reasonable persons endorse the exercise of coercion against illiberal, unreasonable groups, this exercise is legitimate, and thus, compatible with liberalism. The limit of these arguments is, again, their epistemological foundations, which replicate secular, rational, and empirical standards. Moreover, they grant privilege to the majority culture, since dominant values tend to mediate the initial judgement of what is tolerable or not.

The foregoing suggests that, judged by its own standards, liberalism may lead to legislation and, more broadly, governmental practices that may be judged illiberal, especially because they breach personal autonomy and religious freedom. Moreover, in treating religious beliefs as signs of errors and trying to impose certain, secular standards, beliefs, and practices, liberal states may become absolutist and sponsor actions that are in fact discriminatory and exclusivist—in other words, actions that may compromise, rather than contribute to, political stability and unity.

It is in this light that many European states have been accused of taking illiberal stances, by vetoing, proposing to veto, or restricting religious symbols, the construction of religious buildings, certain rituals and practices, among others. Furthermore, it is interesting to mention that the rising number of government restrictions against Muslims in Europe has been accompanied by more social hostility against this particular religious group, and both tendencies certainly make the achievement of the political stability and unity even harder (Pew Research Center 2018).

Chapter II: Investigating Ideological Secularism: Theoretical Underpinnings

The first chapter has surveyed a part of the literature on religion and politics and introduced concepts that are central to this thesis, particularly "ideological secularism". Moreover, it has highlighted the importance of history and politics in examining secular discourses and institutions. These theoretical considerations did not lead, however, to the definition of concrete research strategies. This chapter and the next one outline how ideological secularism is investigated throughout this thesis, clarifying both the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this thesis.

By referring to debates on social construction, identification, and essentialism, this second chapter speaks of the social processes underlying ideological formations, defines theoretical instruments to investigate them, and hints to the methodological strategies pursued in the remainder of this thesis. More specifically, the chapter discusses the social constructivist underpinnings of this thesis, particularly identification, and presents important heuristic concepts, notably those of social and symbolic boundaries and categorization. By doing so, the chapter delineates a theoretical framework appropriate to the analysis of cultural controversies and ideological formations. Additionally, it defends the centrality of language in the study of political ideas. Thereby, it sets the stage for the next chapter, which presents critical discourse analysis and conceptual grammar, the methodological frameworks that guide the study of illiberal secularism in Part II.

Social Constructivism: Theoretical Underpinnings

Since much of the current scholarship on secularism and, more broadly, religion and politics, talks about social construction, social constructivism may be identified as one of its main theoretical underpinnings. Broadly understood as a philosophical position rather than a specific theory, constructivism posits that human beings are social beings and that reality is socially constructed. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966, 33)

> The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these.

This passage suggests that although human beings often take the social world as a given, this world is actually brought into being by them in routine social interactions. Scholars from different disciplinary traditions have endorsed this view and argued, in a way or another, that society constitutes social agents, whereas these agents make society what it is, in a process of mutual constitution or co-constitution (Berger and Luckmann 1966). This dialectic interplay of agency and structure implies that neither a strictly individualist, nor a purely structuralist take on the world suffices to fully apprehend social phenomena. As famously argued by Giddens (1984) in his theory of structuration, both the micro-level activities of agents and the macro-level traditions and institutions should be taken into consideration by analysts trying to grasp these phenomena.

The implications of these now familiar propositions to academic thinking have been substantial, especially because, from a constructivist perspective, knowledge is a social creation rather than an objective representation of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Schwandt 2003). Furthermore, if reality is indeed a social product, none of those identities, categories, and institutions used by agents to understand reality and to act in relation to the world may be considered innate, natural, and unproblematic. They are products of culturally and historically specific social formations (Schwandt 2003). Hence, to contend that an entity is a social construction is tantamount to claiming that it could have been otherwise—it is not inevitable. This is not to say that the process of social construction is inadvertent, naive, and disinterested. This process is often political, even ideological, since it is contextually embedded. To reiterate a point made in the first chapter, any post-political or apolitical vision of social relations is either untenable or utopian (Connolly 1995; Mouffe 2005).

Although the expression "social construction" has been scarcely used thus far, the first chapter has put forward arguments that build upon this philosophical position. Relying on a critical strand of the literature on secularism, it has demonstrated that the secular is not correspondent to the natural,

material dimension of the world. On the contrary, the contemporary secular formation, in both its ideational and institutional forms, is the result of the coming together of specific social, political, and cultural conditions, mainly in Western Europe. This formation has contributed, moreover, to defining what is now understood as "religion" and "religious", as well as to delineating the "political" identities of modern nation-states. In this light, this thesis adopts a constructivist perspective to consider the complex relationship between religion and politics in Western Europe.

As a philosophical position, constructivism is eclectic and pluralistic, characteristics which have allowed its adoption and development throughout the humanities and social sciences. Although scholars have reached some consensus on the social construction of reality, disagreements over important ontological and epistemological issues remain, even where it concerns the factuality of the material world (Schwandt 2003). While this thesis does not wish to engage in these debates, it is interesting to remark that constructivism has been harshly criticized in the recent past, even by authors who accept its central proposition—the social construction of reality (Brubaker 2004; Bader 2001).[24] Some of these disagreements and critiques concern essentialism. According to Fuss (1989), Calhoun (1994), and Bader (2001), the pure and extreme disavowal of essentialism is not particularly constructive and may lead to social determinism. In what follows, an overview of the debate on essentialism helps to introduce the constructivist position adopted in this thesis.

This overview refers primarily to discussions concerning identity and difference or, in other words, identification. This is because these inseparable themes—identity and difference—underlie the research questions of this thesis. As explained below, the process of identification is crucial for the construction of all knowledge and meaning: it is in defining sameness and difference that human beings give sense to the world (Jenkins 2008). If this is the case, this process may serve as an entry point to the study of ideologies, including that supporting secular discourses, practices, and policies

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[24] For some internal and external critiques see, for example, Brubaker (2004) and Bader (2012). In *Ethnicity without Groups*, Brubaker (2004, 3) is very harsh with what he calls a "complacent and cliched constructivism", which has been unable to generate new insights on how group identities are constructed and, moreover, has often inadvertently replicated primordialist ideas.

in Western Europe. As explained ahead, by looking at identification in contemporary political contests over religion and diversity, this thesis hopes to have a better grasp of the illiberal secularism.

Moreover, from the 1960s onward, a large and productive literature on social identity and "identity politics" has emerged, spurring critical reflections on *inter alia* ethnicity, nationalism, gender, race, disability, and citizenship. By focusing on these social categories and political concepts, scholars have attempted to understand the formation, workings, and consequences of collective identities, which, like "religion", have been central for the functioning and endurance of political communities. Notably, understanding how identity and difference come into being and become objects of political concern and management have been important steps in grasping the political ideologies guiding the oft-problematic actions of liberal and democratic states.

Finally, contemporary empirical developments strengthen the case for focusing on identity and difference. Over the past twenty years, secularism and religion have been increasingly implicated in identity politics. The growing incidence of religious demands for accommodation and recognition in Western Europe is indicative of the importance of discussing secularism and cultural conflict in reference to an evolving politics of identity (Koopmans 2013). In fact, as mentioned, contemporary debates on the governance of religion can hardly be disentangled from other themes, especially multiculturalism and immigration. Therefore, exploring the ways in which constructivist research has addressed social identity and dealt with the theoretical and methodological challenges may contribute to understanding the workings of secularism in contemporary Western societies, and to conceiving of ways in which this powerful ideological formation may be analytically explored.

Identity and Social Constructivism: Tackling Ontological Essentialism by Looking at Boundaries

Strict secular views of the world can hardly escape charges of essentialism and reification. This is because, relying on a material and rational claim to reality, such views typically identify and name entities on grounds that are allegedly concrete, innate, and universal. The secular reality is often said to correspond to that universe of things and persons directly accessible to the human senses.

Therefore, in the pursuit of knowledge and meaning, the mediation of spiritual and transcendental sources is deemed not only unnecessary, but also undesirable. A social constructivist position helps to problematize secular claims and sheds light on the degree of essentialism/reification they require.

By focusing on ideological secularism, this thesis proposes not an outright dismissal, but a critical analysis of the ideas, discourses, institutions, and policies founded upon secular views of the world. As argued, an anti-essentialist stance is an important part of this critical endeavor because it contributes to revealing the contingent character of secular, religious, and political identities and institutions. In exploring the existing constructivist literature on different themes—notably, essentialism, identity, difference, and social boundaries—the next sections aim to build theoretical and analytical foundations to the study of ideological secularism. Drawing upon these foundations, the next chapter defines in more detail the methodological instruments with which it is possible to critically investigate contemporary controversies concerning social and religious diversity and secularism in liberal democracies.

The Place of Essentialism in Social Constructivism

Identity politics and the constructivist position have been "ambiguous allies" for decades in the fight against essentialism and reification (Calhoun 1994, 16). In fact, constructivism and anti-essentialism have in many cases been used interchangeably to designate a political and scholarly stance that repudiates "a belief in the real, true essence of things" (Fuss 1989, xi). From the 1960s onward, race, gender, ethnicity, disability, nationality, among other seemingly natural categories, have been thoroughly scrutinized in intellectual exercises which have demonstrated the multitude of ways in which these categories have been socially constructed and reproduced. Furthermore, problematic social and cultural histories of these categories, as well as their consequences have been revealed and denounced (Calhoun 1994). Theoretical approaches drawing on the constructivist position have been often accompanied by staunch critiques toward Western modernity and its great

narratives, including, of course, that of secularization (Taylor and Spencer 2004; Sicakkan and Lithman 2005).

Paradoxically, however, many of these intellectual and practical critiques have relied on the very strategies they sought to oppose. While refuting the idea that social identities possess essential or immutable traits, many of those engaged in identity politics thought it to be indispensable to re-assert their identities in pursuit of collective goals, notably recognition and accommodation. This "dilemma of difference", as Young (1989) calls it, has been identified by several scholars, who have attempted to reconcile the tensions and ambiguities of political projects that advocate anti-essentialism while re-claiming value for their oppressed social identities (see, for example, Young (1989) and Calhoun (1994)). Notably, radical positions, such as deconstructionism and post-structuralism, have risked disavowing the emancipatory ideals of historically disadvantaged groups.[25]

These tensions have led Fuss (1989, 70) to ask in what ways could the "poststructuralist project to displace identity" be reconciled with the "feminist project to reclaim it". In this respect, Young (1989) and Calhoun (1994) suggest that when an identity/difference is treated as a deficiency, deviance, or problem, the adoption of essentialist positions that claim value to the demeaned group may represent an important means to contest oppressive and exclusionary categorizations. Moreover, public self-assertion may contribute to countering one of the consequences of essentialist and reificatory practices, namely: the depoliticization, and thus, naturalization of socially established identities and meanings. The emancipatory potential of strategies of self-assertion suggests that although anti-essentialism remains an important part of critical endeavors in the academia and beyond, essentialization is not the origin of inequality, marginalization, and oppression. Therefore, essentialism, as such, is neither bad nor good: this normative judgment will depend on the social consequences that essentializing strategies bring about (Fuss 1989, Calhoun 1994, Sayer 1997).

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[25] It is interesting to note that, currently, religious actors seem to be trapped in a similar dilemma: while trying to re-value and assert their identities in the public sphere, these actors are often caught between the efforts of governments to delimit and/or depoliticize their sphere of influence, and the attempts of extreme right-wing parties to racialize and vilify their religious views and identities.

Although social constructivism is frequently articulated as a position that defies reductive, homogeneous, and immutable representations of entities, the foregoing suggests that to circumscribe its theoretical edifice to anti-essentialism is both insufficient and inaccurate. As argued, the construction of reality by social agents implies and depends upon the existence of social structures. These structures, albeit mutable, are relatively stable and difficult to change, in that they give meaning to the world and, thus, inform agents' knowledge and actions (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Giddens 1984). In this light, it may be argued that social life would be inconceivable without some degree of essentialism. Taken to its logical consequences, a radical anti-essentialist stance does face difficulties in accounting for the existence of those crystallized social understandings and structures, which are nonetheless important in the constructivist theoretical framework. Moreover, such a position builds upon dichotomies that ultimately essentialize the very notion of essence, as well as other elements of socially established dichotomies, such as nature–culture and body–mind. This may lead to social determinism, a stance as problematic as biological determinism (Sayer 1997; Bader 2001).

In the face of these difficulties, Fuss (1989) contends that social scientists should acknowledge not only that some degree essentialism is indispensable for social life, but also that essentialism is itself a plural position. The indispensability of essentialism has been indirectly defended by mainstream sociological and political theories. For example, the existence and functioning of institutions—to name a concept that is widely used in the social sciences—always requires some degree of essentialism and reification. "Institution" is typically used to designate well-established patterns of behavior, which have been tacitly accepted as *the* ways of getting things done in particular fields or situations. In modifying their behavior to meet such behavioral expectations, social agents tend not only to take social institutions for granted, but also to reify them. Far from being considered problematic, this uncontested and seemingly permanent character of institutions is said to play an important role: it helps institutions to afford meaning, and to lend predictability to social life (Hall and Taylor 1996; Jenkins 2008).

The plural character of essentialism is related to this point. According to Fuss (1989), contemporary social scientists have united against an *ontological* type of essentialism—as opposed to a *nominal* one—which treats identities, objects, and institutions as though they were innate, primordial, given, and immutable, especially in cases where such assumptions have served to marginalize or subjugate social groups. Yet, this critique does not imply that essentialism, in the form of language, identity, and other socially established structures, must be deemed always and necessarily pernicious. On the contrary, as argued, some essentialism and reification are necessary if social life is to be established (Fuss 1989). From this standpoint, articulating constructivism as merely the "other" of essentialism/reification is unsatisfactory. Still, when the consequences of these strategies are oppressive or exclusionary, a critical stance that builds on constructivism may be helpful in revealing the fragile and contingent foundations of existing social formations. As discussed, scholars who have criticized secularism have typically referred some version of social constructivism, especially when contesting the rigid boundaries established between secular reality and religion.

There is an additional reason to avoid exaggerating the divide between constructivism and essentialism: hardly anyone in the academic world advocates the latter position. As Bader (2001, 251) claims at the outset of his critique of constructivism, "we are all constructivists now". If the alternative to constructivism is an unreflective type of essentialist, deterministic, and primordial approach, which treats social entities as given, homogeneous, and static, Bader's (2001) claim can hardly be refuted. It is difficult to find contemporary defenders of the idea that ethnicity, race, gender, and nation are somehow innate, fixed, and unified categories (Larin 2010). Referring to ethnicity, Larin (2010) makes a similar point, arguing that scholarly disagreement in the field of ethnic studies does not derive from an insurmountable essentialist–constructivist divide, as commonly assumed. Even self-proclaimed primordialists, such as van Evera (2001) and Bayar (2009, 1643), concede to the claim that ethnicity is "is constructed around sociologically known similarities." Although these authors assume ethnicity to be fixed for analytical purposes, they do not deny the possibility of revision and change. In other words, there seems to be no real alternative to constructivism (Larin 2010).

From this viewpoint, the constructivist position seems to be downgraded to a truism, whereas the critique of essentialism loses much of its appeal. Therefore, it is not clear against whom constructivists build their arguments. Far from discouraging, this realization may be considered somewhat enlightening. In this respect, Larin (2010, 443) notices that, more than the social character of reality, scholarly disagreement in his field concerns whether ethnicity "should be studied from the participant or the observer perspective". That is, should scholars study processes of identity-making, as constructivists contend, or should they rely on the self-understandings of groups and focus instead on these groups' internal dynamics, as primordialists defend? Currently, both types of research seem to be important and legitimate, as argued in the section concerning social and symbolic boundaries.

In sum, the foregoing discussion contributes to softening the lines of demarcation between social constructivism and essentialism. Putting this alleged dichotomy in perspective is an important starting point for a more detailed theoretical discussion on identity and difference. Further, this discussion provides insights on how to investigate ideological secularism and current contests over diversity and religion: it suggests that a constructivist position that opposes the depoliticization of certain categories and practices should pay attention to identity-making and its political dimensions.

(Re)Conceptualizing Social Identity

Notwithstanding its critical potential and historical importance, the anti-essentialist position within social constructivism should not be overstated. This down-toning of anti-essentialism implies that constructivists should acknowledge the existence and importance of identities (and other social constructions), while remaining attentive to these identities' socially established character, which entails the unlikely, but possible event of change. Moreover, scholars must bear in mind the power-laden nature of the processes leading to the formation and maintenance of these identities. Re-claiming value for an oppressed identity, for one, is an inherently *political* strategy, the objective of which is to *empower* historically disadvantaged groups. That constructivists should not disregard the reality of social identities does not imply, however, that their attention to processes of identity-making

or revision is insufficient or inadequate. Rather, it is precisely the focus on such processes that makes constructivism particularly suited for examining ideological secularism and the political dimension of current controversies, including those concerning secular and religious claims.

To understand why this is the case and how such an examination may be carried out, it is necessary to take a step back and refer to the extensive body of literature concerning the concept of identity (and, by implication, that of difference). This subsection introduces the social constructivist perspective on identity and difference, while making a case for its adoption in this thesis.

Conventionally understood, the term identity refers to the primordial and immutable essence of allegedly unified, homogeneous entities. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2015), identity is "the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties". Therefore, the term designates the core of someone or something, that is, that basic and invariable element or quality in virtue of which things, groups, and persons are classified and described (Sicakkan and Lithman 2005). An alternative way to designate this common core is to refer to "essence", a suggestive replacement that reiterates the importance of essentialization for social life.

When human beings assert the identity of objects and other entities, and act unproblematically in relation to them, they engage in practices of essentialization and reification. This is because, as explained, in understanding social products as naturally given, human beings reify their existence. Moreover, insofar as these products are identified and named in reference to allegedly permanent elements or characteristics, human beings essentialize their content (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Fuss 1989; Bottici and Challand 2010). Once reified or essentialized, a social entity (or institution) is also depoliticized, and agents may act in relation to this entity unproblematically.

Yet, the potentially negative consequences of these practices are one of the reasons why social constructivists contend that identities should not be taken for granted. But, how should identities be analyzed? And from an anti-essentialist position, can identities be defined at all? In trying to address these issues and in line with the social view of knowledge introduced above, constructivist scholars claim that identity should become an object of scientific inquiry. Specifically, they argue that

processes of identity formation, endurance, and change, together with identity's political functions and implications, should be put under academic scrutiny.

In this sense, Larin (2010), partly building on Brubaker (2004), suggests that constructivists take the "observer", rather than the "participant perspective", when investigating social groups. In this context, to take the "observer perspective" is to acknowledge that identities are not just things naturally found in the world, even though human beings typically act as though they were. It is, in other words, to acknowledge that each and every identity is constructed in social interaction and, as such, it is both relational and context-dependent. Furthermore, this view implies that no identity is amenable to possession; rather, identities are fundamental *processes* that provide meaning to the material and symbolic world (Calhoun 1994; Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003; Jenkins 2008).

Identities make the world meaningful, in that humans make sense of themselves and their surroundings by categorizing and attributing names and functions to each other and objects. According to Jenkins (2008, 5), identity is "the human capacity – rooted in language – to know 'who's who' (and hence 'what's what') ....a multidimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities." Therefore, identification contributes to making the world meaningful. It is, in other words, a fundamental process in the constitution of the *social* world. Thus, knowledge and meaning do not refer to the real, objective essence of things and entities. Instead, they are constructed in social interaction, in reference to particular material and ideational contexts, including the secular *episteme* (Asad 2003; Mavelli 2012). In this sense, identities and meanings are context-dependent (Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003). Regardless of one's normative stance on essentialization and reification, social structures exist and matter, in that "human beings become agents, capable of effective action, only when they are actively sustained in place through social and historical connections and disconnections" (Clifford 2000, 96).

The importance of context, notably of what Clifford (2000) calls "historical connections", takes the present discussion back to one of the arguments presented in the previous chapter, that is, history matters. In turn, the word "disconnections" serves as a warning against a too strong emphasis

on structures. Since identities and meanings are socially and historically embedded, social change is also conceivable. If meaning is socially constructed rather than given, it may well be revised by agents in response to new circumstances. The intersubjective networks of meaning to which agents refer to understand, and to act in the world are subject to incessant processes of revision, which are conducted by agents themselves (Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003; Jenkins 2008).

Notably, in the face of contextual changes, social agents may start questioning crystallized identities and understandings, thereby re-politicizing these institutionalized social products and setting in motion contests over their meaning, legitimacy, and consequences. This seems to be happening to the long-established Western European secular orders, which are increasingly problematized and politicized in religious controversies. To investigate these and other occurrences, it is opportune to focus on identity: not only does identity lie at the intersection of agency and structure, but it also functions as a central mechanism in the co-constitution and transformation of the social world (Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003; Jenkins 2008).

Identity as a Process

If one is to consider social change, the concept of identity must acquire a fluid, as opposed to stable, quality. In this context, identity is best thought of as "a condition of being or becoming" (Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003, 210). In other words, it is always in the making (Stuart Hall 1996; Clifford 2000). In virtue of this processual quality, Laclau (1994), Stuart Hall (1996), and Brubaker (2004), among others, draw a distinction between "identity" and "identification", considering the latter term more appropriate to designate identity's incessant process of construction.[26]

Following Jenkins (2008, 14-15), this thesis uses the two terms interchangeably. Moreover, considering the claim that identities are always in the making, it tries to write about identities without

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[26] Although similar, the reasons provided by Laclau (1994), Stuart Hall (1996) and Brubaker (2004) for drawing a distinction between identity and identification are not the same. While Laclau (1994), for example, discusses identification as a process of construction related to the psychoanalytical notion of lack, Brubaker (2004, 29) endeavors to find analytic alternatives to identity, which he criticizes for being "too ambiguous, too torn between "hard" and "soft" meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers, to serve well the demands of social analysis".

taking their ontological status for granted. Three related reasons justify and support this dynamic perspective: first, identities are relational; second, they are immersed in social and political networks; and third, they are neither singular nor unified. These reasons have been touched upon in the previous pages. The following discussion elaborates on them, addressing their implications for social analysis.

That identities are relational and contextual has been explicitly argued for: as products of social activity, identities gain meaning only insofar as they are seen in relation to their counterparts, in particular cultural and historical settings (Dunn 1998). In absence of these conditions, any identity would be difficult to grasp. Although considered previously, these two points still add to the present discussion. *Relationality* stresses that identity involves, simultaneously, the establishment of sameness and difference. Difference is a precondition of identity—and *vice versa* (Jenkins 2008).

In saying so, this thesis is not trying to accord greater significance to either side of the equation, but merely to clarify that it is only in relation to that which is deemed different that an identity may be established. According to Triandafyllidou and Wodak (2003), two relations of comparison are established when an identity is claimed, one of sameness (or similarity) and one of difference. In concrete terms, this twin process is observed in social relations both between individuals and between collectivities (according to the social constructivist perspective, the two levels are inseparable). Remarkable in this respect is that the different, or the "Other", i.e., that which remains outside of the boundaries of the self, is in any way indispensable for the self-understanding of individuals or groups. This is not only because, as mentioned, the establishment of sameness entails the definition of difference, but also because as a social product, identification works as a dialectic interplay between internal definition and external categorization. The idea of *relationality* should be apprehended in these terms (Dunn 1998; Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003; Jenkins 2008; Owens et al 2010). Since similarity and difference may be thought of as opposite sides of the same coin, one—perhaps less obvious—implication of the idea of *relationality* to social analysis is that social and symbolic boundaries became an important subject of academic inquiry (Lamont and Molnár 2002).

The second reason for talking about identity in terms of process—identities are contextual—adds to this depiction of sameness-difference by specifying that this dyadic relationship is neither innate nor immutable. Identity revision, even full-blown transformation, is a conceivable occurrence, especially in times of uncertainty (Bauman 1996). Whether individual or collective, identities are socially constituted, and consequently, responsive to historical and political contingencies. While external contingencies of this sort are important, they are not the sole factors affecting social identities. As suggested above, internal factors are also important. In fact, Jenkins (2008, 46) underscores the "dialectical interplay of processes of internal and external definition" in the formation and transformation of identity. Further, the author clarifies that self-definition should be not be neglected, since internal factors, too, are a part of the process of identification (see also Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003; Owens et al 2010). Once again, social identities appear at the intersection between individual and collectivity, self and other, agency and structure.

On the implications of identity's contextual embeddedness to social analysis, it should be reiterated that contextual factors, as well as practices of self-definition and external categorization, are fundamental to understanding identity and must, therefore, be accounted for. Together, these multifarious inputs to the definition of identity also suggest that identification resembles a process of negotiation, during which participants may agree or disagree, they may endorse different viewpoints as well as express diverging interests. Throughout this process, actors occupy diverse social roles and positions and, moreover, have differing objectives and power resources. From this standpoint, identification may be thought of as a political contest over the legitimate definition of social entities, with real consequences to those affected. If following Moufee (2005), conflict is acknowledged as an ineradicable part of social life, it may be argued that social construction is always to some extent a political process. In short, politics matter. Processes of identity formation, endurance, and change are "intensely political" (Taylor and Spencer 2004, 4).

The foregoing discussion on the internal–external, and individual–collective character of identification suggests that social identities are never singular and unified—i.e., the third reason

mentioned above. In contrast with portrayals of individuals and groups as homogeneous entities, endowed with specific defining qualities, social constructivists put forward that human beings and their collectivities have multiple identities, the resort to which is contingent on the situational, social, and historical circumstances of those concerned. Moreover, these multiple identities do not have to be consistent with one another (Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003; Jenkins 2008; Owens et al 2010). For instance, reconciling feminist and religious identities, albeit possible, comes with great challenges, especially in Western societies. The same is valid for collective identities: that a group is so defined implies neither that in-group and out-group definitions coincide, nor that this group is devoid of internal differences and struggles (Calhoun 1994).

The idea of multiplicity, however, does not refer merely to the different social roles and positions humans and their groupings come to occupy in stratified societies (Owens et al 2010). It also denotes something more fundamental: the inherent fragmentation and destabilization of human identities, groups, and cultures. This depiction of identities as multiple and fractured conforms with, and supports, the characterization of identification as both a process and a project, since the lack of a stable and homogeneous core implies that, even when identities are taken for granted, they may be problematized and contested—at least potentially (Calhoun 1994; Stuart Hall 1996; Clifford 1998).

The implications of this notion of fractured identities to social analysis are somewhat controversial, especially when it comes to the contributions of postmodern and poststructuralist intellectuals engaged in "identity politics" or the "politics of difference" (Taylor and Spencer 2004). According to Jenkins (2008, 19), in underscoring the fractured and fragmented character of identity, especially in the West, these scholars have stressed the notion of difference at the expense of similarity and have, thereby, neglected their inherent interdependence, with potentially problematic consequences to social analysis. In expressing similar concerns, Spencer and Taylor (2004) have also warned scholars against the dangers of reification hidden on a too strong focus on difference, which could potentially undermine their critical endeavors.

In what he labels the "difference paradigm", Jenkins (2008) groups together Stuart Hall, Charles Taylor, Seyla Benhabib, and Judith Butler, among other scholars whose academic thinking has been described as "critical", "postmodern", "poststructural", and "deconstructivist" due to their dismissal and/or questioning of the modern and rational subject of Western Enlightenment philosophy (Dunn 1998). Labels aside, in analyzing and engaging in debates over "identity" and "difference", these scholars have contributed to contesting the grand narratives of modernity, often associated to the furtherance of social exclusion and oppression, especially of minority groups. By contesting essentializing categories and demonstrating that social identities are always fractured, often contradictory, and never complete, these scholars have helped not only to problematize Western modernity, but also to empower and emancipate subaltern subjectivities and to promote their political inclusion (Calhoun 1994; Dunn 1998; Taylor and Spencer 2004).

In pursuing these critical and in some cases, emancipatory objectives, these scholars might have, as Jenkins (2008) suggests, put difference at the center-stage of their projects. Yet, this choice does not seem inadequate in light of the intellectual and political objectives of the "difference paradigm". Notably, this "paradigm", together with other critical thinking, provide important insights into modern processes of identification, especially when it comes to their political dimension. For now, however, it is their depiction of a never-ending process of identity construction that is of interest. In this regard, Stuart Hall (1996) suggests that the continued quality of the identification process derives from the unattainable objectives pursued by the very notion of identity, namely, sameness, unity, totality. Similarly to other critical scholars, such as Laclau (1994), Stuart Hall (1996) resorts to psychoanalytic notion of "lack" to stress that "one needs to identify with something because there is an originary and insurmountable lack of identity" (Laclau 1994, 3). In more mundane, yet compatible terms, Bauman (1996) argues that the search for identity appears to derive from the basic problem of uncertainty—uncertainty about who one is and about where one belongs.

Confronted with this lack, with this absence that is constitutive, subjects search for order and unity, i.e., the Law, in Lacanian terms. The paramountcy of this pursuit implies that no external

grounds or justifications—be them natural, moral, or transcendental—are necessary for the emergence of social and political identity. Identity responds to the longing for order and unity caused by the lack, regardless of its specific content and grounding (Laclau 1994). This longing, however, can never be fully appeased, for the lack is constitutive. Hence, the notion of a lasting core of the self is untenable; in its place, a radical social constructivist (and anti-essentialist) perspective surfaces, a perspective which views identity, subjectivity, and, more broadly, meaning, as unstable products of dominant social, cultural, and political discourses (Laclau 1994; Stuart Hall 1996).

In this respect, there is some degree of consensus among radical and "mainstream" social constructivists, to whom social identities are always multiple, fragmented and internally contested—to some extent. Still, in line with their rich and eclectic theoretical foundations, critical scholars pay more attention than their moderate counterparts to the notion of difference, an analytical choice which allows them to emphasize the instability and dynamism of identities and to disentangle the workings of power in processes of identity (trans)formation.

In virtue of their focus on the workings of power, these contributions are helpful in delineating strategies to investigate ideological secularism and contemporary controversies over religion and diversity. In fact, as seen in the first chapter, conceptualized as the enactment of the secular *episteme*, secularism is one among other discourses of power, which simultaneously inform and constrain the social construction of meaning and identity in modern societies. Thus, despite their problems, the insights of critical perspectives on identity and difference are important to grasp contemporary social phenomena and are, thus, used to complement the constructivist framing of this thesis. It is in this sense that this thesis adopts a critical constructivist perspective. Notably, the critical character of this perspective contributes to diverting the analytical focus to the dynamic borders of identity- and difference-making and to the political workings and consequences of these processes of identification.

The Politics of Identity and Difference

According to social constructivists, identity is not a thing, but a social process, the operation of which cuts across conventional lines of demarcation between similarity–difference, internal–external, and agency–structure. Identification, it seems, takes place where the elements of these dyads intersect. Moreover, this process contributes to making the world meaningful and predictable, as well as to bringing about innovation and change. As such, identity is a multifarious phenomenon, the study of which may be considered as challenging as it is promising. No wonder, then, that social analysts have had a hard time agreeing on theoretical and methodological instruments to explore identity's vicissitudes: in addition to being an intricate social process, identity has become a "contentious place in social and political theory" (Taylor and Spencer 2004, 1; Owens et al 2010).

The critical line of scholarship referred to above is, of course, one among other perspectives on this subject matter. Whereas it, too, conceives of identity as a social process, this perspective has often contained more social dynamism and less structure than conventional constructivist analyses. Despite their many differences, critical scholars have been similarly intrigued by contemporary "crises of identity", responsible for problematizing, politically and intellectually, modernity and its unifying narratives. At the center of their critical endeavors, one typically finds the Western idea of a unified and original self, which has allowed for the postulation of a free and sovereign individual.

To be sure, this critique of the modern subject goes back to the depiction of fractured, fragmented, and multiple identities—which is not to say that critical authors adopt a single or common conceptualization of identity. Furthermore, it has been inseparable from the uncertain and troubled conditions in which the Western world has found itself over the past decades, well-illustrated by public discourses on identity crises, cultural conflicts, civilizational clashes, and societal disintegration.[27] Maybe these critical views on identity are best synthesized by what they are not: they depart (even if only partially or provisionally, in some cases) from modern and liberal ideas of

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[27] In fact, critical and postmodern academic perspectives have frequently been a part of, and a response to, inclusive, self-affirming, and emancipatory political movements, whose complex and evolving demands have been conveyed in several overlapping political vocabularies, such as non-discrimination, equality, recognition, accommodation, identity politics, politics of difference, multiculturalism, and more recently, post-secularism.

individual subjectivity, focusing instead on the often contradictory and discontinuous character of identities, the fluidity of which is said to reflect the political context in which they are immersed, particularly dominant discourses of power. According to Stuart Hall (1996, 2-3)

> identification is in the end conditional... it does not obliterate difference.... Identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption. There is always 'too much' or 'too little' - an over-determination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the 'play', of *differance*. It obeys the logic of more-than-one. And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of 'frontier–effects'. It requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process.

Several aspects of this definition are relevant to the present effort to build a theoretical framework suitable for examining ideological secularism. In this dense passage, Stuart Hall (1996) reveals the ambiguity inherent in identification, frequently over-determined in modern discourses but, in fact, unable to forge total unity—of the self, societies, and even the world. Therefore, identification is treated as a process that is permanently open-ended and ambivalent; it is an ongoing and political process of articulation, which takes place at the shifting boundaries between self and other. As such, the constitution of social identities seems to involve primarily the definition of an-Other against which sameness/similarity is conceptualized. Difference, in short, appears as a fundamental, maybe even antecedent, factor in the establishment of "who's who", to paraphrase Jenkins (2008).

In this respect, it is interesting to recall, however, that identification is a political project founded upon aspirations that can never be met, since absolute sameness is an impossibility. According to Stuart Hall (1996, 4), identities are constructed "across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions". In this phrase, the political context in which identities emerge is put under the analytic spotlight, in a move that contributes to decentering and decentralizing the human individual, which may no longer be thought of as the "unified centre of control from which meaning emanates" (Easthope and McGowan 2010, 73).

Furthermore, this shifting matrix of discourses, practices and positions stresses the fragmentation of identities and suggests that identity is a fluid and, thus, slippery notion, impossible to grasp in full at any single moment: it is connected to both the past and the future, without ever fully being in the present. Described as a verb rather than a noun by Bauman (1996), identity is a process of becoming, an endless search, the final objective of which—total unity—is both elusive and constitutive. The unceasing positioning of subjects and objects in the matrix, then, indicates not only an impossibility to pinpoint the precise borders and contents of identity, but also a constitutive connection of any identity to its imagined past and utopian future.

That identities reach back to the past—to personal experiences as well as to national glories and defeats—is not surprising: it is in referring to what "was" or "has been", that groups and individuals reconstruct their histories, position themselves (and are positioned) in the social world, and gain a sense of who they are in relation to others. At the same time, despite its dynamic and incomplete character, identity also "appears in the future tense"; it projects itself in time and may be thought of as a political project, one that is, nonetheless, always in the making (Calhoun 1994; Bauman 1996, 19). Such temporal connections, however imagined, lend some degree stability to social relations by helping to sediment socially established notions of 'who's who' and 'what's what', which derive from ongoing processes of identification, as argued previously (Jenkins 2008).

All in all, identification surfaces from the quote as a fragmented, yet political process through which subjects position themselves, and are positioned in the social world. This process, moreover, takes place primarily at the margins, at the intersections between similarity and difference, self and other, individual and collectivity. Thus presented, this perspective sheds light on two additional characteristics of identification, which are important if one endeavors to examine contemporary controversies: first, the political character of the construction of identity and meaning; and second, the importance of margins, intersections, and boundaries in the social process which leads to the definition of reality. The next subsections address these characteristics.

The Political Dimension of Identification

The perspective introduced thus far is more critical than the one adopted by Jenkins (2008), who puts forward a moderate constructivist stance on identity. Although partly agreeing with, and building upon the "difference paradigm," Jenkins (2008) maintains that social analysts should not overemphasize difference at the expense of similarity, because similarity is as important and consequential as difference. In his view, dismissing the interdependence of these two elements is tantamount to disregarding important dimensions of social reality, notably collective belonging. Furthermore, combined with a radically anti-essentialist and anti-foundational position, the focus on difference may lead to a paradoxical portrayal of social identity, which exaggerates fragmentation, downplays individual agency, and understates the conventional notion of social structure.[28] In concrete terms, as Young's (1990) "dilemma of difference" suggests, and Calhoun (1994) and Dunn (1998) reiterate, a radical focus on difference and on the fragmented and heterogeneous character of reality risks disregarding an important contemporary development, that of group pluralism.

This criticism is too general. Although not all critical authors may be subject to these critiques, no distinction has been made among them. Charges of structuralism, for instance, are typically raised against post-structuralist scholars. Additionally, it makes good sense to broach this radical, but varied scholarship against the social and political context of its own production, in that intellectual objectives have in many cases been inseparable from broader political objectives. As indicated, radical anti-essentialist positions have included strong stances against universalism and Western modernity, as well as a denial of external grounds/justification for the social world as currently conceptualized. Although these positions have important epistemological implications, they are primarily ontological

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[28] Radical anti-essentialism shakes the foundations of the underlying structures of modernity. Notably, it unsettles such formations by depicting them as provisional and precarious results of the coming together of different sensibilities, practices, and discourses, especially those of power. At the same time, however, this critique contributes to displacing the centrality human agency in the construction of the social world, inasmuch as "the origin" of social meaning and order ceases to be the individual subject; society, power, culture, amongst other dominant discursive structures, turn this subject into "the effect" of linguistic practices (Easthope and McGowan 2010).

and political, insofar as they aim to speak to and problematize the conditions of possibility of contemporary social and material circumstances. In this light, the emphasis on difference and anti-essentialism may be understood differently, not necessarily as a problem or liability (although it may be legitimately deemed so). Specifically, this scholarship may be seen as part of a scientific endeavor that aims to engage critically with reality. As Calhoun (1994, 17) contends, there is "a field of possible strategies for confronting issues of identity". Radical, critical, postmodern, poststructural, and deconstructivist stances on identity may be understood as one such strategy (or several), and one which addresses specific questions and problems.[29]

From the 1980s onwards, this radical scholarship has been related to political movements (at first, mainly leftist and emancipatory ones) which have brought social differences to the fore of the public sphere, hitherto guided by the allegedly inclusive ideal of liberal citizenship and its principles of equality, neutrality, and universality. According to Taylor (1994), it is because particular identities did not enjoy *a priori* recognition in the public sphere that this theme became so important in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The importance accorded to the notion of difference by Stuart Hall (1996) and other scholars of the "difference paradigm" is best understood in the context of these struggles.

In discussing the "politics of difference", Young (1990), for example, demonstrates that the aim of citizenship regimes to transcend social differences in order to ensure a common life, guided by the elusive idea of general will, may generate not only exclusion in the face of group differences, but also a problematic pressure for cultural homogeneity. In light of this critique, Young's (1990) focus on difference can hardly be regarded unwarranted, especially considering the exclusionary consequences of traditional citizenship approaches, which rely on conceptions of equality and

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[29] This is not to say that Jenkins' (2008) critique is wrong. Nor is it to suggest that radical approaches are above criticism—to claim as much would be a contradiction in terms. The argument here is that critical efforts are always pursuant of certain (intellectual or political) goals and, more often than not, particularly effective from their own intellectual and political standpoints. The critique formulated by Jenkins (2008) is appealing and effective in light of his own objectives, that is, to develop a well-equipped analytic framework, capable of providing insights into the complexities of a social phenomenon that is dynamic, processual, internal and external, and individual and collective. However, as suggested, the adoption of different standpoints allow social researchers to confront a myriad of subject matters related to identity, which cannot be encompassed in one single type of research.

impartiality without accounting for their oppressive and discriminatory potential. Concurring with Young (1990), Calhoun (1994) and Clifford (1998) argue that one of the main problems of traditional approaches to political identity and citizenship is that they have prevented difference from becoming a subject of political concern. Young's (2003) critique is powerful precisely for shedding light on the political consequences of this disregard of difference. Calhoun (1994) and Clifford (1998) argue that this disregard is attributable to the assumption that individual identity precedes interaction in the public sphere, instead of being formed and transformed throughout this process of interaction. By so assuming, traditional citizenship approaches miss a central part of the public and political life in liberal democracies, that is: the unstable and power-laden construction of the identities of those who participate in the political community. Thus, the intellectual engagements of critical scholars with such precarious and fractured processes of identification have brought difference and the "politics of identity" back into the public and academic landscape.

These issues reignite themes addressed in the first chapter of this thesis, notably the critique of liberal regimes and the idea that the problem of diversity is the animating soul of politics. As discussed, traditional liberal perspectives, such as the early Habermasian and Rawlsian ones, have been charged with neglecting groups' particularities. Over the past three decades or so, political and academic debates on citizenship, nationalism, multiculturalism, belonging, among others, have shown that the putative impartiality of, and formal equality in, the public sphere are expressions of power regimes, which have privileged white, straight, liberal, rational, and male citizens, while marginalizing or oppressing those who do not conform with this standard ideal—those who are, in other words, "different". In this light, it is not surprising that "identity politics", and subsequent public debates on multiculturalism, diversity, immigration, and integration have focused on the notion of difference. "The different" and her roles in the political community needed re-conceptualizing and valuing. Accordingly, there has been an effort not only to criticize liberal views of the political community, but also to demonstrate how the very notion of "difference"—and thus, of diversity—is slippery, in that it, too, is subject to the contingencies of social, historical and political circumstances.

If identity is a social construction, so are the conceptions of difference, similarity, and diversity. In trying to disentangle groups from categories, Jenkins (2008, 104-106) himself makes this point clear when he distinguishes between processes of "group identification" and "categorization". As the name suggest, the former is an internal process of identification, by which members of a collectivity define themselves and the relations between them. As such, it involves some degree of mutual recognition between participants. The latter process, in turn, consists of an external form of identification: a category is arbitrarily delineated through the intervention of outsiders, who define its contents and boundaries. To be sure, this distinction is methodological, and its purpose is analytical. This is not to say, however, that groups and categories do not exist, but merely that their formation is simultaneous, inseparable; in short, they are two sides of the same coin (on the differences between groups and categories, see Brubaker 2004; Jenkins 2008; Wimmer 2013).

It is interesting to refer to this distinction as theorized by Jenkins (2008) because, in addition to reiterating the point about the social construction of difference, it highlights the political character of this process: if identification involves the interplay of internal and external definitions, disagreement and contestation over the boundaries of similarity and difference are bound to occur. In this regard, the work of critical scholars is important, in that it makes manifest "the struggle involved in forging identities, the tension inherent in the fact that we all have multiple, incomplete and/or fragmented identities (and sometimes resistances), [and] the politics implied by the differential public standing of various identities and identity claims" (Calhoun 1994, 24). Interventions in the domains of class, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, among others, have helped to make this point.

This potential for conflict is heightened when it comes to the categorization of others due to three related reasons. First, the subjects of categorization practices might be unaware of their membership in a category. Second, they might disagree with the "categorizing gaze" of third parties, as it has been the case in many struggles for recognition and respect. Third, whether a category is recognized or not by its members, when effective, categorization comes with real consequences to those subject to its imagined, fragmented, and socially constituted bounds (Jenkins 2008, 106). It is

often due to these consequences—materialized, for instance, in rights, social prestige, political power, and economic rewards—that social actors struggle over the boundaries of belonging and categorizing. A long sociological tradition has demonstrated that the allocation of political, economic, and symbolic resources in a community is closely associated to externally defined social boundaries, especially when such boundaries are imposed or rendered legitimate by the authoritative power of states (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Wimmer 2013). The importance of the boundary metaphor to the politics of identification is the main subject of the next section. States' categorizing role in the construction of identity and difference is discussed subsequently.

Social and Symbolic Boundaries

If identity is a precarious and unstable process of articulation, which is politically and historically contingent, then the shifting boundaries of similarity and difference become a particularly interesting locus of scientific inquiry. Identification seems to occur primarily at the margins, to paraphrase Stuart Hall (1996). To make sense of themselves and the world, individuals and groups, including political communities, depend on social exchange, which happens at the intersections of their own fractured and multiple selves. Although this argument has been presented in the previous sections, not much has been said about social boundaries and their analysis. This section fills this gap by elaborating on boundaries and discussing the state's role in contests over the definition of the political community.

Closely associated to the social constructivist perspective, the concept of boundary has received much attention over the past years, not least because it allows analysts to avoid reifying socially constituted entities (Lamont and Fournier 1992; Lamont and Molnár 2002; Kastoryano 2010; Wimmer 2013). The majority of those who speak about social and symbolic boundaries build upon Fredrik Barth (1969), whose opening contribution to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* made academic history for introducing the boundary metaphor, and demonstrating that ethnic groups are never found in isolation from their counterparts. Similarity entails difference; the self mirrors the other; "us"

presupposes "them"; and all of these relations are articulated, frequently struggled over, at the boundaries that connect and separate identities and social meanings (Jenkins 2008; Kastoryano 2010).

In observing that distinct ethnic groups persisted over time despite considerable flows of people and ideas between them, Barth (1969, 15) contended that it was not so much the "cultural stuff" of these groups that defined them as separate ethnic units; rather, ethnicity was more appropriately seen as a form of social organization. Barth (1969) parted ways with the dominant anthropological perspective of his time, which assumed cultures and ethnic groups to be conterminous with one another. He showed instead that ethnic distinctions emerged primarily as the result of boundary making practices and, thus, irrespective of existing patterns of cultural similarity and difference. Barth's emphasis on the process of social dichotomization implied not only that ascription and self-ascription were more relevant for ethnicity than cultural content, but also that ethnic identities were more situational than structural characteristics (Barth 1969; Verdery 1994; Wimmer 2013).

What followed Barth's (1969) contribution is described by Wimmer (2013) as a paradigm shift in the social sciences. In view of his arguments, the premise of ethnic unit, that is, the idea that self-evident social groups are out there, in the real world, to be found and defined by the objective gaze of social analysts, has been deemed untenable. The downgrade of this premise—hitherto fundamental to anthropology—has led to much creative work in the social sciences (Verdery 1994). Notably, there has been a tendency to approach ethnic groups and other collectivities in ways that acknowledge the subjective character of the social boundaries that define and differentiate them from one another (Wimmer 2013). Moreover, as Verdery (1994, 42, her italics) observes, since the notion of culture as a "zone of shared meanings" has been replaced by the notion of culture as a "zone of *disagreement* and *contest*", the study of ethnicity has become "the study of culture as politics".

With this observation, Verdery (1994) suggests that to investigate the ethnicity-culture compound, one must focus on the politics of culture and on the ideological formations that underpin social occurrences. In addition to reiterating the necessarily political character of identification, Verdery's (1994) observation also highlights the importance of political ideologies for identification.

Drawing on the insights of Barth's (1969) work on ethnicity and groups, the following subsections make a case for looking into social and symbolic boundaries, situate the importance of this type of study in the contemporary world, and specify tools appropriate for the analysis proposed in this thesis.

A Case for Investigating Social Boundaries

Barth's (1969) attention to subjective rather than objective cultural boundaries lies at the roots of the contention between constructivists and essentialists–primordialists. As mentioned, this debate revolves around whether analysts should take the "observer" or the "participant perspective" when studying social groups (Brubaker 2004; Larin 2010). Insofar as anthropologists of the past have taken groups for granted, their work is more attuned to what is now called primordialist thinking, according to which culture and/or ethnicity is a constitutive and relatively permanent characteristic of societies. Like past anthropologists, primordialists have adopted the perspective of group members and have investigated aspects of these groups' "cultural stuff". In doing so, however, these scholars have been particularly liable to the charge of "groupism" (Brubaker 2004). They have often been accused of taking for granted those phenomena that are actually in need of explanation, that is, social groups.

Brubaker (2004), a vocal critic of participant perspectives, argues that social analysis should focus on explaining the processes through which groups come into being in the first place. Even though he does not side with constructivists, Brubaker (2004) contends that the main problem of participant perspectives (including many types of constructivism) is that a part of the social reality investigated—that of ethnic or cultural units—is used as an analytical tool to explain that same reality. Given obvious problems caused by such circular analysis, Brubaker (2004) defends "observer" perspectives. Notably, he urges social scientists to adopt "categories of social analysis", instead of letting themselves be seduced by "categories of ethnopolitical practice" (Brubaker 2004, 10). According to him, even "identity" belongs to the latter group, for, in recurring to the term, most scientists simply take the perspective of participants and assume existence of the identities investigated. He argues, instead, that identity should be abandoned as a category of analysis.

Brubaker's (2004) critique is provocative and incisive, and touches upon a number of discussions presented previously. Here, it is interesting to discuss his critique of "participant perspectives", such as the primordial one, because it contributes to explaining the differences between analyses that focus on social boundaries and those that look into the "cultural stuff" of groups, as well as the added value of each type of analytical endeavor.

As argued, the current primordialist position is not in disagreement with constructivism and its basic claims (Van Evera 2001; Bayar 2009; Larin 2010). Additionally, depending on how it is articulated, constructivism may be subject to critiques as serious as the ones put forward against primordialism. For one, critics are correct in claiming that, taken to its logical consequences, constructivism has a hard time accounting for crystallized social structures, especially for their continuity and coherence over time (Bader 2001; Bayar 2009). Thus, it seems that neither reifying the existence of collective distinctions, nor denying their existence helps to understand social groups. Furthermore, as Jenkins (2008) underscores, to claim that collective attachments are socially constituted and imagined is not tantamount to claiming that they are imaginary and inconsequential. That such attachments bring about real consequences to the lives of individuals should be enough of a motivation to study groups and their "cultural stuff".

While these arguments do not disavow constructivism, they do suggest that the participant perspective has a place in social research. This perspective may provide insights into collective groups and their persistent material and cultural institutions, which may not be otherwise accessible. Thus, primordialist investigations should not be dismissed from the outset. As an "alternative approach" to the study of ethnic groups, they have an important place in contemporary scholarship.

This is not, however, to agree with Van Evera's (2001) negative judgment of constructivist claims, especially those concerning multiple identities and the permeability of social boundaries. According to this author, these postulates are weak, not least for underestimating the endurance and strength of primordial identities. While this point might be well taken if one only considers cases in which ethnic distinctions have indeed played an overwhelming social role, the fact remains that

distinctions of this type cannot be assumed to possess the same resilience and strength always and everywhere (Wimmer 2013). In this respect, Wimmer (2013) notices that although the part played by these distinctions might in some cases resemble that described by primordialists, in others, it concurs with constructivist observations. Social boundaries, in short, are not always the same: they might be more or less important, they might function differently, they might change over time, among other possible variations (Lamont and Fournier 1992).

Therefore, while Van Evera's (2001) emphasis on seemingly bold and long-lasting identities is analytically appropriate in certain contexts, it does not contribute to understanding how identities are formed, transformed, and strengthened. It is in reference to these dynamic processes that constructivism and the boundary metaphor are of value: in well-conceived academic endeavors, they allow social analysts to bring the cognitive, interactional, and macrosociological perspectives together in understanding social process that are creative, dynamic, and vigorous (Lamont and Fournier 1992; Jenkins 2008). Thus, in contrast to the participant perspective, the observer one allows analysts to appreciate and take account of identification as a dynamic political process. While this perspective may not result in parsimonious explanations of social phenomena, it does permit analysts to explore how these complex phenomena arise, blossom, and change, in addition to providing insights into their social, political, and historical consequences and contradictions.

Western Europe and the Contest over Boundaries

The foregoing sections of this chapter have attempted to demonstrate that, for the purposes of this thesis, identity and its counterpart, difference, are better understood as dynamic social processes. In the contemporary world, social identities, be them cultural, political, or religious, seem to be ever in motion: they are eagerly, sometimes violently, contested and re-negotiated, both in the West and elsewhere (Bauman 1996; Kastoryano 2010). In Europe, the dominant academic and political discourses of the past twenty years seem to validate this dynamic outlook, in that terms and expressions such as the politics of difference, multiculturalism, immigrant integration, social

cohesion, culture wars and, of course, the infamous civilizational clash, have gained currency. This evolving political vocabulary indicates that when it comes to social and political identity, there is much fear and anxiety on the continent—and not only about the "Other". Uncertainty appears to strike the "we" as well, with Europeans struggling at the domestic and the European level to define the values, qualities, and traditions that bring them together. From this perspective, cultural conflicts, including religious controversies, may be understood as political contests and negotiations over the boundaries that simultaneously define who we are, and distinguish "us" from "them".

To be sure, this is not to say that this politics of identity—or whichever term one might choose to designate such moments—is new or particular to the contemporary world. The problem of diversity and the question of integration have always been a crucial part of social and political life. Without difference and conflict, social life would not be possible (Simmel 1904; Saxonhouse 1995; Calhoun 1994). Still, throughout the past century, many overarching and allegedly universal ideologies have attempted to suppress, erase, and/or deny the importance of diversity to political societies. This has been shown in the first chapter of this thesis in respect to the workings of secularism, modernization, and liberalism. These dominant languages of politics have kept (certain) identities away from the public square, assuming that such an impartial stance would have guaranteed equality, justice, and the attainment of the common good. Liberal and democratic states have deliberately propagated these views, although they have done so in accordance with their own political traditions. This is because, as discussed, to forge that common bond that holds together a political community, these states have had to engage in community-constructing or nation-building practices (Kastoryano 2002).

The current "post-secular" condition may be thought of as a moment of overt and intense contestation and re-negotiation of identities in the West, especially of those identities that provide political communities with an existential reason. In alluding to duality, dynamism, and simultaneity, the boundary metaphor seems particularly suited to represent and analyze a context in which deep-rooted conceptions are being transgressed, blurred, strengthened, and moved. But how exactly may boundaries be conceptualized and investigated?

Conceptualizing and Analyzing Boundaries

Lamont and Molnár (2002) provide a useful conceptualization of social and symbolic boundaries. They argue that although the establishment of symbolic boundaries may be thought of as a necessary condition for the emergence of social boundaries, the two should not be equated. According to them, symbolic boundaries are the "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices and even time and space. They are the tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality". Social boundaries, in turn, are "objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities" (Lamont and Molnár 2002, 168). Therefore, while symbolic boundaries refer to looser and broader conceptual and interpretative schemes, social boundaries refer to those widely accepted and stable demarcations, with concrete and institutionalized expressions, in the form of groups, rights, resources, opportunities, constraints, *etc*.

Disentangling social from symbolic boundaries is analytically useful for a number of reasons. First, it allows scholars to decouple the stability of social structures from the fluidity of the contexts in which social and political interaction takes place. For example, from this viewpoint, it is possible to think of shifting symbolic boundaries due to, say, classification struggles, that do not change established social boundaries. Second, this distinction highlights the role of relationality in the (trans)formation of identities, since it clarifies that for symbolic boundaries to be institutionalized, widespread social recognition is needed. Third, it permits analysts to entertain the possibility of different types of boundaries, playing different roles in different contexts. For example, while some symbolic boundaries may bring about consequences to individuals and groups, others may be loose and may never generate concrete social boundaries (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Wimmer 2013).

Returning to Barth (1969), regardless of whether they are symbolic or social, boundaries are responsible for defining in-groups and out-groups, thereby forging inclusion and similarity, as well as exclusion and difference. These simultaneous processes bring about real social consequences, such

as economic inequality and political domination. When it comes to nation-states, for instance, the boundary literature suggests that national, republican and liberal ideologies result from diverse dynamics and mechanisms of boundary construction (Kastoryano 2010). Such processes typically involve the politicization of specific identities and differences, such as ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, and more recently, religion. Thus, it is not enough to claim that boundaries are important. It is necessary to understand how boundaries are built, struggled over, and used by political groups, especially states—the foremost promoters of ideologies and identities in the contemporary world.

In his *Ethnic Boundary Making,* Wimmer (2013) offers what is to date one of the most comprehensive typologies of boundary-making, which encompasses and expands the work of other scholars. Although this typology is not systematically used in this thesis, it provides insights into the strategies and means adopted by political actors engaged in the governance of social and religious diversity. For instance, this typology may be useful in identifying and drawing comparisons between the discursive strategies of actors whose worldviews fall on opposite sides of the political spectrum.

Wimmer (2013) proposes a typology of both strategies and means of boundary-making. Strategies refer to the ways in which political actors may attempt to alter the location and/or meaning of social and symbolic boundaries, and include, for instance, boundary expansion, i.e., when political actors attempt to make the boundaries that define a group more encompassing, and boundary contraction, which involves fission, i.e, the break-up of communities into smaller groupings. Means of boundary-making, in turn, are used by political actors to render their vision of social similarity and difference legitimate. In addressing means, Wimmer (2013) also presents the types of resources actors deploy in trying to make their vision of the political world relevant and consequential.

This second part of Wimmer's (2013) typology contributes to identifying the means and resources political actors may use to govern, modify, and reinforce social and political differences. Since this thesis is concerned with discourses, practices, and policies devised by states to manage social and religious diversity, it is particularly relevant here. Notably, amongst the means of boundary-making, which also include discrimination and coercion, for example, Wimmer (2013)

highlights categorization and identification practices. Like Jenkins (2008) and other social constructivists, he argues that these practices are means to defining groups and their members. Additionally, he remarks that discursive and symbolic resources—ranging from bodily markers to official documents—have been important ways to create and strengthen the boundaries that make social groups intelligible and relevant. As further discussed below, the symbolic and discursive preeminence of states and their institutions has allowed these entities to become central sources of categorization and identification in contemporary societies (Wimmer 2013).

Wimmer's (2013) typology reiterates that difference and similarity are socially constructed, and clarifies what strategies, means, and resources are and have been available for altering the fragile boundaries that demarcate identity. More important here, it highlights that the state is a central actor in the promotion of social identity and diversity and that discursive and symbolic resources are fundamental in such enterprise. This, of course, complements what has been discussed in the first chapter about the importance of political discourse and the politics of discourse for ideologies.

State actors have been important promoters of ideologies and identities because state-making requires some degree of social homogeneity and political unity. The next subsection addresses this matter, exploring the role of state actors in the management of the social bodies under their care. It discusses the "politics of categories" in which these actors frequently engage, restating that identification is an inherently political process, which more often than not responds to specific social and historical realities. It also sheds light on the importance of symbols and discourse in the making of identity and difference—a subject retrieved in the methodological part of this thesis. In fact, the importance of these resources indicates that the politics of identity and that of discourse are closely connected, and this makes a strong case for studying discourse and concepts to try and understand an ideological formation and ideational changes that may have allowed for illiberal secularism.

The State and Top-down Politics of Categories

Over the past centuries, the modern state has been a central source of social categorization or, as Brubaker (2004, 43) puts it, "a powerful 'identifier'." From the nation-building projects of the past to current attempts to manage cultural pluralism, states' classification schemes and underlying ideologies—inscribed, for instance, in bureaucratic procedures, legal documents, and educational programs—have contributed to defining and dividing populations (and their surroundings) in several authoritative ways. These state practices have reflected existing social realities, as well as imposed upon them novel divisions and understandings. This section explores this theme theoretically by reference to the existing literature on states and classification practices.

Together with Bourdieu's (1991) exploration of the symbolic power of states, Foucault's (1982) writings on "governmentality" may be considered one of the most important academic elaborations of this theme.[30] In exploring the interstices of governments and their apparatuses— "regimes of practice"—Foucault and his followers have revealed the many ways in which identification and categorization have been used by states to govern the populations under their care (Dean 2010). By engaging from above in the "politics of categories", state actors have, in fact, done several things throughout the centuries: they have promoted new forms of identification, rendered some identities or categories more legitimate than others, and generated social inclusion as well as exclusion (Brubaker 2004, 13). That the state is in a "privileged position" to render the categories it creates socially significant and politically valid should not be surprising. As argued by Wimmer (2013, 64), successful categorization practices depend upon material, symbolic, and discursive resources, which most centralized polities possess in abundance. This is not to say that states monopolize identification or that the classification schemes they establish are beyond contestation.

As seen, over the past decades, "new" social movements have been vocal opponents of some categories upon which Western governments have based their rule. Insisting on this "identity politics"

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[30] By addressing government's rationality, the French philosopher endeavored to shown under which conditions particular "regimes of practices" originated, perpetuated, and changed. "Regime of practices" refers to coherent and routinized means of doing things – such as educating, caring, and punishing individuals – which define and are defined by the forms of knowledge and truth predominant in a society in a given point in history (Dean 2010).

is important because when it comes to states' categorization practices, this thesis investigates how they are used in the face of new drives to social diversification and religious pluralization, and moreover, how they are translated into discourses, practices, and policies of inclusion and exclusion. When a state acts with a view to governing social diversity at large, it conventionally enacts its underlying ideologies—liberalism, secularism, multiculturalism, etc.—via the usage of categorizing practices. These practices are currently important means of boundary-making and contribute to delineating the political domain, that is, the domain in which the state and other *political* actors may legitimately intervene (Wimmer 2013). This point is well exemplified by the transformations of citizenship in Western Europe. Citizenship has been progressively liberalized on the continent not only to include sexual and racial diversity, but also to respond to the process of European integration (Hammar 1990; Joppke 2010). Moreover, new social movements engaged in "identity politics" have questioned the liberal foundations of traditional citizenship models, which had contributed to excluding difference from the political domain. These movements have refuted the universalizing category of citizen and demanded political expression to dimensions of their multiple and fractured identities which they held dear (Gutmann 1994; Cowan 2006; Murphy 2013).

As a consequence of these and other empirical developments, such as the explosion of ethnic violence across the world in the early 1990s, identity and difference have become a particularly salient *political* issue, both domestically and internationally. Since the early 2000s, however, this issue has acquired slightly different contours in Western Europe, where international terrorism, persistent social diversification, religious controversies, and anxieties about social disintegration have frequently monopolized political, intellectual, and even corporate debates. Even the terms of the debate seem to have changed in response to these occurrences, with more focus being put on "diversity" than on the notions of identity and difference (Faist 2009; Vertovec 2012).

In this context, multiculturalism, assimilation, civic nationalism, civic integration, among other paradigms, including secularism and post-secularism, may be understood as intellectual and political attempts to deal with the challenges derived from a new, "super-diverse" landscape

(Vertovec 2010). Nevertheless, as argued in the first chapter, they seem to be as much a response to, as a constituent part of, this ongoing politics of identity. They provide to liberal and democratic states new or complementary ideational frameworks, with which these states may grasp and confront their pluralizing realities. Thus, these paradigms function simultaneously as sources of state power—by providing states with "ideal visions" of the political domain—and as pragmatic guidelines for legal and political projects—by informing, *inter alia,* states' practices of identification and categorization.

Modood (2013, 146) suggests that these frameworks be thought of as comprehensive "forms" or "species" of integration. According to him, a form of integration is a specific conceptualization of the problem of diversity, which includes an understanding of the relationship between individual and group, a political program for the handling of diversity, and a self-conception of the community facing the problem of diversity. This definition, of course, is consonant with arguments presented in the first chapter, notably with the conceptualizations of ideology and ideological secularism, understood as a form of political thinking about the government of social and religious diversity.

From this standpoint, it is possible to glance at the connections between what has been identified previously as states' ideological frameworks and their governing discourses and practices, including identification and categorization. Although Modood (2013) himself does not use this vocabulary, the definition of "forms of integration" seems to reiterate that states' ideological frameworks function as more than objective, rational ways to handle diverse social bodies; they also contribute to defining those realities they endeavor to govern, by means of categorization and other strategies. This is because, as Faist (2009, 178) argues, diversity is not a "pre-social category...it is thus constructed by societal agents by drawing demarcation lines between classifications with social meanings and sometimes defining certain classifications as the dominant ones". Hence, whichever form of integration devised by states to manage social diversity, it will take part in the power-laden process of social construction of reality. Not only will it entail a conceptualization of social difference and of the problem of diversity, but it will also provide solutions to the problem so defined.

In engaging in this process of social construction, states are partaking in the politics of identity and difference, insofar as they identify, define, and categorize the population under their care. Furthermore, in doing so, they articulate and put forth a vision of the political domain, which dictates which identities, actors, sensibilities, and voices may legitimately participate in the political community (and this participation concerns status, rights, and identity). In other words, neutrality is not in fact a possibility. Nevertheless, since this process of articulation takes place in a political field, it may be resisted, embattled, overturned. As suggested by Faist (2009) in the passage quoted above, it is by demarcating lines, by drawing boundaries that the actors involved in such struggles articulate a dominant definition of the social reality and, by implication, of diversity. These social lines help to define the political community, as well as what and who is left out of it. Based on the foregoing, it may be argued that ideological secularism, as a form of political thinking about diversity, informs states' attempts to conceptualize and govern social diversification and religion pluralization and, as such, is closely related to and, indeed, impacts the process of identification.

By focusing in identification, this chapter has sought to explain and demonstrate the theoretical and operational underpinnings of identity formation and change, as well as the role states and their ideologies play in these processes, especially when seeking to forge political unity and social integration. Notably, it has shown that it is by altering social and symbolic boundaries, especially via categorization (using discourse and other symbolic resources), that states establish identity and difference and give meaning to the world. Ideologies, of course, inform these practices, with discursive and symbolic resources bearing traces of, and cues to these forms of political thinking. In this light, it is important to examine the workings of ideological secularism in discursive practice to fully grasp the boundary shifts, identity changes, and conceptual relations that have allowed for the emergence of instances of illiberal secularism in political discourse and practice.

Chapter 3: Investigating Ideological Secularism: Methodological Underpinnings

This chapter discusses ideological secularism from a methodological perspective and presents the analytical toolkit used in this thesis. Building on the idea that secularism may be approached as an ideology and a "cluster concept" constructed in language practice, it proposes a combined analytical endeavor, which focuses on both the conceptual grammar of secularism and the discursive practices through which social actors (re)construct this ideological formation. In doing so, the chapter brings together the constructivist stance introduced in the second chapter of this thesis and the critical understanding of secularism put forth in the first one, demonstrating that the politics of discourse and that of identity are closely related, not least because identification may be thought of as the foundation of all meaning and knowledge, including political concepts.

Thus far, it has been argued that secularism shapes thinking and action, and provides a conceptualization of, and an answer to, the problem of diversity. As such, it functions as an ideal and as a mode of governance in political contexts. Although hegemonic ideas and concepts typically endure in such contexts, new drives to pluralization in Europe have contributed to calling into question the stability of secularism in political discourse, as well as to challenging traditional approaches and solutions to the problem of diversity, such as liberalism and multiculturalism. As contemporary debates on immigration, integration, and religious diversity suggest, a new type of identity politics appears to be underway on the continent, helping to problematize prevailing symbolic boundaries, notably that between religion and politics.

The essential contestability of secularism has been increasingly manifest in this context. The concept has become a stake in ordinary language practice: social actors have begun to mobilize and deploy it in political contests. In this light, this thesis focuses on both the *political discourse* of secularism, and the *politics of discourse* underpinning the construction of ideological secularism. This is because to investigate this social formation and the ideational changes that have allowed for the

emergence of illiberal forms of religious governance, it is necessary to examine the discursive dimension of contemporary identity politics.

To be sure, secularism and the process of identification are closely related. As an ideal, secularism is founded upon the image of a well-functioning political community; it is a project of political unity in the face of diversity. Like identification, secularism is engaged in a search for integration, meaning, and unity—a search that is both elusive and constitutive, given that diversity and conflict are inherent features of social life. As a mode of governance, secularism is productive, in that it works at the symbolic and social boundaries that define prevailing meanings, domains, and categories of understanding. When state actors, for instance, articulate secular views in their discourses of power, they contribute to defining knowledge and beliefs, as well as to categorizing the individuals and groups. As discussed, the secular state is a powerful identifier. In enacting its categorizing powers through discourse, the state may influence meanings in all levels of social organization, ranging from the broader ideational level to the individual, subjective one.

Discursive and symbolic resources are privileged means of exerting such influence, as Wimmer (2013) demonstrates regarding the definition of groups. Accordingly, critical discourse analysts argue that discourse and language are an essential part of the power exercised by states and their institutions (Bloor and Bloor 2007). Moreover, political actors have often used discourse "to problematize, marginalize, exclude, or otherwise limit the human rights of ethnic/religious/minority out-groups" (Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2009, 7). The foregoing suggests that paying attention to language and discourse is important to understand contemporary modes of secular governance on the continent. This is not to say, however, that other forms of social practice do not play important roles in replicating/exerting the secular power of state authorities.

In this light, this thesis proposes to investigate the discursive enactment of ideological secularism by state actors using the analytical frameworks derived from the conceptual grammar and CDA approaches. As the first chapter of this thesis has discussed, these approaches have similar theoretical starting points: both portray society as a political formation pervaded by conflict; they are

concerned with power, ideologies, and hegemonies, and recognize language as an important means to convey social influence and power; and finally, they inquire into similar subjects, i.e., politics in and over language in the CDA case, and political discourse and the politics of discourse in the conceptual grammar one. Moreover, this common concern implies that both approaches conceive discourse as a consequential social practice.

Given this theoretical agreement, in examining the case studies, this thesis begins with a CDA-informed analysis of discourse and complements such analysis with an attempt to re-build the conceptual grammar of secularism in Italy. These two passages are further explained throughout this chapter. In what follows, both analytical approaches are presented, including their theoretical foundations and operational apparatuses. Since this thesis has already introduced the notions of "cluster concept" and conceptual grammar, the first section of the chapter focuses on CDA and its theoretical foundations, with some notes regarding the interconnections between this approach and the notion of conceptual grammar. It also introduces CDA's most basic concepts, notably the notion of context. Building on this notion, the second section covers research design in practice by discussing the analytical implications of CDA's theoretical foundations. Additionally, it briefly presents the cases studied and their corresponding textual corpus, clarifying not only how the former have been selected, but also how the latter is to be analyzed in Part II of this thesis.

Research Design "In Theory"

Why language and what type of discourse analysis?

This thesis investigates a process of ideological change in discourse, that is, the emergence of illiberal forms of religious governance. This research objective calls for an interpretative methodology, such as discourse analysis. The latter is an appropriate choice for studying ideational transformations, in that "discourses create the 'conditions of possibility' for beliefs about the world" (Sapsford 2006, 262) and thus "are strongly implicated in the exercise of power" (Willig 2008, 172).

However, discourse analysis is a contested and interdisciplinary terrain (Potter 2008). There are several types of discourse analysis rooted in diverse theoretical and disciplinary traditions. In this variegated context, the selection of one type must be guided by the question under consideration and the theoretical underpinnings of the research (Gillen and Petersen 2005).

In this thesis, considering the postulation that meaning and identity are socially and politically constructed, it is indispensable to resort to methods that account for the connection between social agency and structure, as well as for power relations. Moreover, these methods should allow the analyst to adopt a critical stance toward reality. In view of these requirements, both CDA and the conceptual grammar framework seem suitable methodological choices. In regard to the latter, the thesis has proposed to trace the broader conceptual grammar in which secularism has been embedded because it treats secularism as a "cluster concept". Insofar as grammars afford intelligibility to concepts, this exercise is expected to contribute to revealing how illiberal forms of discursive governance have become conceivable in liberal and democratic contexts.

However, as argued, conceptual systems cannot be fully unearthed, and moreover, these systems refer primarily to broad ideational meanings (general contents, knowledge and beliefs), which may be detached from lower levels of social organization, such as the interactional and individual levels. Consequently, the grammar of secularism might not say much about the re-negotiation of social relationships in discourse, or about the emergence of new forms of subjectivity in battles over the governance of social and religious diversity. Due to these potential limitations, attempts to reveal the conceptual grammar of secularism only complement the CDA results.

CDA is considered an appropriate methodological tool for several reasons. First, as the name implies, it is a critical framework concerned with real-world problems (Titscher et al 2000). Therefore, it is socially and politically engaged and claims to serve as a guide to human action. Second, it conceptualizes language as a social practice and takes seriously both the situational and the larger social context. This implies that CDA regards discourse as socially constituted and, accordingly, adopts a middle-range theory position which allows for the investigation of the

dialectical relationship between localized discursive events and wider social structures (Wodak 2001). Third, the framework is premised on the idea that power is a central condition of social life (Wodak 2001, 2004). Therefore, political struggles are said to take place *in* language and *over* language (Fairclough 1995, 2001a).

Although it is possible to identify CDA's general principles, the framework's implications for research practice as such remain unclear. This is because CDA may capture the (re)production of meaning relations in language using diverse methods, and this decision depends on the research problem under consideration (Meyer 2001). The version of CDA used in this thesis relies extensively on the work of Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2001a, 2001b) and on Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach (DHA) (Wodak 2001; Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2009). It also refers to the work of other discourse analysts whenever relevant. For instance, although this thesis does not use van Dijk's (2001) socio-psychological approach, it still learns from his contributions to the field, not least because he has studied parliamentary debates concerning ethnic affairs and immigration.

Differently from van Dijk (2001), Fairclogh (2001a) and Wodak (2001) are more concerned with the semiotic aspects of the whole social formation, in its different levels of organization—i.e., from the macro to the micro—as well as with the consequences of discourse for this formation, especially in terms of power, status, and resources. These authors investigate how the order of discourse, that is, the semiotic dimension of the social order, contributes to making, maintaining, and overturning domination in society. They do so from a critical perspective, the objective of which is to unearth the workings of language in constructing and reproducing hegemony and social exclusion.

Specifically, Fairclough's CDA model (2001a) is "suited to the analysis of contexts of social and discursive changes" (Titscher et al 2000, 164) due to its focus on intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Fairclough (1992) relies on a Foucauldian understanding of discourse but attempts to overcome one of its limitations—i.e., its structural bias—by looking at actual instances of language practice: written and spoken texts. The focus on these "discursive practices" leads to a middle-range

social theory that can account for detailed mechanisms of social change, notably in contexts characterized by Marxist-style conflicts. Wodak (2001) adopts similar theoretical starting points but develops a more systematic and linguistically-oriented approach to the analysis of texts, which emphasizes the historical and organizational contexts in which discursive practices emerge. By looking specifically into the field of politics, Wodak and her collaborators (Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2009) endeavor to reconstruct the conceptual and strategic frameworks of political discourses (Meyer 2001). Attention to the field of politics and to issues such as social exclusion and immigration, together with concern for concepts and discursive strategies, make the discursive-historical approach a particularly interesting methodological guide for this thesis. Therefore, together with the conceptual grammar, both CDA approaches may be used to study secularism as an ideal and as a mode of governance. In what follows, the common epistemological and theoretical foundations of these two approaches are introduced, with a view to explaining the structure of Part II, as well as important theoretical concepts that underpin the analysis.

Theoretical Premises and Basic Concepts

While basic premises of discourse analysis have been discussed in the former subsections, each CDA approach builds on them differently, in accordance with research questions and theoretical backgrounds. Whereas Fairclough's (1995) framework is more sociological, the discourse-historical one is problem-oriented and relies extensively on linguistic theories that allow for the examination of language use, such as argumentation theory. Despite these differences, they share a concern for discourse, context, and power. Given the importance of these and other concepts, this subsection clarifies how they are to be understood and starts to delineate their analytical implications. As remarked, one of the most important claims of CDA is that discourse is a social practice and that, as such, it helps to construct reality, while being embedded in a wider social order. Simply stated, these claims imply that language cannot be grasped outside of its context. However, these seemingly

straightforward contentions depend on several theoretical assumptions, and carry many implications for social analysis. For instance, the difference between language, discourse and text, and the relation of each of these concepts to wider and situational social structures and processes remain unclear. This subsection addresses these preliminary issues.

According to Fairclough (1992), language is more than a communication device; it is a social product and a means through which human beings construct social reality. As such, it cannot be considered a neutral or a merely descriptive instrument. It should rather be considered an instrument of power, not least due to its importance in contemporary political contexts. Since linguistic elements, such as concepts and grammar, bear traces of political contests, language is invested with power, and with ideological representations, and thus, is actively involved in the workings of society (Fairclough 1995; 2001a). Broadly speaking, discourse designates the practical use of language, which comprises the whole interaction leading to the formation and conveyance of meaning, including the phases of speech production and interpretation. As explained, to discourse analysts, every social order, constituted as a network of social practices, has a corresponding semiotic aspect (e.g.: language and images), which Fairclough (1992), building on Foucault, names the order of discourse.

However, in CDA perspectives, discourse often acquires additional meanings, more geared to the analysis of language use as a social practice. Used as a countable noun, the term typically refers to the different ways of viewing and depicting aspects of social life, which in turn contribute to conveying certain ideological perspectives on the social world (and thus, ideational, relational, and subjective meanings). Fairclough (1992) calls these different perspectives "discourse types". This point is perhaps best illustrated by political discourses (such as those of right, left, conservative, and progressive forces), which represent social issues differently and, in doing so, propagate particular worldviews. In this second sense, then, discourse is less general than semiosis, and designates actual social practices—of a linguistic type—that relate to certain styles, genres, and fields of action, all of which become important subjects in discourse analyses. In effect, according to Reisigl and Wodak (2001, 36), discourses may be seen as "a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated

linguistic acts that manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated semiotic, oral or written tokens, very often as 'texts', that belong to specific semiotic types, i.e. genres". In this definition, the authors not only reiterate that discourses are social acts of a linguistic type, but also clarify that they are immersed in a complex context, in that they cut across fields of social life and levels of analysis.

Moreover, Reisigl and Wodak (2001) introduce additional categories in their definition of discourse, notably "field of action", "genre", and "text". According to these authors, the "domain" or setting in which a discourse takes place may be divided in "fields of action" (or "activity types"), which influence the content and shape of discourses, including "frames", "genres", and "topics". For example, the political domain, investigated in this thesis, typically includes the fields of law-making and political communication, each with its own participants, topics, and conventions. To be sure, the identification of relevant "domains" and "fields of action" cannot precede the analysis of the context in which the "actors of discourse" exchange words or signs. "Frame", in turn, refers to predefined mental structures that actors implicitly use to make sense of reality and discourse. Associated to certain words and expressions, such cognitive structures reflect general knowledge, and thus, a given conception of the world. For instance, in trying to understand a nineteenth-century novel, on the one hand, and current debates on religious garments, on the other, readers might need to resort to different representations of women in society. Such representations constitute different frames, without which it would be difficult to grasp the texts in question (Fairclough 1992; Bloor and Bloor 2007).

Together with "frame", Fairclough (2001a) introduces the concepts of "schemata" and "script" to designate, respectively, mental representations of activity types, such as medical consultations and phone calls, and discursive rules and conventions that must be followed in these circumstances. All three cognitive structures are related to the notion of "genre", a term that indicates types of discourse characterized by socially established conventions, as well as by formal, stylistic traits. Examples of genre include scientific discourse, news articles, literary novels, and political speeches. These genres tend to be schematically fixed and require text producers, distributors, and

consumers to adhere to previously agreed-upon scripts. Moreover, they are typically associated to specific discourse "topics" or contents, even though no single list of topics exist.

From a functional standpoint, it may be argued that genres are designed (socially and over time) to attain specific social goals, particularly in institutionalized contexts. As such, they contribute to conveying and reproducing ideological representations. In fact, they are frequently associated to certain "discourse" and "activity types". In this light, discourse analysts consider the identification and analysis of genres as important parts of their critical endeavor. According to Reisigl and Wodak (2001), discourse analysts should conduct a broad "genre analysis" before examining actual texts. Fairclough (2001b), too, talks about the importance of examining "systems of genres", not least because the debasement of, and intersection between, these socially agreed forms of discourse might be indicative of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, which may lead to discursive and social change.

The foregoing elements by no means exhaust the list of heuristic devices discourse analysts have formulated to examine the semiotic and the social dimensions of human life. Yet, they represent the most significant concepts in both Wodak's and Fairclough's frameworks, in addition to providing a good analytical starting point for this thesis. It should be stressed, however, that these elements are not part of a rigid analytical framework, in that the definition of such a framework prior to the actual text analysis would conflict with the centrality of "context" in CDA, as discussed below.

Since this thesis examines written texts, it is also important to understand how "text" is understood in CDA. While discourses are complete linguistic interactions, written and spoken texts are the final products of such interactions, that is, they are the material products of language use, easily discernible at the situational level (Titscher et al 2000; Bloor and Bloor 2007). However, since discursive events, understood as instances of language use, are socially consequential, they may affect all levels of social organization, leaving ideological traces and cues in texts, as well as in discursive practices and in broader sociocultural ones. These potentially multidimensional repercussions of language use on the social order suggest, once again, that context is important and that discourse analysts adopt an intricate conceptualization of context in their frameworks.

In Fairclough (1992, 1995), a three-dimensional view of social organization resonates with a three-dimensional understanding of discourse and its potential social effects. Therefore, the author espouses a complex definition of context, according to which analysts must investigate not only texts and the immediate environments in which they are produced, but also the broader institutional, organizational, historical, and cultural formations from which they emerge. Similarly, the DHA (Wodak 2001, 67) works with a four-level conceptualization of context, which includes the social and historical organization, the institutional and situational environments, the descriptive features of texts, as well as the intertextual/interdiscursive context in which discourses are imbricated (see Illustration 1 below). To be sure, this fourth contextual layer is not absent from Fairclough (2001b, 124); as mentioned, the "shifting articulations of genres, discourses, and styles" are a central concern to him. In Wodak (2001), too, intertextual/interdiscursive relationships emerge from the identification of discourse genres, topics, and arguments, which together help the analyst to understand the complex and multidimensional context in which social interactions occur.

As these conceptualizations of context suggest, both approaches divide social organization into roughly three levels. First, a macro, sociohistorical level, in which the ideational content of the order of discourse exists, including human knowledge and belief in the form of categories of understanding, epistemological assumptions, commonsensical knowledge, conceptual grammars, among others. This is the foundational level in which political ideologies reside, and thus, in which secularism exists as an ideal. Second, an interactional level, in which social agents relate to one another, thereby establishing and reproducing social relations as well as social and symbolic boundaries. This is the level of discursive practice. In this intermediate and operational level, agents may pursue linguistic and material strategies, for example argumentation and boundary ones, to achieve goals such as inclusion/exclusion and discrimination. Third, the individual level, in which subjects perform different social roles and express their multiple identities, thereby positioning themselves and being socially positioned in the world. They may do so via perspectivation techniques,

such as framing and mitigation in discourse. As indicated above, discourses and their material manifestations, i.e., texts, may contain cues and traces to all three levels.

Thus, differences notwithstanding, Fairclough's and the DHA's dimensions of discourse largely overlap, as do the corresponding analytical steps envisioned by them. Notably, both approaches advocate that CDA should include textual/linguistic analyses, as well as an investigation of discursive practices, which are, in turn, to be supported by, and to inform, knowledge of the situational context and of the social and historical orders in which texts are embedded. While seemingly external to discursive practice, such wider contexts—including not only institutional and historical elements, but also existing middle-range and grand theories about the phenomena studied— are considered important because they allow analysts to make sense of texts and of the interaction between mainstream knowledge and ideologies, on the one hand, and single utterances, on the other.

Fairclough

TEXT

(1) Description
(text analysis)

Discursive practice
(production and interpretation)

(2) Interpretation
(analysis of how texts are
processed by actors)

Social practice
(situational, institutional, societal)

(3) Explanation
(social analysis)

Discourse-historical approach

Text internal co-text
(descriptive)

Intertextual/interdiscursive
context

Social variables and institutional
frames of situational context

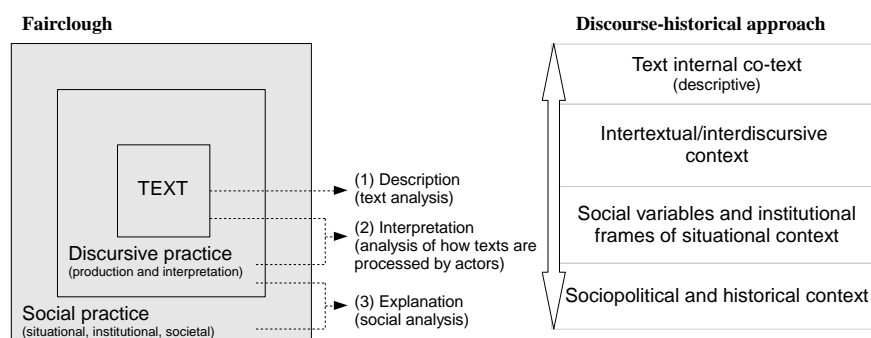Sociopolitical and historical context

Illustration 1: Fairclough's and DHA's Dimensions of Discourse and Discourse Analysis. Fairclough's scheme has been adapted from Fairclough (1992) and Titscher et al (2000). The scheme representing the DHA relies primarily on Wodak (2001).

Again, the foregoing is not to say that DHA is identical to Fairclough's sociological approach. However, since this thesis is concerned both ideational (ideological) and relational (in- and out-groups) dimensions of discourses, it does not draw a line between these two approaches; instead, it relies loosely on both (as well as on conceptual grammar), introducing additional categories of analysis, theories, definitions, *etc.*, as they become relevant.

Research Design "In Practice"

Analytical Implications of Theoretical Considerations and Case Selection

In practical terms, drawing on both CDA approaches, it is now possible to define preliminary analytical steps, which contribute to guiding the remainder of this thesis, including its structure. According to Illustration 1, discourse analysis involves a continuous interplay between (1) the description of textual features, (2) the examination of discursive practice, which comprises analysis of text production and interpretation, as well as of interdiscursivity and intertextuality, and (3) the explanation of the institutional and sociohistorical contexts (Fairclough 1992, 1995; Wodak 2001).

Considering these requirements, the remainder of this thesis is divided as follows. In the next chapter—first of Part II of this thesis—the study of secularism in Italy starts from an investigation of relevant aspects of the country's sociocultural and historical context, that is, of those aspects that relate to the definition of the Italian political community and its secular order. Following this overview, the subsequent chapter focuses on the institutional and situational context in which the governance of religion and diversity has occurred over the past three decades. It approaches religion and diversity as defined and managed by the Italian government and, in doing so, introduces the political domain in which discourses take place, as well as its fields of action, including the legal and institutional ones. The third chapter, in turn, is more analytical; it examines textual material from specific case studies, with a view to addressing the research question of this thesis from a structural and an interactional/relational viewpoint. To do so, it refers to the contextual resources presented in

previous chapters, tracing explanatory connections between texts, discourse practices, and the wider social context (Fairclough 1992, 1995; Wodak 2001). This last chapter also delves into the conceptual grammar of Italian secularism, providing indications as to its current construction.

Before discussing the analytical strategies adopted in each of these chapters, it is necessary to briefly present and justify the case selection. Although Introduction to Part II elaborates on this issue, it is necessary to clarify that the remainder of this thesis is concerned with the oft-problematic governance of social and religious diversity in Italy, and thus, investigates the discursive enactment of ideological secularism by Italian state actors. Although the country—home to the Pope and to a predominantly Catholic population—may be considered an atypical case study, illiberal and post-secular trends have characterized Italian developments in the fields of religion and diversity governance, especially when it comes to immigrant-driven diversity. Moreover, the Italian sociopolitical landscape, similarly to that of other European countries, has been marked by increasing hostility toward religious and social diversity, and by some degree of cultural conflict, manifest in ideological contests over, inter alia, religious matters (Allievi 2014; Ozzano and Giorgi 2015). Cultural conflict has been often compounded by economic, social, and political crises, as well as by the fact that Italy has failed to develop a well-defined, institutionalized model or form of integration to deal with diversity (Zincone and Ponzo 2006; A. Ferrari 2012; Caponio 2013; Allievi 2014).

Although such ideological contests include, for instance, controversies regarding places of worship and religious symbols, they have been as much about religion and diversity as about the definition of the Italian political community—its identity, principles, character, and the "Other" (La Rosa 2008; Allievi 2014; Ozzano and Giorgi 2015). In other words, they concern the symbolic borders of the country: they are conflicts over, first, who is part of the Italian community, and second, what constitutes the collective identity of this community (Saint-Blancat and Friedberg 2005; Cesari 2013). Therefore, it may be argued that politics of identity and that of discourse have come together in these moments of ideological contest, allowing politicians and state actors to mobilize and deploy

discursive instruments that contribute not only to renegotiating secular–religious and other boundaries, but also to redefining secularism and its grammar.

This thesis investigates two such contests, both regarding the public display and use of religious symbols: the crucifix and the full-face veil controversies. The latter is often referred to as the *Burqa* case. In both cases, Italian state actors, such as judges and parliamentarians, have overstepped their roles as liberal and democratic authorities occasionally, breaching the liberal character of secularism. Further, this thesis examines developments in the recalcitrant Italian governance of diversity. It investigates the Charter of the Values of Citizenship and Integration (henceforth, the Charter), which brings together problematic aspects of, and intersections between, the Italian governance of religion and its model/form of immigrant integration, both of which are based on specific notions of "Italy", "religion", and "Other". Thus, this thesis analyzes discourses from three cases that, albeit different, allow for the study of the politics of discourse and identity surrounding instances of illiberal secularism. In what follows, the analytical strategies adopted in Part II of this thesis are presented in detail, including notes on the material relevant in each case.

Explanation and Interpretation: Defining and Analyzing the Societal and Institutional Contexts

To study secularism and the oft-problematic governance of religious and social diversity in Italy, it is necessary to start with an understanding of the sociohistorical, cultural, as well as institutional contexts in which discourses on, and battles over *laicità*, religion, and diversity occur. The first chapter of Part II presents the country's wider the sociohistorical context by exploring the definition of Italian political community as articulated over the past three decades (roughly, from the end of the so-called "First Republic"[31] onwards). The subsequent chapter turns to the institutional context and considers the definition and governance of religion and immigrant-driven diversity by

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[31] In the public discourse, the designations "first" and "second" republic refer, respectively, to the period from 1948 to 1994, and to the period of 1994 onwards. Some argue that the second republic finished in the mid-2000s. This debate, however, is not relevant here, since the term is only used to give a sense of the timeline of the cases.

the Italian state over the same period. Together, these different contextual dimensions are integrated in the interpretation and description of discourse practices and texts, presented in the third chapter. Furthermore, the grand and middle-range theories introduced in previous chapters—i.e., theories on social construction, ideology, secularism, identification, and boundaries—serve as heuristic and analytical resources for the examination of both contexts and texts (Wodak 2001).

The period referenced above—roughly the past 30 years—is important to understand contemporary discourses on secularism, religion, and diversity in Italy for several reasons. Noticeably, from the 1990s onwards, Italian political actors and intellectuals have rediscovered the national question and processes of identity formation and change have become important topics of discussion and governance, especially in times of social, economic and political distress (Diamanti 1999; Patriarca 2001; 2010; Nevola 2003; Gentile 2006). To be sure, social diversification and religious pluralization (supposedly mainly driven by immigration) have also become more prominent during these years and have contributed to reigniting ideological contests that concern the basic character of Italy as a political community. As mentioned, these contests have involved often matters pertaining to the secular–religious divide (see, for example, Ozzano and Giorgi 2015). Moreover, much has been done over the past three decades at the institutional level to address these issues: laws, policies, surveys, among other governance tools, have helped to shape the Italian "body politic", as well as its identity politics. Therefore, contemporary instances of ideological contest in the country— be them over citizenship laws, places of worship, or religious garments—cannot be fully apprehended without reference to this recent societal and institutional context, in which mainstream knowledge, beliefs, and institutionalized practices have been re-created and re-interpreted in specific ways.

Although the foregoing suggests a rather specific temporal perspective, the time frame proposed should neither be overstated nor constrain the notion of sociohistorical context. In fact, the next two chapters cover some historical facts that precede the late 1980s, after all one cannot discuss secularism in Italy without understanding, for example, the long-lasting influence of Catholicism over the state and its identity. Accordingly, the following chapters build on important historical moments,

but only insofar as these moments—and the imagination of them—affect the contemporary definition of Italy and the "Other" and the country's approach to religion and social diversity.

In addition to the temporal perspective, it is important to identify the actors of discourse, that is, discourse participants whose voices are relevant to understand secularism and the governance of religious and social diversity. As discussed, this thesis is concerned with state practices, and thus, it is interested in the role of politicians and state institutions. Together, these actors are responsible for governance practices—from legislation to categorization schemes—that in a way or another affect the people. Since they control the definition and solution of many public issues, their symbolic power is often translated into discursive power (Van Dijk 2000). Therefore, the textual corpus analyzed in subsequent chapters is made up primarily of discourses from parliamentary debates, courts, and various state agencies.[32] However, in presenting the wider sociohistorical and institutional context, it is important to consider the role of political elites in general, including intellectuals, the media, religious representatives, among others. Due to their privileged access to material and symbolic resources, these actors play an important role in shaping public debates and the public opinion, especially when it comes to highly politicized matters, such as immigration and Islam in Italy (Van Dijk 2000). Therefore, in contextualizing the cases, the voices of this larger group often become relevant: they, too, shape the context and the definition of the public issues at hand.

Having defined a temporal perspective and the actors of discourse, it is now possible to describe the analytical steps undertaken in the next two chapters. As mentioned, the first chapter of Part II presents the larger societal context of controversies over religion and diversity, in its sociohistorical dimensions. Although these controversies are multifaceted, investigating ideological secularism—a form of political thinking about the government of diversity—requires understanding broader ideational meanings (e.g.: mainstream knowledge, beliefs, conventions, *etc.*) that have

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[32] To be sure, seeing that the political field, including the institutional apparatus of the state, is pervaded by various, often conflictual viewpoints, it is not possible to identify a single, unequivocal discourse on the matters considered here. Thus, this thesis does not make the generalizing claim that all state actors and their discourses may considered one and the same. In fact, the last chapter of this thesis identifies and delineates different discourse positions, both in the public and institutional spheres.

informed the definition of state, religion, nation, and the "Other" in Italy. In addition to telling the history of the discursive events studied, this collective knowledge base provides social actors with productive and interpretative resources, which render texts and utterances intelligible. These may include, for instance, cultural knowledge, as well as commonsense assumptions that connect arguments to conclusions (what Krzyzanowski and Wodak (2009) name *topoi*).

The chapter is divided in two main sections. The first section refers to the historical episodes, themes, and tropes that remain relevant in contemporary articulations of state, religion, nation, and otherness in Italy. Specifically, it starts by recounting the making of Italy over the past 150 years, considering secular attempts to generate political unity in the country, as well as the historical role of the Catholic Church—often the "self" and the "Other" of the state—in this process. The chapter then turns to what could be termed national mythology: it presents recurring historical themes and tropes which have been mobilized by political actors in disputes over Italy and its character, such as the Modernization debate and the North-South narrative. The second section of the chapter introduces the sociopolitical scenario of the past three decades. It focuses on those developments concerning Italy's politics of identity, such as the re-emergence of the national question and the pluralization of the public sphere. Together, the mainstream knowledge conveyed in these two sections is indispensable to understand any discourse on the governance of religion and diversity in Italy.

In operational terms, this does not mean, however, that all research on this non-discursive, macro context has preceded the study of the cases and their textual material. CDA requires analytical oscillation between agency and structure and between discursive and non-discursive social practices. Thus, although the structure of Part II suggests a stepwise procedure that distinguishes between semiotic and social practices, this thesis has adopted a circular process of research: the documentation gathered and evaluated at first has been used to better define the research problem, the cases, and important concepts, and these refined definitions have been used in a second phase of data collection and in the selection of discourses for analysis (Wodak 2001; Meyer 2001).

To understand what historical moments and institutional features are relevant for analysis, the first step of data collection has been indeed a more general literature review on Italy, which included primarily academic books and articles on the selected cases and their general themes, notably *laicità*, church–state relations and Catholicism, Italian history, the national question, and immigration. The subsequent step comprised the collection and analysis of more specific institutional and situational material on the cases. In this phase, reference to non-academic sources, such as newspapers, intellectual discussions, and governmental documents (i.e., those discourses initially deemed relevant), has contributed to delineating the most important aspects of the sociohistorical and institutional contexts. Furthermore, it has provided cues as to how certain categories and groups, such as minority religions and immigrants, have been defined in Italy, and has guided the collection of the remainder of the textual material. For instance, it was clear from newspaper articles that case law regarding the crucifix controversy has been very important in the public debate, and thus, that it should be included in the analysis. Finally, preliminary examination of this textual material also fed into the decision of what contextual elements to cover in the first and second chapters of Part II. For example, the identification recurrent themes and tropes in discourses about the Italian political community responds to inter alia their importance in actual discourse practice. Thus, although the bibliography of the sociohistorical chapter is mostly academic, it should be clear that its structure and contents have been devised alongside those of the following chapters.

The same is valid for the second chapter of Part II. In fact, this chapter is both contextual and analytical: it introduces the Italian governance of religion and diversity, and thus, the situational and institutional context in which discourses are embedded and identifies some of its consequences for discourse practices concerning religion, the nation, immigration and, more broadly, otherness. The chapter focuses on the institutional framework regarding two overlapping subjects, religion and immigration, since together these subjects have instigated most developments in recent attempts by the Italian state to govern diversity. Building on the notion that states partake in processes of social construction of identity and difference, the chapter presents and analyzes the categories Italian

institutions have helped to produce, such as *extracomunitario* and religions "different from" Catholicism, as well as the oft-problematic practices they have contributed to enabling, for example, discrimination. To do so, the chapter relies on both academic sources and governmental texts, such as legislation and statistical documents. It also considers the actual institutional apparatus of the state, for it reveals much about the definition and governance of religion and diversity in the country.

In presenting the situational and institutional context, this second chapter speaks of the domain and fields of action to which the textual material analyzed in the third chapter belongs. Thus, it allows for the preliminary identification of some genres used in discourse practice. As indicated, this thesis analyzes discourses which occur primarily in the political domain or, in other words, in the broader domain of political action, which includes inter alia the fields of legislation, political communication, executive and administration, among others (see, for example, Wodak 2001, 68). This suggests that a large part of the textual material analyzed in the third chapter belongs to well-structured genres, such as those used in parliamentary debates and court rulings. Such codified contexts make it relatively easier to identify references to additional genres, the main discourse topics, and instances of interdiscursivity and intertextuality in the textual material. As discussed in the next subsection, the relevant domain and fields of action also contribute to delimiting the textual corpus analyzed.

Interpretation and Description: Selecting and Analyzing the Textual Corpus and Discourse Practices

The first and second chapters of Part II cover mainly what Fairclough (1992) calls explanation and interpretation phases of CDA (see Illustration 1). In addition to introducing the non-discursive societal and institutional contexts, they provide several cues as to how social actors process discourses in practice. Moreover, the two chapters set the stage for the description phase, that is, for data collection and textual analysis. In terms of data collection, the previous sections have indicated that, first, this thesis is concerned with the political domain; second, relevant actors of discourse are Italian

politicians and, more broadly, state actors; and third, the corpus of discourse samples should refer to three instances of ideological contest concerning the governance of diversity in Italy, i.e., the crucifix controversy, the face-veiling case, and the development of the Charter.

While these three points have contributed to the early selection of the textual corpus, they were not sufficient to guide the choice of a reasonable number of samples for detailed analysis. One issue in this respect has been the large temporal extension of the cases selected, particularly of the crucifix and face-veiling controversies, which have been recurrent since the early 2000s. Another issue has been the considerable number of governmental actors dealing with these subjects at different points in time, including local administrations, judges, politicians, the Parliament, ad hoc organs, *etc*. Thus, it has not been possible to delimit, for example, precise "moments of crisis" or "critical junctures" during which there has been, say, a nationwide struggle over these subjects. In fact, an initial, broad collection of material from different governmental sources resulted in an incomplete, yet overwhelmingly large textual corpus, which could not have been analyzed in detail. In this light, there was a need to organize and narrow down the corpus for detailed examination. It should be mentioned that, at this stage, the research focused only on the crucifix and face-veil controversies. The decision to include the Charter case in the analysis was taken later.

To select textual samples for detailed analysis, the first step was to consult secondary literature and media reports. These sources contributed to the creation of thorough timelines for each case, which included not only official decrees and laws, but also moments of politicization. By creating these timelines, it was easier to put the crucifix and the face-veil controversies side by side and, thus, to select samples that permitted some comparison between the governmental approaches to a symbol of the majority religion and to a minority symbol. Specifically, it was noticeable that, over time, both cases have generated much draft legislation in the Parliament, in addition to having compelled parts of the government executive and administration to speak out on the subjects.

These commonalities contributed to narrowing down the textual material to that originating in two specific fields of action, namely, "law making political procedure" and "political executive

and administration" (Wodak 2001, 68). While the former includes, for instance, laws, draft legislation, and speeches/contributions by deputies and senators, the latter comprises governmental activities, papers and speeches, as well as ministerial decisions. The decision to concentrate on the activities of the Parliament and the Executive allowed for the exclusion of local ordinances and by-laws, which augmented the textual corpus substantially and did not represent the larger Italian approach to religious and social diversity. Conversely, discourses in central branches of the political system, especially the Parliament, "symbolize democratic discussion, decision-making and power", in addition to expressing different ideologies and interests (Wodak and van Dijk 2000, 13).

With an initial focus on the central government and on two fields of action, it was also possible to set expectations for genres, schemata, scripts, and discourse topics, since the institutional context to which most of the textual corpus belonged was well-codified. In this respect, it suffices to think about draft legislation and Parliamentary debates, which are subject to the rules set in the Parliamentary regulations (*Regolamenti parlamentari*) and in specific codes of conduct.[33]

Draft legislation on the crucifix and the full-face veil have been the first textual samples selected for analysis.[34] The website of the Italian Parliament contains thorough databases, which have been used to consult and gather laws, bills, Parliamentary debates, work carried out in Parliamentary Commissions, *etc*.[35] Since debates on the crucifix have overlapped often with discussions concerning the Italian identity, bills on the character/roots/tradition/values/identity of the country were also included. A list of these documents is provided in Annex 1. The oldest draft law therein dates to the early 2000s, mainly because the widespread politicization of the two symbols occurred around that period (Ozzano and Giorgi 2013; 2015). This is not to say that there had not been disputes concerning the two symbols previously. However, this thesis is interested in wider ideological contests, not in

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[33] The Italian Parliamentary regulations are available in the website of the Chamber of Deputies: http://www.camera.it/leg18/437?conoscerelacamera=237.

[34] The terms "draft legislation" and "draft law proposals" are used here in reference to both *Proposta di Legge* and *Disegno di Legge*, that is, law proposal and law draft. These different terminologies are meant to distinguish between bills presented by the Parliament—*Proposta di Legge*—and by the Government—*Disegno di Legge*—but are not relevant here.

[35] A list of the specialized databases may be found here: http://www.senato.it/3869.

isolated cases. As for the most recent draft laws, they are from the XVI government, which lasted until 2013. The decision to exclude the XVII government from the analysis is related to the period of this research and to the textual corpus, which was already substantially large.

Following the collection of draft legislation, the controversies have been examined separately with a view to identifying additional textual material to be included in the phase of in-depth analysis. Secondary literature, the aforementioned timelines, and the draft legislation came in handy during this second round of data collection, in that they helped to establish the relevance of single texts for each controversy. In respect to the crucifix case, it was clear from early on that parts of sentences from judicial and administrative courts had to be included in the corpus. Furthermore, the controversy received much attention between 2002 and 2004 in Parliamentary commissions and Ministries—overlapping with debates on the Christian roots of Europe—and following the 2009 sentence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on the *Lautsi* case. Bearing these periods of heightened conflict in mind, the textual corpus was enlarged with Parliamentary interrogations and debates, and a few Ministerial answers and notes on the matter (see Annex 1).

As for the *Burqa* case, politicization started around 2004, concurring with debates on Islam in Italy, on the Italian model of integration, and on the so-called Security Package. Notably, this last set of laws, approved between 2008 and 2009, instigated authorities in several cities to adopt ordinances and by-laws barring the use of garments typically associated to Islam, and members of the Parliament to present of draft laws regarding full-face veils. In this contentious context, moreover, the Italian Council of State was called to express itself on the matter, and the Commission of Constitutional Affairs of the Presidency of the Council ended up conducting an investigative hearing on the *burqa* and *niqab*. The issue was also discussed in Parliamentary debates, especially concerning the draft legislation listed in Annex 1. All of these texts have been selected for analysis (see Annex 1).

As mentioned, both controversies overlapped with ongoing debates on the Christian character/roots of Italy and Europe, on the place of Islam in the country, on immigration, and finally, on security and public order. Together, these debates encouraged state actors to develop further the

country's model of integration. This effort culminated in the adoption of the Charter and, later, of the Integration Agreement, both of which spoke directly to the Crucifix and *Burqa* controversies, as well as to the notions of Italian identity and otherness. Notably, the Charter was a direct attempt by the state to define its character, roots, values, and the "Other"—and Italy's version of secularism has played a central role in this exercise. In this light, it was important to include the Charter in the analysis, without, however, extending the textual corpus further, since it was already quite large.

As for the analysis, the first step was to survey the entire textual corpus, bearing in mind not only the context of the cases and the theories that underpin this thesis, but also its main research question, that is: how is ideological secularism (trans)formed discursively in political contexts so as to allow for the emergence and prevalence of illiberal ways of religious governance? According to CDA's three-dimensional view of social organization and discourse, three dimensions of meaning may be transformed in discourse practice, i.e., the ideational, relational, and individual dimensions (Fairclough 1992, 1995). Thus, for analytical purposes, the research question has been divided into sub-groups of tentative questions, each concerning one of these dimensions of meaning:

- Ideational dimension: how are illiberal ways of governing of religion and diversity conceived? What core concepts—foundational, purposive, and operational—are used in secular discourses about *laicità*, religion, diversity, nation, otherness, and how? Have these concepts and the relations between them changed over time? What epistemological assumptions, beliefs, knowledge, *etc.*, have underpinned these concepts and the conceptual grammars they sustain?

- Relational dimension: in exercising their secular powers, which relationships do state actors enact in their discourses? How are these relationships (re)negotiated in discourse? With what consequences for social identities and social structures? How do state actors mobilize and deploy the boundaries between secular–religious, public–private, and self–other, and by what means? Which categories do they create and/or reinforce?

- Identity dimension: are new forms of subjectivity (e.g., religious, government, citizen, immigrant) emerging as a consequence of this process of conceptual change? If so, how are they altered? And how are these subjects (re)positioned in discourse and with what consequences for social relations and structures?

Drawing on the conceptual and CDA approaches, these tentative questions involve different dimensions of meaning, as well as different levels of social organization, from the structure to the individual. Since these dimensions and levels are heuristic demarcations, the questions may overlap on occasion. The questions are considered tentative because, while they are meant to guide the initial phase of analysis, they may require adaptation according to the case under discussion. For example, the crucifix and full-face veil controversies concern religious symbols, the operation of which must be accounted for, especially at the relational level, since symbols are boundary-making instruments. Moreover, basic discourse topics may be identified in each case, leading to more specific questions.

To address these questions following the conceptual grammar and CDA approaches, it is necessary to analyze not only words and language as such, but also the way in which these linguistic resources are used in social interaction. To those investigating ideologies as conceptual configurations, this means focusing on socially constructed concepts and their unstable interconnections to other vocabulary items, while to discourse analysts, this means looking beyond the text to discursive practices (Fairclough 2001b; Freeden 2003). According to the conceptual approach, discussed in the first chapter, because secularism is a cluster concept, it is possible to understand its illiberal turn by identifying revisions in its conceptual grammar. This exercise should contribute to answering the set of questions regarding the ideational dimension of meaning. Conversely, to understand changes in lower dimensions of meaning, the social effects of these changes, and how they may reverberate through broader social structures, it is necessary to conduct an interactional analysis, which to discourse analysts includes a linguistic analysis of formal features of text samples, and an intertextual/interdiscursive analysis of discursive practices. Again, these

analyses correspond to the CDA's description and interpretation phases, both indispensable to grasp the wider ideational transformation of ideological secularism (Fairclough 2001b; Wodak 2001).

In this light, the third chapter of Part II involves examining texts, discourse practices, and the conceptual grammar of secularism. Specifically, it starts with an interactional analysis of the textual corpus and, subsequently, discusses the grammar of illiberal secularism. However, according to the principle of analytical oscillation that guides this thesis, the first chapter of Part I has already indicated some general features of the conceptual grammar of secularism in Western Europe. In fact, together with the theoretical and contextual chapters, these features provide an early picture of the constellation of concepts underlying Italian secularism. Without these resources, it would not be possible to conduct an interactional analysis, since the latter depends on a large knowledge base.

As for the interactional analysis, there is no clear-cut separation between the examination of texts and of discursive practices, notably interdiscursivity/intertextuality. These analyses feed into each other. Further, regarding the textual analysis (or description), there is no ready-made criteria for deciding what formal aspects of language are important. To be sure, to each group of questions above, it is possible to identify beforehand several potentially relevant linguistic features. For instance, vocabulary features, such as words, alternative wordings, and collocation and cooccurrence, typically carry ideational meanings of the type relevant for the analysis of ideological secularism. Similarly, relational modality, speech acts, and the usage of pronouns may convey relational meanings, whilst expressive modality and perspectivation strategies may provide cues to identities and subject positions (Fairclough 2001a; Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2009). Nonetheless, as Annex 2 demonstrates, multiple linguistic aspects, ranging from vocabulary features to general textual structures, might be relevant. The decision to look at one feature or another is guided by the questions, as well as by the cases under consideration (Meyer 2001; Wodak 2001).

The interdiscursive/intertextual phase of the analysis (or interpretation) is premised on the idea that all discursive interactions (and thus texts) are historical and hybrid. Discourses are historical because they necessarily build upon older texts, conventions, genres, styles, and orders of discourses.

They are hybrid because they are never mere instantiations of one single power position in society; they typically reflect several of these positions because social actors rely upon diverse discursive elements to construct meaning. Thus, texts produced by actors in interactional contexts may contain ideological investments from contradictory positions—they are sites of struggle (Wodak 2001).

In assembling such heterogeneous discourses, actors may be more or less creative: they may either reproduce or change the prevailing order of discourse. Thus, the intertextual/interdiscursive character of discourses is a source of innovations: it allows for webs of meaning that support orders of discourse to be re-articulated in new ways. If so, these discursive articulations play a central role in larger processes of social and political change. Unpacking these articulations is an important part of the CDA approach, and may indicate how illiberal secularism has become conceivable in a liberal and democratic state (Fairclough 1992, 2001b). In analyzing discourse practices, this thesis builds on inter alia DHA schemes, which put discourses, genres, texts, and discourse topics side by side, thereby providing a clear picture of interdiscursive and intertextual relationships in actual text samples.

Finally, concerning CDA's explanation phase and the conceptual analysis, they are presented partly together, since both go back to the ideational dimension of meaning and attempt to make sense of illiberal instances of ideological secularism. Drawing upon what has been presented throughout this thesis, the conceptual analysis tracks the constellation of concepts that embody and enact secularism in Italy, paying attention to what Freeden (2003) calls morphology—i.e., the position of these concepts within a network of related political concepts. The material used to do so includes the textual corpus, and the literature on the cases and on the Italian sociohistorical and institutional context. This is because to identify conceptual revisions, it is important to start from the configuration of political concepts that has underpinned the Italian notion of secularism and its modes to govern social diversity throughout time. This configuration may be recollected from the first and second chapters of Part II, which includes the "traditions of discourse" and the "cultural context" of Italian secularism (Freeden 2003, 4). The cases and textual corpus are then used to try and grasp the contemporary morphology of the concept, without however referring to a strict framework, with core,

adjacent and peripheral concepts (see Freeden 2003). Although it is not possible to provide an exhaustive conceptual grammar of secularism, this exercise is expected to lead to the identification of conceptual revisions that help to understand the illiberal turn of secularism in Italy.

The conclusion to this thesis recollects the larger social explanation for illiberal secularism. Thereby, it tries to bring together all of the analysis conducted in Part II and Part I's theoretical edifice. Building on the results of the interactional and conceptual analysis, this explanatory step traces interconnections between the textual material, discursive practices, and the broader level of social practice, with a view to approaching instances of illiberal secularism in Italy from a comprehensive viewpoint, which begins in single utterances and extends to the overall order of discourse.

Part II: Understanding Illiberal Secularism in Practice: The Italian Case Study

Part II of this thesis investigates illiberal secularism in Italy, a Western European liberal democracy, with a view to unearthing ideational changes that have made illiberal modes of governance thinkable and possible in the country. Specifically, it investigates the discursive enactment of ideological secularism by Italian state actors in three different, yet related cases: the crucifix and full-face veil controversies, and the Charter of the Values of Citizenship and Integration. As mentioned, Italy may be considered an atypical case study for several reasons, including the country's Catholic tradition and positive understanding of *laicità*. In addressing some of these reasons, this introduction endeavors not only to make a case for studying illiberal secularism in Italy, but also to present the remainder of this thesis.

To begin with, the very claim that Italy is a liberal democracy is debatable. Whilst Italy's democratic character should not elicit much objection, the qualifier "liberal" may raise some eyebrows.[36] In Italian, *liberale* is associated to economic liberalism and, thus, Italians typically do not use the term in reference to the state. Instead, they seem to prefer "constitutional republic", "democratic republic"—as worded in the Constitution—and even "*stato di diritto*", i.e., a state in which the rule of law is prevalent.[37] As these expressions suggest, regardless of terminological preferences, the Italian state, too, is informed by liberalism, the dominant ideological formation in Europe (Geuss 2002).

Although conceptions of liberalism vary across the European continent, it may be argued that the conceptual core of the liberal ideology finds resonance in the Italian Constitution and institutional apparatus, which safeguard freedoms and fundamental rights and establish limits on the powers of

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[36] Regarding Italy's democratic character, *Freedom House* reports that, despite facing problems with freedom of press, corruption, and organized crime, the country holds free, fair, and competitive multiparty elections and enjoys a substantially high degree of political freedom. Thus, it qualifies as a free, advanced democracy. See more in https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/italy.

[37] To be sure, this is a simplified definition of the expression *stato di diritto*, which has a long and disputed history in both Italy and other European countries. For more on the debate over the term, see Bin (2017).

government. In fact, the first part of the Constitution indicates the prevalence of a form of constitutional liberalism, with freedom, equality, and separation, for example, functioning as principles of the political and legal systems (Constitution of the Italian Republic 1948). Thus, like its Western European counterparts, Italy may be described as a liberal and democratic state.

Further, Italy is a secular state. Despite Catholicism's position of privilege, the Italian state puts forward a secular–religious demarcation that contributes to defining the political domain, and thus, prevailing notions of public–private, religion, citizenship, nation, and otherness. The term *laicità* designates Italy's version of secularism, which is better introduced in subsequent chapters. *Laicità* conventionally refers to constitutional principles and institutional traits that are very specific to the Italian case. Therefore, the direct translation of term into secularism may generate some confusion, since the latter, as seen in the first chapter of this thesis, refers to ideological meanings that exceed the Italian case. Moreover, although *laicità* may be considered the core concept in the conceptual grammar of Italian secularism, it is certainly not the sole concept to enact the secular episteme. For example, as discussed, prevailing notions of religion and citizenship, too, may function as secular ideals and enact ideological secularism. In this light, in the following, the term *laicità* either appears in Italian or is translated into "the secular character/nature" of the state or simply Italian secularism.

Furthermore, as in other Western European states, secularism in Italy is informed by liberal conceptions. Although "secular" does not designate a homogeneous set of principles and arrangements in the region, three liberal principles bring Western European secular orders closer together, that is, religious liberty, religious autonomy, and state–religion cooperation (S. Ferrari 2002). Thus, regardless of how the secular and religious realms are defined, secularism in Italy and in the remainder of the region relies not only on some version of the secular–religious demarcation (typically mirroring Christian worldviews), but also on some type of church–state cooperation and conceptualization of liberalism. Notably, liberal ideals, such as toleration and neutrality, occupy a prominent place in these states' ideological frameworks and institutional structures. In this light, Italy

may be considered a liberal secular state, which must uphold religious liberty and equality, as constitutionally established.

In presenting the Italian sociohistorical and institutional contexts, the two following chapters corroborate and elaborate these arguments. Notably, they demonstrate that the historical and institutional development of the Italian secular state has not differed substantially from that of other Western European states, with, for example, secular–religious culture wars being central to the institution of Italy's sovereign powers and to the definition of its body politic (even if neither are finished products). In this respect, it is interesting to remind that the secular camp in these wars was initially liberal and anticlerical, indicating that Italy's Catholic tradition and liberal character have been intertwined in complex ways from early on (Papenheim 2003; Pollard 2008).

Considering the past three decades, the two chapters also show that Italy has been facing similar problems and dilemmas to those of other Western European states, particularly when it comes to handling social diversification and religious pluralization. In a context marked by rising security concerns, persistent economic turmoil, political uncertainty and disbelief, and recurring immigration "crises", the Italian state has had to face much cultural conflict or, differently put, ideological contests of the type studied in this thesis. While these contests have concerned a variety of issues, ranging from same-sex unions to religious symbols, most of them have comprised attempts to re-define the political community and its underlying character, values, principles. In other words, these contests have involved a renewed search for the Italian identity, a search that goes hand in hand with the re-emergence of debates on the national question and, of course, with the transformation of Italy into an immigration country. This broad process of ideological reconfiguration in the country and, for that matter, on the continent, may be seen as a new phase in the Italian "politics of identity" (Triandafyllidou 1999; Patriarca 2001; Allievi 2005a; Ozzano and Giorgi 2015).

The Italian state has been both a participant and a locus in which these ideological contests take place. The second chapter of Part II demonstrates how the state has been managing the intricate social context described above, focusing on the main factors of social diversification and religious

pluralization in the country, i.e., immigration and religious minorities. Although liberal principles continue to underpin Italy's political and legal systems, illiberal and post-secular trends have characterized the governance of social and religious diversity in the country. Notwithstanding Italy's positive notion of *laicità*—a sign of post-secularism—Italian state actors, too, have resorted to discourses and policies that may be seen as manifestations of illiberal secularism, as the case studies in the third chapter demonstrate. Thus, it may be argued that, like other Western European states, the Italian state has risked jeopardizing some of its liberal foundations in enacting its secular powers.

Specifically, in trying to handle social and religious diversity, these actors have contributed to promoting divisiveness, in the form of social exclusion and discrimination, and absolutism, in the form of individual rights' infringements. The first chapter of this thesis has argued that secularism becomes illiberal when it betrays the normative structure of liberalism and, as the case studies show, this has occasionally happened in Italy. In fact, the Charter, Crucifix, and *Burqa* cases show instances of secularism turning illiberal in discourse. They demonstrate, for instance, that state actors have promoted a too strong identification of state structures with (a narrow understanding of) the majority religion and that they have supported legislation that, if approved, may violate the rights of minority religions. The foregoing indicates that the chapter discusses the potentially exclusionary and absolutist character of not only secular, but also post-secular discourses—a fact that renders the Italian case study even more interesting, especially considering contemporary debates on the post-secular.

Therefore, while the next two chapters contextualize the Italian case by referring to relevant sociohistorical, political and institutional developments, the last chapter concentrates on the discourses through which Italian state actors have enacted their secular powers. Again, to understand how illiberal secularism becomes thinkable and possible, the chapter examines the political discourse of secularism, as well as the politics of discourse underpinning the construction of this ideological formation. As explained, however, the three chapters are part of a unique analytical endeavor: the contextual knowledge base presented in the first two chapters allows this thesis to trace explanatory

connections between the single utterances, discourse practices, and the wider social context, and to identify the part of secularism's conceptual grammar.

Chapter 1: Defining the Italian Political Community: Nation-state, Religion, and the "Other"

> In the context of specific historical developments, the notions and structures of religions and states not only arose, and came to be conceived of as being, in opposition to each other but also arose intimately tied to one another; that is, states, nations, nationalisms, and religions emerge together as categories of understanding and as social constructions (Beyer 2013, 42).

This chapter presents the sociohistorical context in which contemporary discourses on *laicità*, religion, nation, and diversity have occurred, in line with CDA's claim that language cannot be grasped outside of its context (Fairclough 1992; Titscher et al 2000). Specifically, it focuses on the broader societal frameworks that have contributed to the progressive delineation of the Italian state and political community. Since this thesis investigates ideological secularism—a form of political thinking about the government of diversity— it is necessary to identify and understand those ideational meanings, such as mainstream knowledge and beliefs, that have informed current definitions of, and debates over, state, religion, nation, diversity, and otherness in Italy. In doing so, this chapter provides a glimpse into the history of the discursive events studied in the third chapter, and identifies productive and interpretative resources that Italian actors use to render texts and utterances meaningful and intelligible.

In the opening quote to this chapter, Beyer (2013) indicates that the structures which underpin contemporary Western states have been conceived in close connection with the notion of religion, without which neither the idea of state nor that of nation would be comprehensible. Consonant with the critical literature on secularism, this claim suggests that to discuss the definition of Italy, it is essential to consider the history and sociopolitical influence of religion in the country, especially Catholicism, which has been considered both the "self" and the "Other" of the state. Accordingly, the chapter recounts the incessant and often difficult making of Italy, focusing on secular and religious attempts to generate political unity and social integration through ideologies, policies, and discourses, especially those meant to define and discipline the "Other".

To this end, the chapter begins by glancing at the historical dispute over "Italy" and "Italians", emphasizing aspects that have been relevant to the articulation of the notions of state, nation, and religion in the country. This opening section is divided in two parts. The first one discusses the enduring influence of Catholicism on the definition of political community and provides a short account of secular–religious disputes in Italy since the mid-nineteenth century. The second part, in turn, is more concerned with national mythology, and thus, recounts the recurring themes and historical tropes which have been mobilized by political actors in disputes over Italy and its character. While Italian history is interesting in and of itself, it should be stressed that the purpose of this opening section is not to provide a thorough account of the events that led to the contemporary sociopolitical configuration of the country. Rather, it only builds on important historical moments insofar as these moments—and the imagination of them—affect the contemporary self-definition of Italians, modes of political inclusion and exclusion, and more broadly, the governance of diversity.

The second section of the chapter introduces the Italian sociopolitical scenario of the past three decades, focusing not only on the rediscovery of the national question by political actors, but also on the progressive pluralization of the voices that inhabit the Italian public and political spheres. Together, these developments have resulted in the emergence of a new phase in the Italian "politics of identity", or in what Patriarca (2001, 30) has called a "larger process of ideological reconfiguration" in the country. This section addresses this process in two parts. The first part presents the troubling circumstances leading to ideological reconfiguration in Italy, whereas the second one demonstrates that in this new scenario, intellectuals and political actors, including the Church, continue to rehearse old themes in new ways. Notably, these actors have been engaged in discursive struggles that revive and recreate vocabularies of the past, including nationalist, civic, and republican vocabularies. The concept of civil religion, widely discussed by Italian intellectuals over the past couple of decades, exemplifies such tendency. The chapter is concluded with brief note on the current cultural and political influence of Catholicism in Italy, often said to be the only religion capable of creating social integration and political unity in the country.

Making Italy and Italians

This section provides a brief historical account of Italy as a nation-state, recounting occurrences and themes identified by scholars as important not only to the contemporary articulation of Italy as a state and nation, but also to the emergence of practices and modes of thinking conducive to self-other definitions. The roles played by worldly and religious authorities in these processes are also of interest, not least due to their implications to the current secular–religious demarcation. However, as mentioned, this overview is more concerned with the present than with the past: the latter is revived only inasmuch as it provides resources for contemporary modes of thinking about, and acting upon, what is Italy and Italian—and, by implication, what is not. As hypothesized by Crainz (2009, IX), "in today's Italy, there is also the story of its past". Therefore, the objective of this section is to trace some of the origins of these identities (and related practices of inclusion–exclusion) to past ideological struggles over Italy and its character. This exercise provides sociopolitical and historical elements without which current narratives, practices, and debates cannot be fully grasped.

The continuous tense in the title of this subsection— "Mak*ing* Italy and Italians"— conveys a central message of this chapter: the debate over what "Italy" means never seems to fade away. In fact, the title alludes to the 1861 phrase "now we have made Italy, we need to make Italians", often attributed to Massimo D'Azeglio. As this phrase indicates, "making Italians" has been an issue since the unification of the country in the mid-nineteenth century and, as recent public and academic debates indicate, the issue is yet to be resolved (Bellamy 1987; Patriarca 2001; Gentile 2006; De Luna 2013). The consequences of this allegedly unfulfilled task are felt in many domains of political life, engendering, for instance, doubts about the civicness of Italian citizens and about the soundness of the state and its structures (Galli della Loggia 1998; Sciolla 1999; Segatti 1999).

To be sure, national identities, as any other social identity, can never be established once and for all. Such identities cannot be monolithic either. As the result of political processes of social

construction, identities of whichever type will always be fractured and subject to alteration. Hence, rigid identities and lasting boundaries should be considered a "social fiction" (Forgacs and Lumley 1996; Jenkins 2008). Nevertheless, it may be argued that whereas foreigners may consider "Italy" an easily accessible symbolic construct, that is not the case in the country, where the nation and its character have often been subjects of ideological contestation, particularly since the 1990s. Allen and Russo (1997, x) contend that

> "Italy" has been "designed" all over the globe as an identity, a criterion of similarity, that is in fact never the same. It is in a state of flux, up for negotiation, getting handed over, claimed, held up banner-like to legitimize particular acts or even entire lives, and sometimes even the taking of lives. It is found in great variation within the peninsular and insular territorial boundaries of the nation-state called Italy itself, but it is also found, sometimes to greater effect, in other places where "place" is drawn in the colors of colonialism, postcolonialism, immigration, exile, and the multinational markets and labor relations of postindustrial capitalism.

In this quotation, the authors corroborate the fluid, volatile state of the Italian identity, in addition to indicating that contests over "Italy" have not been confined to the territorial borders of the state; on the contrary, they have taken place as much in Rome and Sicily as in Ethiopia, the USA, and South America. Due to this intricate process of social construction, there have been many "Italies", each of which has been imagined according to a different conception of the nation, politics and state (Forgacs and Lumley 1996; Gentile 2006). Therefore, it may be argued that none of the country's overarching identities or political subcultures has functioned as a stable, hegemonic construction, which actors could take for granted and mobilize in their everyday interactions.

Such precariousness begs the question of what elements are necessary to make a nation-state: is it culture, history, language, territory or some other criterion? And perhaps more importantly, which of these elements have been absent in Italy? Or, as Patriarca (2001, 24) rephrases the inquire so often raised by Italian intellectuals, "what went wrong?"

These questions seem to have guided the sociopolitical efforts of the Italian state since the Risorgimento: regardless of their political allegiances, most of the leaders of the time recognized the importance of regenerating (*rigenerare*) the character of Italians with the objective of forging a moral and intellectual political community, brought together by common principles and values. To this end, they mobilized the school and the army, which have undertaken the task of forming citizens compatible with the liberal character of the newly established state. Gentile (2006) argues that following these first top-down attempts to "make Italians", the need to reform the citizen has become a powerful myth in the country and, consequently, has occupied a central and stable place in different state's programs and policies—up to this day. Throughout the history of the Italian state, in fact, political actors have put forward, and struggled over, different conceptions of the Italian citizen and the common consciousness of the nation-state (Gentile 2006).

Gentile's account (2006) suggests that a nation-state is defined neither by one single criterion nor by a set of them. Rather, it appears to derive from dynamic, historically specific, and inherently political processes of identification, through which individuals and groups try to establish their preferred views of "who is who" and "what is what", as discussed in Part I. Where these actors stand ideologically and how they re-appropriate history in pursuit of their goals are perhaps the most important questions to understand the fragmented process of "making Italy and Italians"—thus, questions about a nation's constitutive elements should be dismissed (Forgacs and Lumley 1996).

In this light, this overview briefly revisits the past 150 years of "making Italy and Italians" in search for those reiterated historical themes around which ideological struggles have occurred and national myths have surfaced, such as the myth of character regeneration. These themes, their histories, as well as the ideological positions they evoke, continue to provide ammunition for contemporary political actors engaged in the formulation of modes of thinking about, and acting in the world—which are, in turn, translated into self–other definitions and practices of inclusion and exclusion. In other words, "all the divisions of the past, far from dissipating, continue to overlap, to intersect, and to revitalize with every new season" (Palano 2014). This exercise, however, is not to

claim or impose an artificial continuity upon complex historical processes. As discussed previously, the objectives here are much narrower; they are circumscribed to the identification of recurrent themes around which historically specific political battles over "Italy" have occurred.

That alongside Germany, Italy was a late-comer in the process of modern state formation is a well-known fact. Despite a long intellectual history of "imagining Italy", it was only in 1861 that the country emerged as a centralized polity and even so, the then-existing Italian state lacked a substantial part of its current territory, including Rome and the remainder of the Papal States. Unification occurred in a series of stages, in a process which resembled a struggle between the worldly authorities of Piedmont-Sardinia and the religious authority of the papacy (Pollard 2008).

Despite their different political programs, the champions of the Risorgimento were inspired by Enlightenment ideals and the French Revolution and shared the conviction that "the Church and especially the papacy...were serious cultural and institutional obstacles to the achievement of progress in Italy" (Pollard 2008, 17). Therefore, the "Liberal Revolution" carried a strong anticlerical mark, which was subsequently translated into ecclesiastical reforms aimed to usurp the temporal powers of the Church. Although anticlericalism had not always been a flag of nationalist movements in the country, the events which culminated in the seizure of Rome by the Italian forces in 1870 were portrayed as the latest stage of the nineteenth-century European "culture wars" between, on the one hand, liberal and secular exponents of modernity and, on the other hand, "reactionary" religious authorities (Papenheim 2003; Pollard 2008).

Despite the fierce antagonism that characterized discursive battles between secular and religious exponents at that time, Papenheim (2003) argues that there was a great degree of pragmatism in the attitudes of both liberals and Catholics and, moreover, that two clear-cut and monolithic secular and religious groups did not really exist. Rather, mediation and compromise between the two intersecting fronts were not only a possibility but also a reality—an indication that the war metaphor might have been a too strong representation of the facts on the ground (Papenheim 2003).

Still, the rhetoric polarization between the papacy and its liberal opponents reveals some important and lasting themes in the history of Italy's self-definition. First, this polarization preannounces a pivotal division in Italian politics, that is, the division between secular and religious political groups. Second, some of the arguments put forward by Catholics shed light on what would become a powerful myth surrounding Italy's self-image as a political community, that is, the Catholic myth of the nation. Third, liberal's defense of, and vocal support to, the ideals of liberal modernity would become a lasting concern of Italian political actors, triggering endless debates over Italy's development level and its obstacles, including much-rehearsed discussions regarding the problematic character of Italians and the need to regenerate it. In fact, as discussed below, the modernity *topos* has generated a number of additional debates, which have informed the representation of Italians and self-other characterizations. In what follows, these themes are explored in two subsections: whereas the first one briefly introduces the Catholic myth of the nation and its influence in the formation of the Italian political community, the second subsection discusses the recurrent Italian self-examination, together with some of its associate themes and myths.

The Catholic Myth of the Italian Nation: A Brief History

Clark (2003, 43) contends that where state-building was accompanied by secular–religious "culture wars", as it happened in Germany, France, and Italy, there has been a significant and lasting division of the political field along confessional and anti-clerical lines. In effect, Catholicism in Italy has been not only an important political subculture, with which a significant part of the population still identifies, but also an important political opponent, against which several groups define their own identities (Parker 1998). Throughout the past century, Italian political actors have often mobilized and used Catholic moral resources and historical faults to address the problem of defining Italy and its national character. In analyzing Italy's national history, Gentile (2006) identifies a Catholic myth of the nation, the general contents of which began to be delineated long before the emergence of the

Christian Democratic party (*Democrazia Cristiana*, DC), Italy's dominant political force for most of the twentieth century. Since the roles played by the Pope, the Church, and the Catholic tradition in the country are controversial, it is difficult to account for the elements of this Catholic myth—they are disputed and change over time. Yet, this myth has certainly informed, and has been informed by the secular–religious dyad, church–state relations, and the definition of Italy, as a state and a nation.

As mentioned, the nineteenth-century Liberal Revolution meant more than the establishment of a unified polity in the Italian peninsula. It also contributed to the narrowing of the temporal powers of the Church, thereby inaugurating an era of secular politics in the country. In fact, liberal forces defined state sovereignty at the expense of the authority of the Roman Pontiff, who reacted by trying to seize not lands, but rather souls—the souls of Italy's citizens. With the *non expedit*, the self-proclaimed "prisoner of the Vatican", Pope Pious IX, hampered the quest of the liberal state to build a nation of citizens by requesting Catholics to boycott elections. Thereby, participation in political life was deemed sinful and was effectively banned. Such an intransigent position corroborated the views previously expressed by Pious IX in the *Syllabus Errorum,* a document enumerating the errors of liberalism and modernity. The Pontiff, thus, not only denounced the illegitimate character of liberal Italy, but also opposed the wider processes of modernization and secularization, in progress both in Italy and in other European states (Pollard 2008; Driessen 2014).

Nevertheless, the Papal condemnation of liberalism and modernity did not imply an ecclesiastical retreat from the public and political realms. On the contrary, the *non expedit* and similar declarations suggest that, following the capture of Rome, religious authorities began to devise fully modern ways to regain their powers over the faithful. Furthermore, the Church, too, had to face the rapidly changing social and economic conditions of the time, and it did so by revitalizing its social foundations in the form of voluntary associations, devotional practices, and stronger clergy-faithful relationships (Clark 2004; Pollard 2008; Driessen 2014). According to Driessen (2014, 96), in this context, ecclesiastical authorities became "more sensitive to the changing political consciousness of their faithful and more innovative in the ways they attempted to organize and channel it". Therefore,

while the liberal state struggled to consolidate its authority over the citizenry, Italians continued to be loyal Catholics. In fact, their social and spiritual bonds to the Church underwent a process of revitalization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Despite the intransigent rhetoric of Catholic authorities, the Church was then a modernizing and multifaceted political force, the purpose of which was to "reassert and reinvigorate Catholic identity and morale", especially in the face of liberalism and modernity (Pollard 2008, 29). To do so, it increasingly became a politically active actor. Whilst the clergy nurtured, educated and disciplined the faithful, lay Catholic exponents began to enter politics at the city level. As a result, when the First World War broke out later on, the clergy and Catholic organizations were called on to join the war effort, both materially and psychologically. Bishops, for example, were requested to raise the national morale of soldiers and their families. Although religious activism was primarily local at first, this early political engagement also contributed to bringing democratic ideals and Catholicism closer together, in an association that would slowly transmute into a form of Catholic patriotism—and which would subsequently conflict with the liberal and secular patriotism of governmental actors.

Together with the abolition of the *non expedit,* the increasing political activism of the Church led to the creation in 1919 of the Italian Popular Party (*Partito Popolare Italiano*, PPI), the first Catholic party of the country, formed under the leadership of Don Luigi Sturzo. Allegedly non-confessional and independent from the Vatican, the PPI defended Church's interests and was largely compliant with its doctrine (Di Maio 2004). Catholic patriotism developed further in this context of appeasement, laying the basis for the reestablishment of the nation-state after the Second World War.

Early advocates of Catholic patriotism contended that unless political authority were firmly founded upon Catholic values and principles, Italy would never achieve greatness. According to Gentile (2006), this idea would become the centerpiece of the Catholic myth of the nation. Therefore, although at the time Catholicism and liberal nationalism had not fully addressed their differences (Rome, for one, was still a "question"), Catholic political exponents were no longer trying to define their identity in opposition to that of unified Italy. Instead, they endeavored to define the country's

body politic by demonstrating that "the Church and Catholicism had left an indelible imprint in the formation of the national identity and had been for centuries the maximum expression of Italian greatness" (Gentile 2006, 138). Religion, they argued, was the oldest and most authentic foundation of national unity. Thus, similarly to liberal and socialist forces in the country, early exponents of Catholic patriotism attempted to re-appropriate social facts and to reinterpret historical events, with a view to articulating a specifically Catholic narrative of Italy and its national identity.

In putting forward and defending this interpretation of Italy, Catholic actors had become effective participants in the national politics of identity and difference. Throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, Catholics continued to be central actors in the Italian politics of identity. However, the "Others" against which they defined themselves varied substantially, as did the divisions internal to the Catholic block itself (Gentile 2006; Pollard 2008).

With the rise of fascism in the early 1920s, Pope Pious XI hoped to reconstruct Italy's Catholic society, allegedly impaired by the Risorgimento and its liberal ideals. Once in power, Mussolini repudiated his atheistic and anti-clerical stance and sought to collaborate with the Vatican. Thus, notwithstanding Mussolini's totalitarian aspirations, the Church did not mourn the demise of the liberal regime (Pollard 2008). Although collaboration with Fascism caused the "exile" of the PPI and the weakening of organized Catholic movements, it cleared the way for the 1929 conciliation between the Italian state and the Holy See, leading to the signature of the Lateran Pacts, the Financial Convention, and the Concordat (Di Maio 2004). Even though the settlement of the "Roman question" was a part of fascist efforts to control the Catholic world, it guaranteed the enduring power and presence of the Church in the Italian public and political spheres. However, that the Church would agree to negotiate with Mussolini's government is still surprising, especially considering that the latter's racist and totalitarian stances contradicted both the social doctrine and political aspirations of the Vatican. This situation has led scholars to wonder about Vatican's reasons to collaborate with, instead of opposing Mussolini. Pollard (2008, 103) argues that collaboration was nothing but a

"marriage of convenience", in that Fascists and Catholics had not only some convergent interests at first, but also a common enemy—that is, Communism.

Communism was, in fact, the "Other" of political Catholicism for most of the post-war Republican period. Nevertheless, this was not immediately the case in the early 1940s, when following the collapse of fascism, Catholics and leftists joined forces in the Resistance movement, which contributed to liberating the northern and central part of the country from the Germans and fascists. Grass-roots activism and participation in the Resistance proved important to preserve the country's Catholic subculture, as well as to cleanse the Catholic morale from the guilt of clerico-fascism. Furthermore, these engagements helped to instill patriotism into Italian Catholic movements, which would become fundamental in the political reconstruction of the country. During the Resistance, such patriotic feelings were primarily related to antifascism, and contributed to forging unity among liberation forces with opposing ideological orientations. Once peace was established, however, these forces parted ways, leaving behind the memory of a heroic, yet feeble moment of national unity in the name of freedom. This moment was later turned into a historical myth: together with the Liberal Revolution, the Resistance has been re-appropriated and reinterpreted countless times by political actors seeking to sanction their particular views of who and what is Italy, Italians, and of course, the enemy (Gentile 2006; Pollard 2008; Driessen 2014).

In the post-war period, lay Catholic political actors and social movements, as well as ecclesiastical authorities were actively involved in politics, including identity politics: not only did they prevent the country from falling in the hands of leftist forces, but they also ensured that a "religiously friendly" process of democratization took hold (Driessen 2014, 100). The Italian Christian Democratic Party (DC), which emerged after the disintegration of the Fascist regime in 1943, was perhaps the most important sponsor of these developments (Donovan 2003). In addition to having led reconstruction efforts in the post-war period, the DC managed to establish Catholic dominance over Italian politics, especially after 1948, thereby becoming the country's main political force—a position held for most of the twentieth century. Such dominance granted the party's

leadership legitimacy to lobby for churchly interests, such as the inclusion of the Lateran Pacts in the republican constitution, and to articulate an openly Catholic understanding of the Italian national identity. In fact, Gentile (2006, 368) remarks that

> the theme of political and moral unity constituted the main motif of the Christian democrat national mythology. This unity, for De Gasperi, already existed in the religious unity of Italians. The Catholic religion was the main foundation of an identity that had been formed over the centuries through the symbiosis of the Christian and Italian civilizations.

Although initially ambivalent toward democracy, the Church lent support to the DC and its Catholic representation of the Italian nation in the immediate post-war period. In the 1948 national elections, for example, it was the Church, through its parishes and "civic committees", that provided organizational and ideological backing to the party (Pratt 1994). Nevertheless, this endeavor to activate and gain the political support of the faithful had ulterior motives: in promoting the Catholic party, the Church hoped to renew the country's Christian civilization, as well as to "buttress the confessional nature of the Italian state to the detriment of political pluralism and religious liberty in Italy" (Driessen 2014, 107). Post-war Catholic integralism involved more than the spiritual revitalization and political mobilization of devout souls; it also meant participation in a "crusade" against evil, represented by the country's leftist forces, notably the Communist Party. Together with the DC, the Church entered an ideological battlefield deeply entangled in the then emerging bipolar world order. After all, to recover its social standing and ideological hegemony, the Church had to defeat the challengers of the Catholic myth of the nation.

This mythical understanding was certainly challenged. Far from being hegemonic, Catholic and, more specifically, Christian democratic ideas of Italy were in constant conflict with those articulated by the Communist Party. Although both parties held the Resistance memory dear, disavowed imperialistic forms of nationalism, and looked at universal ideas for political inspiration—respectively, God and international Communism—they had opposing understandings of Italy, as well

as divergent plans for its future. Rather than bolstering dialogue and negotiation, such opposition generated a fierce combat "for the heart and soul of the Italian people" (Pratt 1994, 135), which, albeit weakened, lasted until the end of the Cold War. Therefore, although terms such as "nation" and "nationalism" had been progressively abandoned after the Second World War, political actors continued to contend for the real identity of Italy.

In this context, Catholics and Communists defined their identities in opposition to the other. This configuration of the debate implied that whatever vision of the Italian body politic these political forces defended, this vision necessarily implicated the exclusion and/or elimination of the other. Catholic forces sought to alienate the left not only by convoking the faithful to participate in politics, but also by taking advantage of the power of religious ideas, symbols and practices, which were meant to exclude Communists from society. According to the Church, the universal mission of Italy was to guide the "anti-communist crusade" (Gentile 2006, 374). Hence, while Catholicism was considered a constituent component of the Italian identity, Communism was depicted as an external threat. This threatening enemy would take Italy down the road of perdition, destroying the most fundamental structures of Italian society, such as the family and traditional gender roles (Pratt 1994; Gentile 2006).

Although the 1950s were marked by accusations of clerico-conservatism against the DC, that close alliance between the Catholic party and the Vatican did not last long, with the former becoming largely independent from the latter in the 1960s. To be sure, Catholic political guidance still made sense in the light of the Communist threat, however such guidance was no longer provided by ecclesiastical authorities. In undertaking the political primacy of the Church, the DC turned into a pragmatic party in search of political, not spiritual, goals. There was considerable growth of state clientelism throughout the 1960s and 1970s, signaling that ideological antagonism had given way to more mundane political concerns. Compounded by secularizing and modernizing trends, this shift caused a reassessment of religious and political identities in the country, which contributed to altering the political preferences of Italians. Notably, because of these changes, faith ceased to be the chief determinant of voting behavior, and Catholics began to evaluate public policy independently from

their religious convictions (Donovan 2003; Driessen 2014). In this modern, industrial and urban context, the Church tried once again to restore its social and political hegemony, this time by "updating" its internal structures.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) represented an overarching churchly renewal. For starters, the recognition of pluralism, democracy, human rights, and religious freedom signaled Vatican's abandonment of a long-lasting integralist position. Furthermore, in the face of a rapidly changing social, economic and cultural conditions, the Catholic hierarchy sought to open to itself to former opponents (in a strategy known as *"apertura a sinistra"* or "opening to the left") and to reduce the distance between the laity and the Church's doctrinal and institutional structures (Pratt 1994; Pollard 2008). Internal migration, urbanization, cultural Americanization, among other social transformations, meant that the model of society hitherto used by the Italian Catholic world to organize its actions—based on patriarchical relations and on rural, close-knit communities—was becoming progressively obsolete. The Church reacted to these transformations accordingly, elaborating a new "view of religion as concerned essentially with inner states" (Pratt 1994, 139). By emphasizing individual religiosity, the Church hoped to maintain its moral hegemony at a time when long-established social structures were being challenged, as well as to position itself as the bearer of truth in a dynamic, democratic, and plural society (Driessen 2014).

While the Second Vatican Council allowed the Church to devise new strategies to regain political power and spiritual influence over its flock, its impact on the Italian branch of the Church was more ambiguous, particularly because it generated political dissent within both the clergy and the Catholic lay movement. Economic hardship, social disruption, and violence—a hallmark of the 1970s in Italy—compounded these challenges, compelling ecclesiastical authorities to deal with even high levels of protest. This situation culminated in two important political defeats for the Italian Church: the law on divorce in 1974, and the successful referendum on abortion in 1981. Together with the transferal of Catholic votes to the left, such progressive legislation suggested that, although a large part of the population remained religious, most of the Italian electorate had become secular

by the 1980s. The Church, in short, had lost its overwhelming political influence and moral authority over the Italian body politic: citizens increasingly detached their religious lives from public and political choices. Interestingly, despite profound social changes, there was little public and intellectual interest in the question of national identity proper, which would only make its way back into the Italian political scene in the 1990s (Patriarca 2001).

Meanwhile, the Church continued to support the DC, even as the party faced increasing political stasis, factionalism and corruption charges. In 1984, DC's weakness paved the way to a renegotiation of the 1929 Concordat, which led to the disestablishment of the Catholic Church in Italy (Pollard 2008). With the collapse of communism and the aggravation of Italy's state crisis in the early 1990s, the Christian Democratic regime ultimately broke down, leaving the Vatican and Catholic associations without a direct referent in the Italian political scene. Although Catholic groups still defended the importance of political mobilization on religious bases, the Conference of Italian Bishops (CEI) acknowledged in 1993 that the principle of Catholic political unity was fading in the face of the country's new political reality, especially party polarization. Shortly thereafter, the Church assumed a neutral position, officially declaring its independence from the then emerging party system. Nevertheless, this has not meant a disengagement from Italian politics. For example, when the Northern League put forward secessionist threats in the early 1990s, the Italian Church turned into a fierce defender of united Italy (Diamanti and Ceccarini 2007; Pollard 2008).

Nor has the adoption of a self-standing position meant that Catholicism ceased to be culturally and institutionally woven in the Italian social and political systems. On the contrary, such independence has given the Church leeway to gravitate the political life of the country more autonomously, as it deems appropriate. In fact, the Church has been able to address different political forces and the public, as well as to position itself independently on matters of its concern, such as in bio-ethical disputes (Donovan 2003; Driessen 2014; Giorgi and Ozzano 2015). Moreover, while the Church did lose institutional power from the mid-1970s onwards (the Divorce and Abortion legislation were followed by the deconfessionalization of the state and the Constitutional Court's

promulgation of *laicità*), the Italian *nation* has not undergone a process of secularization akin to that observed in the Italian *state*. Contemporary scholars often argue that Italy cannot possess a civil religion because Catholicism acts as the unifying bond of the Italian community, or that Catholic symbols, rituals, and values have long performed the role which in a Republic should appertain to a civic credo (Rusconi 1999; Ferrara 1999; Garelli 1999; 2007; A. Ferrari 2008; S. Ferrari 2009). The enduring influence of the Catholic myth of the nation suggests that the Church has remained an active participant in Italy's politics of identity, as discussed below.

Italian National Mythology: recurrent themes and histories

Italy's 1990s state crisis and the ensuing debate on national identity shed light on the other side of nation-building in the country, i.e., on its secular protagonists, themes, and histories. Following the rediscovery of the national theme, intellectuals and political actors have begun to explore Italy's historical phases and character traits in search not only for the distinguishing characteristic of Italians, but also for means of forging unity among them (Patriarca 2001). Although the particularities of this relatively recent debate are discussed in the next section, it is interesting to recall the 1990s resurgence of the national subject because it marks the beginning of a new phase in the Italian politics of identity: a phase in which old themes and historical episodes are rehearsed in innovative ways, thereby, acquiring new ideological meanings and bringing about often unforeseen consequences. Before discussing the emergence of these new ideological stances, it is necessary to introduce these recurrent themes and historical tropes, which together seem to form an ever-changing and much politicized Italian national mythology.

One of historical episodes most commonly revived by scholars discussing Italy and its national identity is the Risorgimento and the creation of the liberal state. However, Italy's founding moment has been differently interpreted and evaluated by a range of intellectuals and political actors, with no final agreement on its successes and faults. Even Catholic exponents have put forward their

own reading of the Liberal Revolution, notwithstanding the nineteenth-century polarization between religious and secular authorities. Therefore, although the 1861 was certainly an important year, all attempts to recount the unification of Italy have been (and are) necessarily incomplete *versions* of the facts, which serve the particular purposes and interests of the narrators.

The objective here is not to produce yet another version of the Risorgimento, but rather to glance at the politics of identity that surrounded efforts to build a state and, more importantly, to forge a national community. As seen, the liberal goal of forming Italian citizens was partly frustrated by the intransigent posture of the Roman Pontiff, who guarded the souls of the devout against the incursions of liberal state actors. Notwithstanding obstacles, liberal exponents emphasized that the civilizing (*incivilimento*) of the people was an important step not only to create a feeling of "we-ness" among the citizens of the new polity, but also to ensure that Italy embarked on the road to modernity. These themes were closely related, since the cultural and spiritual development of the people was considered a prerequisite for the socioeconomic development of the nation-state (Gentile 2006). Moreover, together, they left a strong imprint on subsequent Italian political practice and thought, both of which are still marked by anxieties about social integration and fears of unaccomplished modernization (Bellamy 1987; Müller 2013). Modernization, in particular, seems to have served as an overarching framework of reference to those attempting to make sense of Italy and its history.

According to Gentile (2006, 19-21), the champions of unification saw the formation of the nation as a means to "conquer" modernity. Echoes of this narrative have indeed been heard throughout most of the past 150 years. This resonance, however, has been filled with regret for lost opportunities. At the dawn of the new millennium, for example, Galli della Loggia (1998, 141) argued that Italy's "deficit of modernity"— "inherent in the genetic code of the unitary construction" —has animated and guided all political subcultures formulated in the country after unification. As such, modernity (or the lack thereof) has constituted one of the recurrent themes referred to above. This theme is particularly important because it elicits and evolves into other subjects, such as the

problematic national character of Italians and the myth of regeneration, which have themselves been regularly raised in the Italian politics of identity.

While the term "modern" and its derivatives have been critically examined and problematized in many Western countries, they have been largely taken-for-granted in political discourse and practice in Italy, being deployed to denote positive social developments (Mason 1988). Hence, as commonly used by Italian intellectuals and political actors, these terms have expressed value judgments about what is good, positive, progressive, and developed, on the one hand, and about what fails to live up to the expectations of whomever is speaking, on the other hand (Mason 1988). To be sure, questions about what and who is modern have been subjects of ideological contestation for decades. Still, despite profound disagreements, "modern" has typically carried a positive connotation, representing an ideal to be attained (Mason 1988; Agnew 1997).

Moreover, although intellectuals and political actors have never agreed on the features of truly modern states, most of them have argued that Italy does not qualify as modern—or does so only partially and insufficiently. Specifically, according to this line of thought, Italy is best described as backward. Agnew (1997) observes that this metaphor of backwardness has pervaded discourses about Italy, having influenced the country's self-definition to the point to acquiring a mythical character.

But in respect to whom and what is Italy considered backward? This question suggests that the modernity narrative is not merely normative—it is also relational. The political history of Italy provides many answers to the modern-backward question, which depend on the objects of comparison. In defending unification, Cavour (1976, quoted in Gentile 2006, 22), for instance, talked about joining the "other civilized nations" of the world, insinuating, as many have done after him, that "Europe" and, more generally, the "North" represent the ideal of modernity that Italy should pursue. Later, however, imperialistic forms of nationalism, most notably Fascism, resurrected the Roman and Christian past of the peninsula, suggesting instead that achieving modernity meant recovering the glories of a grandiose past. These historical glimpses exemplify two important threads of thought in political and intellectual efforts to gauge Italy's modernity: first, one that looks at an

elusive, yet allegedly successful North as a model to follow; and second, a thread that compares the present to an imagined grand and illustrious past, which should be replicated. Thus, these answers to the modern-backward question reveal other two recurrent themes in the history of nation-building of the country, i.e., the Roman myth and the North-South duality.

The North-South theme is premised on the idea that the "North" is a higher referent against which the South, in which Italy is typically situated, should be measured. From unification onwards, the country's performance has often been negatively evaluated in light of the performance of its Northern peers, especially France, Germany and Britain. In this dichotomous representation, however, the North does not correspond to a precise geographical area, but rather to modernity: it stands for development, rationality, civicness, and industriousness, all of which take a positive connotation. Conversely, the South represents backwardness: it is underdeveloped, magical, archaic, inferior, and in some cases, lazy, weak, and deceptive. In clarifying the features normally attributed to each of these imagined referents, it is also possible to discern some of the alleged causes and symptoms of Italy's backwardness. From the "failure of unification" and the liberal practice of *transformismo*, passing by patronage politics and organized crime in the twentieth century, to today's consumerist society, the whole history of Italy is said to manifest signs of social, economic and cultural backwardness. Moreover, many political actors and scholars have identified the lack of national spirit and civic virtue as both causes and symptoms of Italy's underdevelopment. As a consequence of this diagnosis, these actors have often been insecure about the European character of Italy, and have treated the country as though it were either "lagging behind" or simply "exceptional" (Mason 1988; Forgacs and Lumley 1996; Agnew 1997; Grillo 2002).

Although "North" frequently refers to Europe or the West, the discursive components of the North-South narrative may be found in many levels of analysis, ranging from face-to-face interactions to macro-sociological contexts. Within Italy, this narrative is often articulated in reference to the divisions between the Northern and Southern parts of the peninsula, which raise yet another recurrent theme in the Italian politics of identity, variously called the "Southern question" and "two Italies".

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Again, geography in this case is more symbolic than factual. Although the "South" has shifting boundaries (it may, e.g., include or exclude Rome), this imagined geographical referent serves as an emblem both to Italy's failure in building a state and to its divided character (Dickie 1996, 27).

An old phenomenon, this domestic facet of the North-South dichotomy has become increasingly important, particularly in the period after the unification of the country, and in the twentieth century, following the migration of workers from the *Mezzogiorno* to the Northern regions. Over time, the putative contrast between a well-governed, civic, developed, organized, and industrial North, on the one hand, and a clientelist, inefficient, backward, rural, and mafia-ridden South, on the other hand, has become essentialized, giving rise to a nearly natural opposition between the two parts of the country. Therefore, the North-South narrative has contributed to the articulation of a powerful discourse of difference within Italy, according to which the North is good, European, and superior, whereas the South represents the "Other", that who is bad, African, and inferior (Dickie 1996; Schneider 1998; Pandolfi 1998; Mai 2002).

It is interesting to note the Orientalist undertones of these representations. Like Europeans have done in Middle Eastern societies, Italians have used their intellectual resources and cultural products to objectify the South, to trivialize its role in the history and development of the peninsula, and to render it morally—at times, racially—inferior. According to Pratt (2002, 36), for example, "making Italy" after unification "would be achieved through making the South like the North, through civilizing missions and development". In doing so, Italians have effectively colonized the South, which has been systematically depicted as the "Other", not only of Northern regions, but also of Italy as a whole. Pandolfi (1998, 285) observes that "the South...is represented by a double figure: on the one side, the passive product of alterity externalized, and on the other side, the internalized other in an active national subject ("Italy")". While the main promoters of this rhetorical construction have been Northern Italians, it has been a reciprocal creation, to which Southerners have contributed as accomplices (and continue to do so in the micropolitics of everyday life, even in respect to immigrants). Schneider (1998) and Pratt (2002) both argue that, in a sense, the desire Italians express

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to detach themselves from the South reflects their anxieties about not belonging to Europe, to the North, and more broadly, to the Western civilization.

In this respect, it is interesting to remark how the aforementioned pairs of concepts—modern–backward, North–South, Northern Italy–Southern Italy—are hierarchical, in addition to normative and relational. Not only are the first elements of these conceptual pairs somehow superior to their counterparts, but they also dictate the parameters of development, civicness, and goodness according to which they are classified (Agnew 1997; Schneider 1998). These elements have played a primary role in the elaboration of the social and symbolic boundaries that inform prevailing modes of thinking, as well as practices of inclusion and exclusion in the country. This is not to say that the components of these pairs are immutable entities naturally given in the world; on the contrary, they are ideal constructions that cease to make sense outside relationships of alterity. Still, these constructions bring about consequences that are real: migrants from Southern Italy, for instance, have experienced a good deal of discrimination from their Northern fellows, primarily in virtue of their allegedly "backward" and "primitive" character, which implies inferiority in the civilizational hierarchy (Maritano 2002).

The self-definition of Italy that results from these incessant exercises of domestic and international comparison is derogatory, negative, and even accusatory, with some Italians being considered guiltier than others. The depiction of Italy as Southern and backward resonates with another fundamental theme in the debate of national identity: the idea that the "Italian character" as such is inherently problematic (Patriarca 2001; 2010). As Gentile (2006) demonstrates in his historical reconstruction, the negative self-representation of Italy goes far back in time, to the Risorgimento and its champions. Typically built around a number "Italian vices", including lack of civic spirit, individualism, familism, and the absence of state, this self-representation has been variously restored by political actors throughout the history of Italy as a nation-state (Patriarca 2001; 2010; Gentile 2006). Furthermore, it has been accompanied by pedagogical or citizen regeneration projects, the objectives of which have been the formation of a new, virtuous Italian citizen and, thereby, the constitution of a body politic capable of supporting a modern and bright nation-state.

Liberals, Fascists, Catholics, Socialists, and Communists: all incorporated the "myth of regeneration" in their ideological frameworks. In doing so, they also put forward ideals of good citizen and good state, which were consistent with their specific projects for a great and illustrious Italy.

As mentioned, in articulating these ideological frameworks, political actors re-appropriate and reinterpret historical themes in accordance with their own worldviews. For example, during the First Republic, both Communists and Catholics have portrayed the Liberal Revolution and the Partisan Resistance—two important, yet distant moments in the history of Italy—as continuous and driven by the same set of ideas, hopes and projects. In a similar fashion, the myth of a glorious Italian past has also played an important role in the Italian politics of identity (Allen and Russo 1997; Patriarca 2001; Gentile 2006). Notably, as mentioned, the Roman and Christian Empires have frequently served as historical referents against which to evaluate Italy. While this comparative exercise has supported the negative self-representation described above, it has also allowed political actors to envision a great future for the country, and to articulate a positive representation of the Italian character. There are material and intellectual illustrations of this ambiguous relation to the country's past. The architectural style of the Fascist regime, which drew inspiration from classical Rome, is one such illustration. Another, more intellectual illustration is the fact that early Christian democrats, such as Dossetti, built upon the glories of a Christian past to propose a post-national political architecture for Europe, one that would find its strength and power in common Christian values and principles (Gentile 2006).

In resurrecting past glories and recalling the primordial role of Italian culture in developing Europe and the Western world, intellectuals and political actors have reinforced the image of "two Italies", beyond the country's regional disparities. Specifically, in comparing a degenerate present to an ideal and grandiose past, these actors have not only added to the negative representation of the Italian character, but also suggested that Italy has been failing to live up to its true potential. This unspecified potential indicates that, despite defects and vices, Italians consider themselves to be the bearers of something special and unique, of which they should be proud. This special something is said to include, for example, inventiveness, generosity, and adaptability. Additionally, it has been

translated into positive stereotypes, such as that conveyed by the expression "*Italiani brava gente*", a mythical depiction of Italians as particularly tolerant, generous, social, and thus, incapable of acting unmercifully (see, for example, Del Boca 2005). In other words, that exceptional character referred to above is not all negative. Rather, Italian exceptionality is perhaps best understood as a case of "uniqueness fraught with liabilities" (Patriarca 2001, 26).

From the decades that preceded the Risorgimento onwards, many Italian thinkers have taken pride on the greatness of their forefathers, contending at times that Italy's historical roots are also the roots of the whole modern European civilization. Vicenzo Gioberti, a nineteenth century intellectual, politician and patriot, was a founding contributor to this myth of "Italian primacy". In his writings, Gioberti placed the Italian peninsula at the vanguard of universal civilization and contended that Italy had a God-given mission on Earth: to be the master of all nations and, in this capacity, to guide humanity toward civilization (Gentile 2006; Patriarca 2010). Gentile (2006) observes that in the twentieth century, these twin myths of "Italian primacy" and "civilizing mission" have gained several advocates and, consequently, various versions. Tales of Italian greatness have in fact supported different forms of modernist nation-building in the country, such as imperialist wars and colonial undertakings (Allen and Russo 1997).

These tales still retain some appeal. At the turn of the millennium, for example, Galli della Loggia (1998, 31-32) argued that "Italy has acquired...a central place in the European and world civilization.... Guarding the classical past and the cradle of Western Christianity, not only it is as if Italy somehow guarded the identity of every European, but to this identity it has given an essential and direct contribution". In a book that aims to understand the weakness of the Italian identity, Galli della Loggia's (1998) praise of the Roman and Christian heritages demonstrates the ambiguous relationship Italians have with their own identity, considered at once unique and vicious. Overall, then, Italy seems to suffer from an inferiority, as well as a superiority complex. This diagnosis is well illustrated by Negri's (1997, 44) contention that "Italy is the only country that has produced all the modern revolutions without having ever enjoyed victory in any of them".

As suggested by Negri's (1997) words, the ambiguous relationship of Italians with their identity also finds expression in the country's relation to modernity and to the outside world. Although frequently looking at their European counterparts and striving to reach an externally defined ideal of modernity, Italians have expressed concerns about the potentially disruptive implications of modernization for culture and society (Galli della Loggia 1998). Specifically, transformations associated to this process, such as urbanization, industrialization, and changes in life style, have often been deemed threatening, insofar as they might impair the uniqueness of Italy's culture and way of life. Considering this threat, many intellectuals and political actors have endeavored to promote a process of modernization that is specifically Italian, instead of simply trying to emulate models developed elsewhere (Pratt 2002; Gentile 2006). This reassessment of modernity indicates that North-South referents have not taken on stable meanings in Italian political thought and practice. In effect, Northern patterns of development were considered insufficient to trigger the emergence of a (third) Great Italy. To materialize this grandiose future, Italy—with its superior culture and civilizing mission—had to become a self-standing protagonist in the world system of states, much like the Roman and Christian Empires had been in the past.

While this vision has animated colonial and imperial forms of nationalism in the early twentieth century, for example, it did not lead to a revaluation of Italy's place in the international ranking of civilized nations. Since the fifteenth century, the territories of the peninsula have occupied a secondary position in the imagination of foreigners, notably Northern Europeans. Patriarca (2010) observes that Italy has been constructed as "vicious" and "inferior" both from within its own borders and from the outside. Moreover, according to Allen and Russo (1997, 3), "more powerful European nations have dominated and fetishized a "*piccola Italia*" as weak, effeminate, southern, and exotic throughout its formative modern history". Therefore, the country has been emasculated, and constructed as inferior, infantile, and fragile. This situation does not seem to have changed substantially over the past decades, since Italy has frequently served as the "Other" to northern tourism, as a provider of manpower to more developed nations, as a marketing strategy to

multinational firms, and as a market for global cultural products (Allen and Russo 1997). These foreign depictions have reinforced the negative self-representation of Italians.

The foregoing indicates that the politics of identity in Italy has been complex: not only does it go centuries back, but it also involves many actors and ideologies, which have been woven in domestic and international happenings. What is important to retain from this discussion are the themes and narratives that have been recurrent in these battles over the Italian identity. As argued, since these themes still inform contemporary attempts to define Italy, it is not possible to analyze the governance of religion and diversity in the country without taking them into consideration.

Contemporary "Politics of Identity" in Italy

The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the party system have not meant the end of ideological contestation in Italy, but rather the beginning of a new phase in the country's politics of identity. In this context, the debate over what constitutes the Italian identity has resurfaced, triggered at first by the 1990s state crisis and thereafter by many domestic and international occurrences, not least immigration and terrorism. Moreover, this new phase has been marked by many instances of cultural conflict or ideological contest, which have concerned inter alia social values, religious matters, and ethical issues. These contests have involved old and new political actors, including Italian citizens and their associations, governmental authorities, political parties, the Church, immigrants, and religious minorities. Further, as mentioned, instances of ideological contest and processes of identity renegotiation have coincided frequently. Notably, controversies over immigration and religious matters often overlap, giving rise to broader debates over the governance of social diversity and the boundaries of an increasingly plural political community.

This section describes the circumstances under which this new phase of identity politics has developed, emphasizing that political actors and intellectuals have been reviving and recreating narratives, themes, and vocabularies of the past to put forward their own understandings of Italy. The

first part of the section discusses the rediscovery of the national question in a new, more intricate political context, marked by the emergence of new political forces and the progressive pluralization of the Italian society. In doing so, it also provides some insight into how contemporary actors have been re-articulating the national question. The second part of the section elaborates on the latter subject, discussing intellectual inputs to political contests over Italy and its identity. Specifically, it focuses on the use of "civil religion" by Italian scholars, particularly because the concept brings together two vocabularies that have become quite prominent in the current phase of identity politics: the civic and national vocabularies. The concluding section of the chapter looks more generally at unity and diversity in Italy, highlighting wider societal trends regarding identity and difference, particularly those related to cultural Catholicism and immigrant-driven diversity. This section closes the chapter by providing hints into how the politics of identity currently plays out in the Italian society.

The Return of the Nation and New Drives to Pluralization

In the early 1990s, after having long been regarded a discursive "taboo", the national question resurfaced in the Italian public sphere and political debate, thereby inaugurating a new phase in the country's politics of identity. Intellectuals, political actors, and journalists began to re-articulate discourses about the nation in a context marked by the collapse of the party system, the disappearance of Cold War narratives, the strengthening of globalization, and the deepening of European integration. To be sure, the national theme had not disappeared from the country's political culture between the end of the Second World War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Nevertheless, due to its role under Fascism, political actors avoided overt nationalist vocabularies, preferring to articulate their social and political identities in more universalistic terms (Nevola 2003; Patriarca 2001; 2010). Political Catholicism and communism are examples of such broader orientations. Antonsich (2016) argues that the prevalence of such universal orientations contributed to the development of a civic conception of the country, which would play an important role in the public debate after the 1990s.

Although domestic and international transformations alike contributed to the reemergence of the national question, it was principally the 1990s state crisis and the resulting demise of deep-seated political paradigms that relaunched the debate in the country. Inasmuch as Italy was held together by a "pact of identity" premised on a "democracy of parties" until the late 1980s (Nevola 2003), the disintegration of the party system meant that both democracy and political unity were, if not in danger, at least weakened. Writing in 1993, Rusconi (1993, 309) warned that "when politics produced inefficiency and corruption, the very bonds that hold a nation together are damaged". While Italy's crisis did not actually culminate in the establishment of a "Second Republic", the basic reference points of democratic politics in the country—the parties—had vanished from the political map. This meant that interaction between the state and its citizens had to occur directly, without the mediating functions of parties (Nevola 2003). Although these changes brought about optimistic talks on a "democracy or nation of citizens", several scholars and political actors worried that Italy lacked elements to make such an arrangement function, notably that bond of citizenship said to result from a common identity, civic spirit, social capital, civic religion, and shared memories (Rusconi 1993; Galli della Loggia 1998; Sciolla 1999). Despite having been much criticized, Putnam's (1993) social capital thesis illustrated well the tone of these debates, not only for identifying a divided Italy, but also for deploying a civic and republican vocabulary, which would become increasingly relevant in the political sphere, as demonstrated by Antonsich (2016).

Narratives of weak, failed or unaccomplished nation pervaded diagnoses of democracy in Italy, encouraged by the emergence of new actors in a hitherto undefined political scene, including the National Alliance (AN), a postfascist party, Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia (FI), and the Northern League (LN), with its questioning of national unity and secessionist threat (LN's leadership, however, was often ambiguous in this regard). The political actors of the time realized that in a context marked by a state crisis and raising popular cynicism, the national question represented a powerful political weapon (Parker 1996; Patriarca 2009). In the meantime, Italian intellectuals reached some agreement on two fronts: first, while not always sharing each other's views on the strength of the nation, most of

them have defended Italy's unity; and second, they "rediscovered the value of a "good" patriotism", as Patriarca (2001, 23) contends. However, in keeping with the negative and exceptional self-representation of the country, intellectual discussions on the nation have been often framed by the assumption that something "went wrong" in Italy. This assumption has led to academic reflections on the issues—historical, social, cultural, among others—that have prevented the Italian nation from achieving a complete and successful unity (Patriarca 2001).

The recurrent themes and historical tropes previously presented have figured prominently in these intellectual exercises. In fact, Patriarca (2010) identifies the derogatory narrative on the national character across a number of publications and cultural products of the time. This narrative has given rise to new discourses on, and forms of, "civic pedagogy", the purposes of which overlapped with those of past projects to "regenerate" Italians. Furthermore, Nevola (2003), Pollard (2008) and Thomassen and Forlenza (2011) demonstrate that from the 1990s onward, several political actors, including the Church, have revisited and reinterpreted different periods of the history of Italy, such as the Risorgimento and the Resistance, with a view to putting forward their own understanding of the country and its identity. Therefore, having "re-discovered the value" of the nation, these intellectuals and political actors have sought a shared "historical memory" and common ground for the country, both of which have been considered essential to underpin the functioning of a truly democratic polity (Thomassen and Forlenza 2011, 708).

Despite some agreement, neither the overall reasons for the state crisis, nor the type of "good" national identity that should have been nurtured to solve it, were clear. Beyond corruption, institutional instability, and popular mistrust, the purported reasons for the crisis were many, and related to what Italy supposedly lacked: a nation, a state, a civic religion, a republican culture, and a linkage between civic culture, national identity and democratic institutions (Rusconi 1993; 1999; Galli della Loggia 1998; Sciolla 1999; Ferrara 1999; Garelli 1999). Despite differences, it is noteworthy that these reasons were generally articulated around the notions of social integration and political union. Additionally, they implied that long-established Italian problems, such as

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particularism and clientelism, had not been overcome. As for the type of identity required to address the country's critical situation, proposals largely mirrored the formulation of the national problem. Specifically, since outright nationalism had been on the wane for decades, there was a search for constitutional, republican, liberal and civic national alternatives, especially on the part of intellectuals. These views, albeit different, suggested that a healthy democracy somehow depended on the civicness of its citizens (also described as civic culture, spirit, virtue, capital), which, in turn, required some degree of identification with the nation. For instance, Rusconi (1993)—who, according to Diamanti (1999), was responsible for triggering this debate—frames the issue in Habermasian terms, referring to the German philosopher's notion of "constitutional patriotism". In practical terms, Rusconi (1993) advocated for a patriotism based on the democratic constitution.

Due to these and subsequent occurrences, notably immigration from third-country nationals, narratives based on a civic conception of the nation have continued to get sponsors, both in the academic world and in the political sphere (on the later, see Antonsich 2016). These narratives have informed modes of thinking about Italy and the "Other", especially given the country's increasingly plural social body. By then, Italy had already become a country of immigration and this fact would become ever more important in the Italian politics of identity. For one thing, religious pluralization, an important theme in contemporary debates and this thesis, is primarily a consequence of immigration, even if secularization too played a role in altering the religious landscape (Pace 2007). Moreover, as mentioned, the Church assumed a new public stance in the mid-1990s, retreating from official party politics and choosing, first, to maintain its public engagement neutral and, second, to work directly on matters of its interest, particularly those related to societal values, ways of life, and identity politics (Donovan 2003; Pollard 2008; Ozzano and Giorgi 2015).

In this pluralizing public space, political actors, intellectuals, and state authorities have had to think of social integration and political unity in terms that go beyond concerns with Italy's "weak" and "unaccomplished" nation. Specifically, in the face of growing numbers of foreigners, they have been forced to devise paradigms and policies to govern new types of diversity, including religious

diversity. Needless to say, the grounds of political unity are even harder to establish in this new, more intricate context. While political actors have demonstrated some reluctance to address these issues in a serious and systematic way, the Church has restored its political power and social standing by adopting a "Cultural Project" (CEI 1997).[38] Such power and standing are well illustrated by the fact that over the past decade or so, Italians have expressed more confidence in the Church than in the institutions of the state (Diamanti 2003; 2014). According to Diamanti (2014, 5), "there is only one figure that today enjoys great credit. Pope Francis". The political protagonism of the Church, together with a general mistrust in public institutions, have contributed to reviving arguments that, if anything, Catholicism brings Italians together (Pollard 2008; Garelli 2011).

Intellectual Diagnosis: Weak Nation and Missing Civil Religion

The rediscovery of the national question in Italy has occurred in an intricate context, marked not only by a deep institutional and ideological crisis, but also by transformations in the country's social fabric, notably immigration. Consequently, a new phase in the Italian politics of identity has been inaugurated, a phase in which social actors mobilize old national themes in new ways with a view to restoring predictability and order to the political field. As mentioned in the previous subsection, civic and republican conceptions of the nation have become particularly relevant in this new phase, with both politicians and intellectuals identifying some sort of "civic lack" as the main problem of Italy. Intellectuals, in particular, have been authentic civic patriots: they have defended the unity of the country, especially against the secessionist threats of the LN; they have tried to pinpoint the origins of Italian political and social problems, including its weak and troubled national character; and they have proposed a number of ways of ensuring that Italy lives up to its potential, devising, for example, ideas and programs aimed to regenerate the character of their compatriots. In

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[38] On the Cultural Project of the Italian Catholic Church, see Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (CEI). 1997. "Cultural Project". http://www.progettoculturale.it/.

doing so, these actors have made frequent use of nation and "civil religion", insinuating that at the heart of Italy's problems lies the difficult relationship between nation, state, citizenship, and Catholicism. In what follows, this intellectual account is presented, focusing on the concept of civil religion, which recalls much of what has been recently discussed concerning national identity and civicness in the country. Of course, the accounts of such members of the political elite are not representative of the whole politics of identity at play in the country. Still, they are helpful in identifying those themes and elements that are important to grasp contemporary struggles over, and modes of thinking about, Italy, the state, the nation, the Italian identity, and otherness.

Over the past three decades, several Italian scholars have adopted the concept of "civil *religion*" to discuss the challenges the country has faced in forging social integration and political unity. The concept does fit well into the public debate, since many political actors have emphasized the nexus between national belonging and civic virtue in working democracies. In fact, civil religion appears to have been preferred by Italian interlocutors precisely because it brings together the emotional and procedural elements of this nexus—belonging and civicness.

Coined in the eighteenth century, "civil religion" gained renewed academic relevance in the late 1960s with the work of Bellah (2005), who discussed the sacralization of politics in the United States. Over the past decades, many scholars have criticized, responded to, and built upon, Bellah's (2005) original essay. These academic endeavors have led to conceptual refinements and to the development of new analytical categories (Gentile 2005). Academic debates aside, broadly speaking, "civil religion" may be said to designate those beliefs, values, symbols, and myths which underpin and reinforce political unity by ensuring that citizens identify with the community or country to which they belong. In other words, this religion serves to nurture that bond of citizenship, which—having an emotional, cultural, and civic import—is considered indispensable for the endurance and functioning of a state, particularly liberal democracies. As such, civil religion may be thought of as the factor of legitimation of a community, as well as an instrument of civic education, both of which contribute to social integration and political unity (Sciolla 1999; Gentile 2005; Sullivan 2010).

When it comes to the Italian debate on national identity, many intellectuals have resorted to the concept of civil religion in search for that missing common identity and shared sense of civicness in the country. Interestingly, many of these discussions have either been triggered by, or at least dealt with the enduring cultural and political influence of Catholicism, especially following controversies over the public display of religious symbols. These intellectual arguments, moreover, reveal a normative position that draws upon both political liberalism and a lose form of republican constitutionalism, which had in fact inspired the Risorgimento and First Republic. Therefore, the civic conception of the country referred to above resurfaces in these debates (Antonsich 2016).

To comprehend the discursive deployment of civil religion in these debates, it is important to clarify how Italian interlocutors understand the nexus between nation, belonging, and citizenship in a liberal democracy, and the relationships of these terms to the ideas of "real" religion and civil religion. The following chapter specifies how, from a legal and institutional viewpoint, the Italian state has understood this nexus, while this section focuses on more dynamic perspectives, put forth by intellectuals and other political actors, particularly the Church, over the past years. Although the foregoing contains systematic references to liberal and civic conceptions, Italian actors do not provide one, single and homogeneous response to the question of how the nexus between nation-citizenship-democracy should be understood. Still, it is interesting to look at these responses from a more general viewpoint, in that their civic leanings have informed broader public and political debates on the national question, thereby providing some insight into Italian approaches to social diversity.

When discussing the foundations of liberal and democratic political systems, Zagrebelsky (2007) and Rusconi (1999) refer to Böckenförde (2006, 68) and his dictum, "the liberal secular state lives on premises that it cannot itself guarantee". In doing so, these authors re-propose a theme that has been at the heart of recent discussions about the nation in Italy, that is: under the uncertain and plural circumstances of secular modernity, can contemporary states dispense with that sense of belonging once instigated by religion, and survive only on an abstract "love for freedom"? Furthermore, what, beyond the procedural rule of the liberal and secular state, is to bring modern

social bodies together? And what is to legitimize its rule? Thus formulated, these questions start to reveal, first, why Italians have so often deployed the concept of civil religion to discuss the nation-citizenship-democracy nexus, and second, why religion and the Catholic Church have become particularly relevant in debates over the national question.

In regard to the first point, although many Italian scholars have suggested that the national identity is fragile, they have not reached agreement on whether an abstract "love for freedom" or a "patriotism of the constitution" are enough to guarantee the proper functioning of the state. Notwithstanding disagreement, many of these scholars resort to the concept of civil religion to approach the question, suggesting that political communities do require *some* underlying foundation, which is to serve as a "cement" or a bond fostering inclusion and integration.

Nevertheless, when it comes to specifying the contents of this foundation, the views put forward by Italian scholars diverge significantly. Whereas Rusconi (1999, 236) speaks of civil religion as a bundle of "metapolitical values" which in Italy took on Catholic-liberal contours, and S. Ferrari (2010) argues that Catholicism provides a "nucleus of values" that in Italy functions as a civil religion, A. Ferrari (2009a) contends that the country lacks a real civil religion precisely because Catholicism has assumed the role of a civic credo. Drawing more extensively on Bellah (2005), Garelli (1999) identifies five different, yet ineffective, civil religions in Italy, namely, liberalism, Catholicism, Socialism, activism, and finally, a pre-Christian religion. Ferrara (1999, 217), in turn, disagrees with such characterization; according to him, Bellah's (2005) civil religions were no more than political cultures, in that they missed a dimension that is essential in civil religions, that is, an idealized projection of "we", the community.

Despite disagreement, it is interesting to observe that the concept of civil religion, as used in Italian intellectual discussions, begins to reveal an answer to Böckenförde's (2006) dictum, in that it denotes the importance of establishing a bond of citizenship that rests on both legal and identitarian bases. As assumed by S. Ferrari (2010), "in the long run, a citizenship based only on the cold exchange of rights and obligations is not viable; something more, capable of warming the hearts of citizens, is

required". In this context, civil religion seems to be, or to provide that "something more", which links citizenship and nation, civicness and belonging, thereby allowing for the formation of a cohesive social fabric in support of liberal democracy.

Furthermore, in Italian discussions, civil religion often assumes a normative character: not only does it refer to an idealized projection of those elements said to bring citizens together (Ferrara 1999), but it also serves as a basis for projects of "character regeneration" and "civic pedagogy", that is, projects that aim to rectify Italy's alleged problems and negative traits. In this regard, it is interesting to note that "real" religion, notably Catholicism, is variously identified as either one of the problems or one of the positive peculiarities of civil religion in Italy. A. Ferrari (2009a, 843), for example, argues that as long as the religion of the majority binds Italy together, it cannot possess a true civil religion, which should consist in a "'patriotism' founded on a common bond of citizenship based on common institutions". Consequently, he holds that the Italian state is devoid of a pluralist imagination and, thus, of a universal approach to the governance of social and religious diversity.

The arguments raised by A. Ferrari (2009a), notably his concerns about the inability of Catholic Italy to build a pluralist society and institutional system, are better understood considering the history of the formation of modern sovereign states, which has involved secularization and, thus, the progressive demarcation of the secular and religious spheres. In fact, Böckenförde's (2006) dictum refers to the problem of legitimization of secular political authorities, which unlike political communities of the past, can no longer rely on a common religious faith, such as Catholicism. Thus, while secularization has guaranteed social peace and individual freedom, it is unclear whether the resulting liberal ideals and values are "warm" enough to ensure social integration and political unity.

From the foregoing, it is possible to understand why Italy's Catholic unity is considered problematic, or at least worrisome, by those discussing political identification and civil religion in the country: although the religion of the majority may favor integration and unity in specific cases, it neither generates a civic sense of responsibility towards the political community, nor favors universal inclusion and equality. For example, as discussed in the next chapter, the differentiation in the legal

status of religious groups in Italy may be considered a symptom of the inability of Catholic Italy to build institutions that are truly pluralistic and accommodating (Ventura 2005).

To be sure, not all Italian intellectuals agree with A. Ferrari's (2009a) assessment. As seen, many consider that Catholicism in Italy assumes and performs the role of a civil religion, however peculiar and problematic this may be. More recently, the argument that contemporary Europe is post-secular—again, a condition involving the public resurgence of religion and the critique of the myth of secularism—has opened new lines of defense of Catholicism as a civil religion. Based on a post-secular reasoning, it may be contented not only that the normative and moral import of religions may indeed provide resources that help political communities to survive, but also that a pure, neutral civil religion is unattainable, in that the secular–religious division is socially and politically constructed.

These overlapping concepts and discussions reveal the renewed importance of social integration and political unity in Italy following the 1990s state crisis and the intensification of migratory flows. They also demonstrate that Italian actors continue to revive themes and recreate vocabularies of the past, particularly nationalist, civic, and republican ones. While this section has focused primarily on intellectual accounts, it should be remarked once again that other actors have participated in this politics of identity, including politicians, policy-makers, state institutions, and the Catholic Church. Moreover, these debates have evolved as responses to real-world occurrences.

Unity and Difference in Italy: Cultural Catholicism and Immigrant Others

While politicians, political parties, and state institutions have struggled to reestablish the legitimacy of their public roles and functions in the turbulent 1990s, the Catholic Church was quick in reasserting its social standing and recovering its political power, with the result that it has become one of the few institutions Italians still deem trustworthy (Diamanti 2003; 2014). As discussed, by assuming an independent position when the party system disintegrated, the Church safeguarded itself from an unstable and unpredictable political game, which led the DC to break down in a number of

weak political pieces. Nevertheless, neutrality by no means meant political disengagement, as ecclesiastical authorities have made abundantly clear over the past decades. On the contrary, the Church has taken advantage of its self-standing position to intervene in the affairs of the Italian state and society whenever it considers appropriate, including in debates concerning national unity, war and peace, immigration and cultural diversity, bio-ethics, and civil rights.

What is interesting about these religious interventions in secular debates is that most of them have regarded important, sensitive, and timely cultural subjects, which help to define the identity of a nation and the character of a political community. For example, by providing input on ethical matters, such as medically assisted procreation, the Church has advocated for a particular view of Italy, the moral foundations of which would be indistinguishable from those of the Catholic religion (although religious positions are admittedly more variegated than suggested here). Thus, as observed by Ozzano and Giorgi (2015), the Church has been very much engaged in those public controversies that politicians, scholars and journalists have approached through the concepts of "cultural wars" and "clash of civilizations". Although these metaphorical frameworks do not depict the situation on the ground accurately, they do contribute to stressing that ideological conflict has characterized the Italian social and political landscape, and that this conflict has ultimately been about giving sense to "Italy" in a new, dynamic, and plural reality. In this context, the Church has taken on the role of public protagonist in the country motivated by the belief that modernity "is lacking in substantial values and that Christian ideas and experience contain and offer many resources of meaning capable of helping to develop an elevated idea of human co-existence" (Garelli 2007b, 34).

The foregoing indicates that the Church has continued to be an important player in the Italian politics of identity. However, as Diamanti (2003) maintains, the "Catholic question" must be understood in a different light currently: it no longer refers to the close ties between the Church and governing parties, but to the ability of the Church to advance its own political agenda and interests, and to gather social support for its public interventions. Surprisingly, such public vitality comes in a moment of crisis for the majority religion, since the number of regularly practicing Catholics in Italy

has been suffering progressive downturns. Moreover, like the political apparatus of the state, the Italian society has become increasingly secular over the past few decades (Pace 2003). In view of this paradoxical outlook, Diamanti (2003) suggests that the Church has kept its public standing notwithstanding secularization because Italy lacks a proper secular culture, capable of supporting the political community and its rule—an argument which concurs with the "civil religion" discussion.

Diamanti's (2003) point rings even louder if the latest reports on the relationship between Italians and the state are taken into consideration (Diamanti 2014). In this particular report, it is possible to discern a pervasive lack of trust in state institutions and in the future, a widespread suspicion towards political parties and, more generally, democratic politics, and a long-standing perception of living in times of crisis—economic, fiscal, and political. Together, these figures indicate that Italians have been generally disoriented, frustrated, and tired (Diamanti 2014). Despite this pessimistic outlook, the Church and the Pope seem to remain largely shielded from criticism, having retained high levels of public trust even as the political and socioeconomic situation of the country deteriorated. Thus, the Church continues to be a major force and a legitimating presence in Italy (Pollard 2008). Overall, these findings seem to support the idea that the Church is the "sole Italian institution with a strong foundation and popular substance" (Galli della Loggia 1998, 50).

Currently, Italians do appear to share a special relationship with Catholicism, even those who do not consider themselves to be particular faithful or do not conform with religious precepts. Scholars studying religion in Italy point out that secularization in the country has been marked by several peculiarities, not least the reluctance of Italians to abandon their ambivalent Catholic identity (Garelli 2007a; 2007b). Although not a phenomenon directly associated with the institutional Church, the endurance of this religiously-based identity suggests the emergence of a cultural type of Catholicism, which indicates that Italians are still somehow attached to the country's majority religion, even as society becomes more free, hedonistic, materialistic, and diverse.

In this regard, Garelli (2007a, 2) talks about a "diffuse Catholic sensibility that seems to withstand the test of time and the challenges of religious pluralism". Although Catholicism in Italy is

currently lived in new, ambiguous, and even contradictory ways, this "diffuse Catholic sensibility" influences the country's self-image, as well as the ways in which ethnic and religious pluralism is approached (Garelli 2007a; 2007b; Pace 2007). According to Pace (2007, 89), Catholicism affords Italians common points of reference, in the form of a "patrimony of shared values", especially in the face of otherness (notably represented by Muslims, immigrants, and the Roma and Sinti populations). Therefore, although Italians conceive their relationship to Catholicism in a multitude of ways—not always in conformity with the wishes and guidance of the Holy See—, the majority religion continues to represent a source of national unity (Pace 2003; 2007).

These findings have lent support to the theses that Catholicism brings Italians together, sustains the national identity, and functions as a civil religion. Like in the past, the Church has not been the sole champion of these theses: similar arguments have recently been used by state actors and politicians to advance their preferred views of "Italy" (Garelli 2007b). Italians themselves claim to be Catholics by culture. Further, they use this identity in ways that are not only religious and cultural, but also political. By relying on a loose, yet homogeneous Catholic affiliation, Italians fashion discourses and practices about unity and diversity, which bring about both inclusive and exclusive implications for others. As discussed in the final chapter, in portraying Italy as homogeneous in religious terms, they may exclude—wittingly or not—religious minorities from a political community that is liberal, secular, and democratic. In virtue of the pluralization of the social fabric, especially the increasing presence of Islam, the tendency to resort to religion and religious heritage to delineate a shared national identity has been gaining force in Italy (Pace 2003; Guolo 2003; Allievi 2012). This tendency is worrisome, insofar as it may generate and reinforce exclusionary discourses and practices, notably against ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities in the country.

In respect to immigrants and, more generally, minorities, it should be noted that they have long been featured in the Italian politics of identity and difference as both the same and the other. They have been equated to, and differentiated from, Italian emigrants; their cultural and linguistic heritages have been celebrated and accommodated, as well as commodified and discarded; they have

been divided into "good" and "bad", into humans and *clandestini*, and into "persons" and "non-persons" (Dal Lago 2009); they have been considered at times poor and underdeveloped, and at other times, criminals, rapists, and "parasites", who should be either incarcerated or sent back home; and more recently, war elsewhere has transformed them not only into asylum seekers and refugees, but also into terrorists and fanatics, who pose threats to Italy and Europe, to their ways of life and liberal democracies (Triandafyllidou, 2000; ter Wal 2002; Dal Lago 2009; Allievi 2012; M. Colombo 2013).

From these multifaceted in-group–outgroup representations, it becomes clear that the self-examination promoted by the encounter with cultural and religious pluralism has led to social and political constructions of the Italian self and otherness that go beyond the construction of Catholicism as a common national culture. Besides identity and culture, different discursive frames have been used by citizens and political actors to justify practices and policies of immigrant inclusion and exclusion, such as the legality, the public order, and the economic scarcity frames (Dal Lago 2009; Ambrosini and Caneva 2012; Ozzano and Giorgi 2015). Still, it is important to stress Italy's "diffuse Catholic sensibility" (Garelli 2007a) and the lasting influence of the Church, in that religion is becoming an increasingly important criterion of identity and difference, in both Italy and Europe.

In other words, while religion is but one of the ways of constructing unity and difference, it has become a crucial way of so doing all over the world in the past decades, notably due to the public resurgence of religion. Needless to say, in Europe, the prominence of religion is closely related to the visibility of Islam, particularly following religiously motivated terrorist attacks in the West. In Italy, even though Muslims represent a small percentage of the population, Islam has been depicted primarily as a problem that divides the country, especially for requiring Italians to confront long-standing challenges concerning national cohesion and political unity (Guolo 2003). As a consequence, Muslims have slowly been constructed as the "Other" par excellence of Italians, with the result that Catholicism and Christianity, understood as factors of cultural identification, have gained new advocates, such as the LN, an initially neopagan party (Guolo 2011). Therefore, in

discussing pluralization, Italian political actors frequently focus on Islam and fail to truly address and "digest" the ongoing process of social and religious diversification (Allievi 2005a, 5).

However, the "Islamisation of immigration" and of otherness is not an indisputable, hegemonic position within the Italian political sphere (Guolo 2003; Allievi 2005a, 3). Like immigration and social diversity, Islam is also regarded a divisive matter because social, political, and institutional actors take different stances toward it. Whereas exponents of the LN have contributed to vilify Muslims, members of the left-wing and the Church have been more welcoming of religious diversity, and have, thereby, helped to unsettle some of social and symbolic boundaries that exclude Muslims.

Providing the complete configuration of the Italian political field, of course, is a complex endeavor, which exceeds the objectives of this chapter. It concerns what has been previously identified as the "situational context" in which discursive practices emerge. The following chapters include relevant elements of this context. What should be retained from the present discussion is that in the current era of cultural and religious pluralism, the political contest over Italy seems to have intensified, and to have grown more complex, with new and old actors, subjects, and challenges interacting in the political sphere in unpredictable ways. The confusing and insufficient evolution of legal and institutional responses to social and religious diversity in Italy, discussed in the next chapter, might be a manifestation of such complexity.

Chapter II: Governing Diversity in Italy: The State and its Institutional Apparatus

The previous chapter has presented sociopolitical processes that have contributed to defining and problematizing the Italian political community since the Liberal Revolution, including meanings and practices according to which the notions of nation, state, religion, and otherness have been conceived. In doing so, it has spoken to the importance of context in the analysis of discourse, notably societal context. While the latter is important to grasp contemporary ideological contests, it does not provide the analyst with information about the situational and institutional contexts in which these contests occur. When it comes to examining discourses about religion and social diversity, it is also necessary to understand the legal and institutional frameworks in which these discourses are embedded, as well as the categories these frameworks produce and the practices they enable. Building on the CDA approach, this chapter presents the institutional context in which discourses about the nation, state, religion, and otherness have been produced in Italy since the late 1980s.

As previous chapters have indicated, political discourses are typically situated in specific institutional and organizational environments, such as the Church, the parliament, and academic institutions. These environments condition the structure of utterances and texts, and the access of different groups to socially valued resources, such as status and knowledge. In this light, besides constituting formal arrangements, institutions may be thought of as middle-range social structures, which contribute to framing relationships of power, domination, and discrimination in a society. In what follows, social institutions are approached as important middle-range structures that mediate between the sociopolitical configuration of a society and the situational context in which agents and groups carry out their lives. In terms of CDA's multidimensional view of context, this means that this chapter introduces institutional elements of the broader sociopolitical, as well as localized situational contexts, and discusses institutional roles, procedures, and knowledge, which contribute to understanding how social agents produce and interpret discourses (Fairclough 1992; Wodak 2001).

To do so, the chapter examines the legal and institutional frameworks the Italian state has devised since the late 1980s to manage social diversification and religious pluralization. Since religious minorities and immigrants have been considered the main drivers of these processes of change, the chapter focuses on those categories, policies, laws, etc., Italy has developed to govern these groups. Additionally, it identifies the institutional actors, roles, and procedures working in each of these fields of governance. In doing so, it takes seriously Faist's (2009) contention that diversity is the making of social agents. Accordingly, it argues that, in trying to govern religious and immigrant-driven diversity, the Italian state has partaken in processes of social construction of diversity.

This view is consonant with the constructivist tradition of thought presented in the second chapter of Part I. As seen, categorization is an important means of boundary-making in modern nation-states; it helps states to reduce social complexity and allows them to create identities by which they can "keep track of their political subjects" (Starr 1992; Verdery 1994, 37; Wimmer 2008). Moreover, as critical discourse analysts note, categorization comes with real consequences to individuals and groups, in terms of rights, social prestige, political power, and economic rewards (Jenkins 2008, 106).

States' classification schemes and underlying ideologies are typically inscribed in legal and institutional structures. Kastoryano (2002) demonstrates that social policies, official statistics, and institutional dynamics, for example, allow states to delineate the identities of social groups and to set the boundaries of political communities (although bottom-up demands from individuals and groups may also influence these processes). Thus, through their complex and extensive institutional apparatuses, states contribute to conceptualizing diversity. Furthermore, it is based on such conceptualization that states frame the challenges that emanate from contemporary "drives to pluralization" (Connolly 1995), and devise corresponding governing approaches and policy solutions. This understanding is compatible with the notion of secularism introduced in this thesis, according to which secularism is a philosophical, institutional, and an ideological ideal and mode of governance of diversity, which cannot be depoliticized once and for all (Agrama 2010; Starrett 2010).

Like institution, the notion of state is not limited to discrete administrative offices, organizational bodies, and the like. What is typically designated as "the state" is an extensive and intricate apparatus, which takes several forms, material and non-material, formal and informal (Però 2013). In fact, Kastoryano (2002, 5, italics mine) contends that the state is "an *institutional reality* that...has its own internal logic, born of history and nourished by ideology, acting directly on civil society and shaping its political life". According to social constructivism, this "institutional reality" is made up of formal and informal norms and rules, including laws and policies, and underlying modes of thinking and acting, which inform the ways the state handles society, including social diversity and demands for integration. Of course, the consequences of states' attempts to govern society are far from homogeneous—they depend on many factors, ranging from macro-historical representations of the political community to the micropolitics of bureaucratic settings.

This theoretical recap explains why this chapter refers to both the institutional and situational contexts of interaction, that is: the latter is substantially shaped by the former. The concepts of "immigration" and "religion" illustrate this point. In the absence of institutionalized definitions, it would be impossible to collect data on these phenomena, to frame them as either social problems or resources, and to propose legislation to deal with their implications. Moreover, the state informs the ordinary lives of citizens, interactions between bureaucrats, and exchanges amongst politicians. It does so by providing these actors not only with overarching ideologies, collective myths, and commonsense knowledge, as partly seen in the previous chapter, but also with relational and subjective meanings concerning their specific roles, positions, identities, resources, and social value within each of the structures that compose society.

This chapter is divided in two main sections. Complementing the sociohistorical context, the first section outlines the general context in which Italian arrangements for the governance of social and religious diversity have developed. In describing drives to pluralization in the country over the past three decades, the section emphasizes ways in which the Italian state has categorized and classified immigrants and religions, and demonstrates how these groups have overlapped in some

cases. Moreover, it shows that official categories and statistics do not merely enumerate members of groups; they also help to create sameness and to enumerate otherness, as exemplified by the seemingly administrative term *extracomunitari*. The second section of the chapter discusses the legal and institutional frameworks developed by the Italian state to deal with religion and immigration. Furthermore, it provides insights into the consequences of these frameworks to the groups affected by them. For example, minority religions may fall on different legal categories, which bring about important implications regarding their rights and voices in society. Immigrants are not all the same either, a fact that brings about both inclusive and exclusionary consequences.

Diversity in figures: Enumerating Otherness

This section describes the context in which the Italian institutional framework to govern social and religious diversity has developed over the past 30 years. Although the previous chapter has discussed Italy and its challenges in the early 1990s, it has not devoted much space to an important phenomenon of the time—immigration. To be sure, the demise of deep-seated ideologies and the disintegration of domestic power structures revived the debate on the national question. Still, immigration and the consequent social and religious pluralization of society have contributed to maintaining this question alive, as both a public concern and a subject of debate. Since Italians faced difficulties in conceptualizing their own identity even before foreigners arrived in the country, it may be said that immigration has compounded the challenge of defining Italy. The presence of immigrants raises questions about Italy, social integration, and political unity, in addition to requiring politicians and policy-makers to devise innovative ways of maintaining a strong social bond, able to ensure the smooth functioning of liberal and democratic institutions. Further, in the age of religious resurgence and international terrorism, the increasing pluralization of religious voices in Catholic Italy makes these issues even more pressing (Triandafyllidou 1999; Grillo 2002; Allievi 2005b; Dal Lago 2009).

These questions and concerns reflect the wider material, institutional, and ideational contexts in which immigration, social diversification, and religious pluralization have taken place. This is because, as argued above, diversity is not a naturally given fact, but a social construction, which cannot be disentangled from the ways in which social actors and groups conceptualize themselves and others. Notably, social diversity cannot be disentangled from the ways state actors conceive and handle it. The following two subsections contextualize immigration and religious pluralization in Italy and demonstrate not only how official categories have helped to delineate otherness in the country, but also how immigrant and religious categories have come to intersect in complex and problematic ways. The first subsection deals specifically with immigration and cultural diversity. The second one focuses on religion and on the emergence of religious diversity in the country.

Immigration in Italy

Italians have long been acquainted with the benefits and plights of domestic and international migratory journeys: not only did they leave in large numbers to the Americas and Northern Europe, but many of them have also moved internally in search of work (Del Boca and Venturini 2003). Furthermore, contrary to current understandings, foreign settlement has been a reality in the territory of the state since unification. As Colombo and Sciortino (2004a) observe, Italy has been a part of several migratory systems, which have included figures as diverse as refugees, merchants, workers, nobles, and students. Although these first immigrant groups represented a negligible percentage of the population, their presence in the country influenced urban centers, and led to the development of specific immigration policies (Colombo and Sciortino 2004a; 2004b).

Notwithstanding its early history, immigration in Italy is said to have begun in the early 1970s, when an important statistical turning point was reached: originally a sending state, Italy became a host of international migrants in 1973 (Del Boca and Venturini 2003; Choate 2007). This bare statistical fact had a huge impact on the way international movements of people are approached in

the country. Over time, the 1973 turning point has acquired symbolic import, coming to convey the idea that migration patterns in Italy may be divided in two phases, the historical phase of Italian emigration and the current phase of foreign immigration (Colombo and Sciortino 2004a). Since the first emigration phase has influenced ideational and institutional developments in the field of immigration, it is worth considering some of its aspects before discussing the current phase.

Between 1876 and 1976, approximately 26 million Italians left the country, permanently or not, in search of better lives overseas and in other European countries. Scholars identify economic hardship and the foreign demand for labor as the main reasons for such a considerable migratory wave (Del Boca and Venturini 2003). As far as integration in host societies goes, scholars demonstrate that in countries such as the USA, Italians faced the same challenges migrants face currently in Italy, including discrimination and exploitation (see, for example, Foner 2005).

Particularly relevant to the present discussion, however, is the evolving role of the state in controlling these population movements, especially the institutional means developed to influence the Italian population abroad. Following failed attempts to hamper departures, the Italian state radically transformed its approach to mass emigration in the beginning of the twentieth century. Conceptualizing the phenomenon as both a challenge and an opportunity, it sought to regulate the overall experience of emigration, in an attempt not only to protect and aid Italians abroad, but also to reap benefits from their choices, notably remittances and international prestige (Del Boca and Venturini 2003; Choate 2007).

Nevertheless, to do so, the state had first to define mass emigration. Or, in the terms of the discussion presented in this thesis, it had to mobilize its institutional apparatus to understand and handle the phenomenon. To this end, statistics and social sciences came in handy. By investing in the collection, analysis, and distribution of data regarding emigration, the Italian state not only improved its knowledge basis, but also developed "a flexible migration theory, collapsing the traditional categories of emigrant, exile, and expatriate into a single group of "Italians abroad" (*italiani all'estero*), located in emigrant "colonies" (*colonie*) settled around the world" (Choate 2007, 736).

Thereby, Italy actively engaged in identity politics beyond its borders, using its categorization powers to establish the notion of "Greater Italy", which encompassed Italian citizens, as well as their descendants and all of those who were culturally and linguistically Italians.

In practice, the cultural involvement of the state in countries hosting Italian communities took several forms, including the promotion of cultural festivals, holidays, and language instruction. Since most host states did not accept direct foreign intervention, Italy relied on a network of state-sponsored institutional proxies to nurture Italianness abroad, such as banks, Chambers of Commerce and religious charities (Choate 2007). The subsequent development of legal, institutional, and ideational frameworks in the country has borne the marks of this cultural approach to the migratory phenomenon and the nation. In this regard, it suffices to remark that the notion of "Greater Italy" does not seem to have lost its mythical appeal: it has informed the 1948 Constitution, as well as the 1992 Act of nationality, both of which rely upon co-ethnic principles that replicate the Romantic notion of nationality promoted by the Liberal state during the height of mass emigration. In fact, Italian descendants abroad still enjoy voting rights, even when they have no connection to Italy (Arena et al 2006). Further, categories such as "Italians abroad" and "Greater Italy" have had lasting ideational influence: they have contributed to building an Italian self that is at the same time widely inclusive (for its geographical reach) and rigorously exclusive (due to its ethnic basis).

These categories indicate that the migration experience remains somehow inscribed in Italian history, institutions, self-representations, and cultural products. Schuster (2005) argues that emigration has become an essential part of the Italian national identity and mythology. The myths of "productive return" and "the other Italy" (*l'altra Italia*)—which together convey the ideas that the descendants of emigrants remain culturally Italians, and will return to, and enrich their homeland— exemplify how emigration has impinged on the national imaginary (Zincone 2006). Making a different but related point, Maher (1994) identifies in the Italian public discourse a number of stereotypes derived from the period of mass emigration and other traumatic collective experiences, such as colonialism and Fascism. Likewise, ter Wal (2000) shows that Italian politicians still mobilize

and use the history of emigration to put forward their ideas in Parliament. These contentions may also be understood in reference to domestic migratory waves, which occurred between the 1950s and mid-1970s, mainly from the *Mezzogiorno* to Northern regions. Internal migration brought the North-South divide to the ordinary lives of citizens and resulted in the creation exclusionary discursive categories that are currently re-elaborated and used in reference to foreigners (Maher 1994; Mai 2002).

Although migration is a process familiar to Italians, the year of 1973 now signals a historical break point which, more than the change in the migratory balance, seems to indicate that past and present population movements should not be approached equally. In turning emigration (or rather, an idealized depiction of it) into a part of their history, Italians have built narratives of economic necessity, external labor demand, hard work, and social integration. Conversely, the current phase of immigration to Italy has been depicted in negative terms, which allude to war and poverty, even though scholars identify several similarities between past and present international movements of people (ter Wal 2000; Reyneri 2003; Colombo and Sciortino 2004a; Choate 2007). Thus, while the country seems to have internalized emigration as a constituent part of its history, immigration has been denied a place in Italian self-representations. Notably, while the past (and present) departures of Italians have been described as "economic migration", more recent arrivals have been portrayed primarily as "migrations of the poor and destitute, governed by push factors such as war, famine and poverty" (Colombo and Sciortino 2004a, 49). There has been, accordingly, much concern about "the poor immigrants" of the Third World" invading Italy. (Dal Lago 2009, 11).

Despite the prevalence of this description, the contemporary immigration phase is more complex than this fearful "vision of pauperism" suggests. Over the past four decades, Italy has been a part of a plurality of migratory systems and, therefore, it has not been possible to talk about one immigration to the country. Rather, Italy has experienced *immigrations*, which have resulted from a confluence of factors, and have varied significantly over time (Cvajner and Sciortino 2009). In fact, the profile of Italian immigration has changed dramatically in the past four decades, in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The numbers alone are impressive. Whereas in 1991, there were

approximately 356,000 foreign residents in the country, this figure had more than tripled by 2001, when 1,300,000 foreigners were registered in Italy. The pace of increase did not slow down thereafter: in 2015, the number of migrants surpassed the 5,000,000 mark, with the result that immigrants now account for more than 8% of the overall Italian population (Istat 2016).

It should be remarked, moreover, that these figures do not include irregular foreigners, the number of which has been substantially high in Italy, particularly due to visa overstay. The majority of those who came to the country without proper documents were attracted by, and found work in, Italy's large underground economy; only subsequently did many of the current foreign residents benefit from regularization schemes (Reyneri 2003; 2007; Fasani 2009). Zincone (2006) identifies the high proportion of undocumented foreigners as a feature of the migration process in Italy. Similarly, Schuster (2005) observes that status mobility has been a part of the personal trajectories of a large proportion of the immigrant population in Italy. Together, these observations indicate that immigration policies have had an important impact over the dynamics and characteristics of foreign entries and settlement in Italy, as further discussed later in this chapter.

In geographical terms, most migrants have settled down in the Central and Northern regions of the country, where opportunities for social and economic integration are better. Notwithstanding the common features presented thus far, in qualitative terms, Italian immigration has been a variable and heterogeneous phenomenon. Although the top 10 nationalities' share of total immigration has increased over time (indicating that the composition by nationality of the foreign population is less fragmented now than in the past), the immigrant population has remained rather diverse (Perlmutter 2014). Foreigners have arrived from a wide range of places, and for many different reasons. Contradicting theoretical expectations, the composition of migratory influxes has changed considerably over time, with North Africa being replaced by Eastern Europe as the main sending region in less than 15 years (Reyneri 2007; Cvajner and Sciortino 2009). To be sure, these changes are related to both domestic and international developments, including economic and geopolitical vicissitudes, as well as political decisions in Italy, Europe, and third countries. Therefore, it appears

necessary to look back into the brief history of Italian immigration to better understand its dynamics, characteristics, and particularities. As with emigration, it is the role of the Italian state in governing, and thus, shaping the migratory phenomenon that is most relevant for the analysis here.

Different explanations are found in the literature for the 1973 migratory shift, including explanations that challenge the significance of this turning point (Colombo and Sciortino 2004a; Einaudi 2007). Still, most authors relate the onset of immigration to Southern Europe and, by implication, to Italy, to the closure of borders in traditional destination countries, notably Germany, France, and Britain. The decision of Northern European countries to halt immigration in the mid-1970s is said to have caused a diversion of migrant populations from the so-called "Third World" to new receiving countries, such as Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal (Triandafyllidou 1999; Zincone 2006; Colombo 2013). In other words, in these narratives, Italy appears to have represented no more than a "fallback" choice to those willing to try their luck abroad (Colombo and Sciortino 2004a). Moreover, as mentioned, Italian political actors have frequently stressed push factors alone, thereby suggesting that economic and political problems in sending countries have been responsible for the bulk of immigration to the country. Nevertheless, the heterogeneity of the foreign population in Italy, together with the continuity and growth of immigration, indicate that such exclusive emphasis on push factors is at best a partial explanation for a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon.

Although pull factors vary according to the national group concerned, Italian immigration has been primarily of an economic type: it has responded to an objective need for manpower in the country. In this respect, Sciortino and Colombo (2004a) argue that the role of labor demand in Italian *immigrations* has not been as marginal as conventionally claimed, and demonstrate that even before 1973, immigrants came to Italy in search of work. Therefore, despite the reluctance of Italians to openly recognize it, there has been a constant demand for foreign labor in the country, especially in virtue of the Italian economic growth and demographic decline. As mentioned, an additional pull factor has been Italy's large underground economy and segmented labor marker, which have contributed to attracting undocumented workers even as the government adopted increasingly

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restrictive immigration stances throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (Reyneri 2007; Einaudi 2007). The foregoing indicates that domestic pull factors have contributed to shifting the Italian migratory balance, and have continued to feed different migratory systems, thereby leading to the intensification of immigration, especially from the 1990s onwards.

The emphasis on push factors seems to help Italians to portray immigration as a foreign phenomenon—as opposed to a structural feature of the Italian society. In fact, the increasing presence of foreigners in Italy was not immediately understood as a permanent and important social occurrence, neither by the state nor by the media and the citizenry. Instead, the migratory phenomenon slowly became socially and politically significant: it only reached salience in the public debate in the mid-1980s, when it began to generate "a great deal of self questioning" and, thus, to call for a redefinition of the national identity (Triandafyllidou 1999; Grillo 2002, 8; Sciortino and Colombo 2004b; Dal Lago 2009).

Although foreign "Others" had previously helped Italians to forge their self-representations (as *brava gente* or backward, for example), Sciortino and Colombo (2004b, 97) contend that the contemporary public narrative on immigration derives from "the progressive codification of a distinction among different types of foreigners, the gradual distinction between 'foreigner' and 'immigrant', and the establishment of relations between these conceptual oppositions and the distinctions applicable to the Italian population". The formation of a public discourse on immigration has been a slow, unstable, and complex social process. The emergence of such a unified narrative depended on the reestablishment of prevailing social and symbolic boundaries, which allowed for the categorization and hierarchization of the immigrant and native populations, and thus, the articulation of self-other representations (Dal Lago 2009).

Since Italy has been internally divided into North and South, and has been a part of a plurality of migratory systems, the self-other distinctions that informed the public discourse on immigration could hardly replicate the standard national-foreigner formula. In the same way that Southern Italians were considered fundamentally different from their Northern co-nationals, so were Moroccans from

European immigrants. Hence, as Pratt (2002) reasons, to understand Italian immigration and its social consequences, neither the host society nor immigrants may be treated as monolithic and immutable groups. Rather, they must be seen as multiple, complex, and fractured—characteristics which interact in a myriad of ways, thereby producing modes of thinking and acting that are more or less inclusive of both national and immigrant groups. In these processes, identities may be superimposed, history may be forgotten and re-written, categories may acquire new meanings, and hierarchies of belonging may be destroyed and re-created (Maher 1998; Triandafyllidou 1999; Hanretty and Hermanin 2010).

The Italian state, of course, has played a pivotal role in these processes of identity redefinition. In enacting legislation to handle immigration and immigrants, it has not only defined, but also altered the dynamic and features of the migratory phenomenon. While the section on immigration policies elaborates on this matter, the remainder of this section introduces the impingement of state activity on the Italian public and political debate, and therefore, on the prevailing ways in which immigration and foreigners have been approached in the country.

As a "total social fact", immigration brings about consequences that cut across several levels of analysis, ranging from the micro-context of interaction among citizens and foreigners (Maritano 2002), passing by the middle-range state bureaucracy (Salih 2002; Quassoli 2013), to the macro-context of the media and wider sociopolitical processes (Mai 2002; Sciortino and Colombo 2004b; Dal Lago 2009; Palidda 2009, 357). Despite such pervasive influence, the presence of foreigners does not become automatically a subject of public concern and debate; as suggested, it is progressively articulated as such over time, in specific sociohistorical contexts (Triandafyllidou 2000; Sciortino and Colombo 2004b). In Italy, the presence of foreigners did not generate a unified public narrative on immigration until the 1980s, though a few such narratives—both positive and negative—circulated in the country's public sphere earlier. Immigration only became a fully-fledged public issue in the late 1980s, when it was politicized and discursively constructed as an important national problem. Although several political actors, including the media and pro-immigrant lobbies, have partaken in this discursive transformation, Sciortino and Colombo (2004b) observe that immigration was only

launched as a major area of social and political conflict in the country following its incorporation into the official agenda of the state in 1986, year of the first immigration legislation (Zincone 2006).

It is worth recalling that these were turbulent times in Italy: macro ideologies and political forces had collapsed, the national sentiment had been challenged (and rediscovered), and globalization had gained momentum. In this unstable context, migrants represented "an ideal public enemy", especially since the process of defining otherness helped to reassure the Italian self, however troubled the latter may be (Dal Lago 2009, 17). Nevertheless, like in the rest of Europe, the construction of otherness in Italy could not be founded upon overt forms of racism. Accordingly, this process took on more subtle forms, replicating themes often heard elsewhere, such as the protection of native jobs and the national way of life (ter Wal 2000; Colombo 2013).

The Italian case is particularly interesting in this respect in virtue of the supposedly neutral, bureaucratic, and technical language used to construct sameness and difference. After the mid-1980s, the public discourse on immigration in Italy has been pervaded by legal, political, and legislative terminologies, notably *extracomunitario* (national of a non-EU state) and *clandestino* (foreigner whose legal status is irregular), as well as by "scientific" and statistical analyses of the migratory phenomenon (Sciortino and Colombo 2004b; Dal Lago 2009). From this vocabulary and framing, it is possible to observe the pivotal role of the state in governing and conceptualizing immigration.

Since the state contributes to defining immigration as a national problem and immigrants as "an-Other", it is important to briefly discuss the evolving Italian governance approach to immigration, especially its main guidelines or themes. Two main themes have informed the Italian political debate on immigration from the outset, that is, public order and border control. These themes, moreover, were translated into a law and order management approach, which has been frequently driven by emergencies. Concerning border control, from the mid-1980s onwards, politicians and policy-makers have supported the sealing of external borders, emphasizing the growing presence of undocumented immigrants in the Italian territory. However, they have often overlooked that this phenomenon reflects conditions internal to the country itself, including inadequate legislative responses to the

demand of foreign labor (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009). Regarding the former theme, public order, statistics of immigrant crime and deviance have interacted with anecdotes on evictions, expulsions, clashes with the police, and more recently, terrorism, making of immigration a security matter, to be handled by the police apparatus (Palidda 2009). The development of this approach culminated in the adoption of the so-called "Security Package" in 2009-2010, which openly frames immigration as the main security problem of the new millennium.

This approach does not apply to all foreign groups in the country. EU citizens, for example, have been legally and symbolically separated from other national groups, which have been broken down in additional categories (Sciortino and Colombo 2004b; Dal Lago 2009; Colombo 2013). In categorizing and dividing immigrants, in compiling statistics on different immigrant groups, and in forging and condoning terms such as "clandestine", "illegal", "irregular", and "undocumented", the Italian state has contributed not only to constructing immigration as a social threat and an urgent security problem, but also to relegating the economic and human dimensions of this phenomenon to the political sidelines. As in the case of emigration, the labels and frames created and/or promoted by the state have contributed to the emergence of a "science of immigration", which has mimicked public fears and reinforced stereotypes, while failing to gear the political and legislative attention to actual immigration challenges (Dal Lago 2009). Consequently, the demand for foreign workers in the country has rarely been properly addressed, as have matters pertaining to the issue of governance of diversity, such as immigrant integration. Instead, the restrictionist discursive and legislative stances of the state have helped to generate public narratives that divide and classify migrants, primarily into three groups: foreigners, most of whom are Western citizens; "good" immigrants, i.e., foreign *workers* whose administrative status is regular; and "bad" immigrants, who are often irregular, and by "logical" implication, illegal, deviant, criminal, and terrorist. Meanwhile, public and political debates had largely ignored other important legal categories, such as that of refugees, which became central in the 2010s (ter Wal 2000; Sciortino and Colombo 2004b; Dal Lago 2009).

Other terms, such as *marocchino* and *albanese*, have pervaded the Italian public discourse on immigration as well, often propagated by the media and vocal political actors. They reinforce the prevailing negative image of immigrants in Italy. As argued by Colombo (2013, 168), "a negative representation of migrants has been persistently fostered in political and media discourses, where they have been indexed into categories aimed at legitimising their exclusion on all social, economic, and political levels". Hanretty and Hermanim (2010) also demonstrate that these all-encompassing categories tend to depersonalize immigrants, contributing to reifying the groups they create, and to naturalizing these groups' alleged traits and behaviors. The consequences of such stigmatizing language are discriminating and exclusionary, since these groups are portrayed as dangerous and destitute "Others", such as criminals and terrorists, who must be controlled or eliminated.

In sum, since the early 1990s, the politicization of immigration in Italy has been accompanied by a public discourse that has been frequently prohibitionist and criminalizing, and in some cases, openly xenophobic and discriminating. The state has provided many of the labels and frames used in such negative representations. Of course, political actors have adopted a wide range of positions, which are introduced with the discussion on immigrant legislation.

Catholicism and Religious Diversity

Any discussion about religious diversity relies on tacit assumptions regarding the definition of religion and the best ways to collect information on religious meanings and realities. As Introvigne and Zoccatelli (2013) argue, documenting religious diversity is a challenging and inherently political task, even more so considering that identity and difference are social constructions. While numbers alone may seem of limited informative value in this light, they contribute to revealing how religions and the faithful are identified and delineated by different actors, including the secular state. Moreover, the ways in which the wider public relates, and reacts to dominant religious identities, categories, and statistics may provide some insight into the self-conceptions of the society under scrutiny.

As discussed, religious identities and categories have always played an important role in the self-representation of Italy as a nation and a state. Nevertheless, until recently, the official meaning of religion was more circumscribed in Italy than in other countries, since relations between spiritual realities and temporal powers were considered equivalent to relations between the Catholic Church and the secular state. In other words, for long, when talking about religion, the Italian state talked primarily about Catholicism (A. Ferrari 2009b). Thus, even though the settlement of minority religions in the Italian peninsula preceded the formation of the unitary state by centuries, Italy has not only been a predominantly Catholic country, but it has also been depicted and treated as such by observers and political actors (Campani 2008). Only recently has religious pluralism become an object of political concern and academic analysis, a fact well illustrated by the difficulties in finding comprehensive and reliable accounts of religious diversity in the country (Pace 2000). Although Catholicism has been the Italian religion par excellence, information on citizens' religiosity and its evolution has not been readily accessible either. The national census, for instance, does not include questions about religious affiliation, in that this type of information is considered "sensible data" (A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari 2010; Cipriani and Roldán 2015).[39]

Still, mobilized at different times by politicians, intellectuals, and the clergy, Catholicism has represented both the self and the other in Italy's brief history as a unified polity. Currently, the majority religion is primarily an element of national unity, though this understanding depends on, for example, the conceptualization of religion and culture one adopts. In any event, when given the chance to declare their affiliation, most Italians claim to be Catholics (Garelli 2007; 2011). Therefore, even though Catholicism is currently lived in ambiguous and contradictory ways, sociologists continue to observe a diffuse "Catholic sensibility" in the country, which influences the self-image

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[39] For more information on this issue, see the Italian "Personal Data Protection Code" (Legislative Decree no. 196 of 30 June 2003), which is available at: <<http://www.garanteprivacy.it/web/guest/home/docweb/-/docweb-display/docweb/1311248>>. Notably, Art. 4 and Art. 26 stipulate, respectively, the definition of "sensible data" and the safeguards that apply to this sort of data.

of the national society as well as the ways in which ethnic and religious pluralism is approached (Garelli 2007; Pace 2007, 88). Furthermore, as seen, following the collapse of the Italian party system, the Church has managed to recover its social standing and political voice, and has become one of the few institutions Italians still deem trustworthy (Diamanti 2014).

Together, these facts are surprising for two reasons: first, the Italian state and its institutions have become progressively secular, especially since the 1980s; and second, the Italian population has distanced itself from traditional forms of religious practice and devotion, as indicated by declining levels of religious observance (Garelli 2007; 2011; Pace 2007; Introvigne and Zoccatelli 2013). In this light, the strength of Catholicism as a collective identity in the country seems to contradict institutional developments and social realities.

This persistent attachment to an ill-defined religious "sensibility" suggests that the notion of "Catholic" should not be taken for granted in discussions about social and religious diversity in Italy. Like other types of identification, Catholicism means different things to different Italian actors, and these meanings continue to change over time. In discussing the increasingly complex Italian religious landscape, Garelli (2007; 2011) uses the expression "*religione all'italiana*" (Italian-style religion) to describe the country's exceptional road to religious modernity, characterized, on the one hand, by individualization, privatization, religious freedom, and pluralism, and on the other hand, by a lasting, yet selective and loose attachment to traditional Catholic values. According to him, in the contemporary Italian context, Catholicism and its values function as a

> pool of resources to draw on in case of necessity; a reference more ideal than real, the presence of which is in and of itself reassuring...a sort of defense or renewed affirmation of our identity in an ever more multicultural Italy, especially in response to the presence on the territory of an Islam that is highly visible and emphasized by the media (Garelli 2011, 11).

The foregoing suggests that Italians acknowledge, and in some cases, openly reassert the nexus between the Catholic religion and national identity, especially in the face of social and religious

diversity. Therefore, it seems that the diffuse Catholic understanding of the nation partly functions as a reactive identity (Allievi 2005b). Furthermore, the quote indicates that many Italians resort to religious identification in ways that are secular and functionalist: not only do they conceive their Catholic affiliation in a multitude of ways, but many of them also adopt critical stances toward the institutional Church, its cultural presence, and public engagement (Pace 2007; Garelli 2011). In other words, there are a plurality of ways of being Catholic in contemporary Italy, not all of which conform with the wishes and guidance of the CEI and the Vatican. This oft ambiguous relationship between Italians and the Catholic faith is reflected in statistical disparities between religious affiliation and religious observance: while data from the Church indicate that approximately 98% of the Italian population were baptized in 2009, only 25-30% of this group are estimated to participate regularly in Sunday church activities (Introvigne and Zoccatelli 2013).

That Italians still approach Catholicism as an important facet of their national identity, notwithstanding decreasing levels of religious observance, is telling in a number of respects. For one, it indicates that the Catholic Church is still a pivotal player in the country's social and political life, even though it has officially opted for "neutrality" in politics after the disintegration of the DC (Donovan 2003). Additionally, it suggests that Catholicism may indeed function as a civic religion, as some intellectuals have argued (Rusconi 1999; S. Ferrari 2010). The lasting importance of Catholicism in Italy, however, cannot be evaluated without considering the role the state and its institutional apparatus have played in conceptualizing, delineating, and mobilizing religion and Catholicism to their secular ends, particularly when attempting to manage social diversity and to establish a well-functioning political community.

As the previous chapter argued, the notion of "Catholic political unity" is not recent. Intellectuals and social actors have begun articulating religious understandings of the Italian nation even before the Liberal Revolution (Gentile 2006). Although the Church has actively promoted this notion in the past, state actors have also had a considerable role in conceptualizing the Catholic religion as a foundation upon which Italy's collective identity and political unity could rest. Moreover,

similarly to other secular nation-states, the Italian state has contributed to defining the very ideas of "religion" and "Catholicism" in the country, particularly through ordinary policies, legal principles, and institutional apparatuses. The subsequent section of this chapter elaborates on the formal elements of this secular architecture. Here, however, it is still relevant to make two points: first, as mentioned, until recently, the notion of religion in Italy overlapped with that of Catholicism; and second, there has never been a strong, absolute wall of separation between the Church and the Italian state.

Despite historical instances of state anticlericalism, cooperation and accommodation have been central principles of Church-state relations in Italy, as illustrated by the fact that Catholicism was the official state religion until 1984. Moreover, according to A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari (2010, 432), "social cohesion has been entrusted more to certain cultural-religious influences...rather than to some notion of patriotism". Hence, Catholicism is identified once again as a foundation for citizenship and political unity in the country. This fact, however, may be attributed as much to the social engagement of the Church as to deliberate state practices. Thanks to the cultural dominance of Catholicism, the Church has managed to control socially valued resources in Italy, and thereby, has been able not only to challenge state actors, but also to guide the population in several occasions, such as in the aftermath of the Liberal Revolution. Nevertheless, as the previous chapter has clarified, the Italian state has also been able to define, mobilize, and use the moral resources and social influence of Catholicism and the Church to advance its own power, legitimacy, and authority (for example, during twentieth-century war efforts) (Pollard 2008; Gentile 2009).

Particularly noteworthy in the history of the Catholic myth of the nation is that, over time, the Italian state has defined its body politic in both opposition and correspondence to religion and Catholicism. In doing so, it has not only re-opened the religious–secular question and reasserted the boundaries of its temporal authority, but also helped to define the prevailing conception of religion, which—and here is a crucial point—has applied to the majority and minority religions in the country. It is in this sense that one may argue that the numerical and cultural dominance of Catholicism in Italy has conditioned the ways in which religious diversity has been approached and governed by

state actors. Notably, as discussed below, Church–state relations have served as a template for the treatment of "non-Catholic" communities in the country, as the prevalence of the principle of cooperation in agreements with minority religions indicates (S. Ferrari 1995).

However, only recently did religious diversity become a subject of political concern, notwithstanding the fact that Jewish and Protestant groups, among other communities of faith, have been historically present in the country (Campani 2008). Moreover, although Italy ceased to be a confessional state in 1984—thereby, inaugurating an era of "confessional pluralism"—democratic legislators have not done much subsequently to safeguard and promote the state's new legal character.[40] For example, the stipulation of *intese* (agreements) with minority religions was stalled for a long time, and that a law on religious freedom has not yet been signed (Casuscelli 2015, 63).

Immigrant-driven diversity and the emergence of "new minorities", including religious minorities, contributed to changing this situation. Notably, the transformation of Italy into a country of immigration called for a redefinition of the national identity (Triandafyllidou 1999; Allievi 2005a). Nevertheless, it took state authorities many years to acknowledge that Italy has become "a multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious country", as Sandra Sarti, former Director of the Central Directorate for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior, put forward in 2013 (Sarti 2013, 7). While national politicians and institutions have spent much energy trying to restrict immigration and to control territorial borders since the 1990s, they long neglected the social and cultural implications of foreign settlement in the country, not least because of the prevailing conceptualization of immigration and social diversity as transitory, rather than structural phenomena.

Throughout most of the 1990s, neither religious diversity as such, nor immigrant religiosity seemed to be particularly relevant political issues. Whereas historical minority religions were numerically negligible, immigrants were a too diverse group to be singled out by religious difference. Furthermore, as this chapter discusses, political actors and the media problematized and constructed

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[40] It should be remarked that the Italian Constitutional Court had been somewhat more active in the promotion of religious freedom and pluralism during those years, as discussed further below.

immigrant "others" drawing on types of difference derived from political-legislative and legal vocabularies. For example, until the late 1990s, these actors often referred to immigrants' nationality (*Marrocchino, Albanese*)*,* status illegality/irregularity (*clandestino*), and deviance/criminal behavior, but not so much to religious traits (the LN and the AN occasionally adopted a more identitarian discourse, emphasizing the cultural and religious incompatibility of a number of foreign groups with Italy) (ter Wal 2000; Colombo and Sciortino 2004b; Riva et al 2008; Colombo 2013). Religious diversity became publicly visible over time, especially after the 2000s. Like elsewhere in Europe, there has been a slow semantic shift in the conception of "otherness" in the country: it has evolved from including the "different" to encompassing the "foreigner" and the "immigrant" to, finally, to comprising the "religious" and, above all, the "Muslim" (Allievi 2005a).

Politicians and state actors have contributed to this semantic shift through inter alia discourses, policies, and institutional developments. The Italian state began to show an interest in mapping the different religions professed by those residing in its territory in the mid-1990s, when the Observatory on Religious Policies (*Osservatorio sulle Politiche Religiose*) was created under the aegis of the Center of Religious Affairs of the Italian Ministry of the Interior. The Observatory's primary purpose has been to identify, monitor, and analyze religious groups "different from Catholic ones", as the website of the Ministry of the Interior puts it (Ministero dell'Interno, Dipartimento per le Libertà Civili e l'Immigrazione 2009; Ministero dell'Interno 2016).[41] That state authorities define minority religions by referring to their differences from the majority religion reinforces the argument that Catholicism is used as a template to govern and incorporate minority faiths. Conversely, the notion of "religious minorities" has not been traditionally a part of the Italian legal system. As discussed below, this fact has important implications for the definition and functioning of Italian secularism.

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[41] Site of the Ministero dell'Interno, Dipartimento per le Libertà Civili e l'Immigrazione. Osservatorio sulle Politiche Religiose. Available at: http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.interno.it/dipim/site/it/dipartimento/direzioni_centrali/affari_culti/ufficioi/attivitx/osservatorio_politiche_religiose/ access May 08, 2016.

Although the Observatory does not conduct a full-blown census of religious belonging, it compiles a large amount of information on local religious realities, which the prefectures (*Prefetture*) gather and transmit to the organ. By combining local reports, the ministerial organ is able to provide the state with a broad picture of the Italian religious landscape, which includes groups as diverse as the Jewish, Protestants, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists. In addition, the work carried out in the Observatory demonstrates how this landscape has evolved over time. From 1997 to 2011, for example, the organ registered a great increase in the official number of religious entities, which went from approximately 500 to nearly 3.300. These numbers contribute to confirming that religious pluralism is by now an established reality in Catholic Italy (Ministero dell'Interno 2013).

Precise national pictures, however, are more difficult to obtain. Since religion is considered "sensible data", the National Institute of Statistics, ISTAT, does not collect information on the population's religiosity. Until recently, estimates of religious affiliation and, by implication, of religious diversity came from the archives and offices of established religions, as well as from a variety of studies, conducted by academics and research institutes, sometimes in collaboration with governmental structures (Cipriani and Roldán 2015). Drawing on data from the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), Introvigne and Zoccatelli (2013) indicate that *national* minority religions currently make up nearly 3% of the Italian population, with Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Muslims being the largest non-Catholic groups in the country.

While it is challenging to obtain quantitative data on the different religions Italian citizens profess, it is even more difficult to account for the country's "new religious diversity", especially if immigrant religiosity is considered. Together with the political import of this type of data, especially in times of a worldwide "religious resurgence", the lack of precise statistical information on immigration creates further difficulties for researchers. Yet, some institutes have been reporting on the religious profile of immigrants for several years now, making it possible for both academics and state authorities to reconstruct approximate pictures of the national religious landscape.

Initially published by the Caritas Research Center on the request of ecclesiastical authorities and now published by IDOS (Study and Research Centre IDOS) on behalf of the "National Office against Racial Discrimination" (UNAR) of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Statistical Dossier on Immigration is one of the most important sources of information on the issue. According to the 2015 edition of the Dossier, there are approximately 5 million immigrants in Italy, most of which are either Christian Orthodox or Muslims. Whereas the latter two religions represent respectively 30,5% and 32,2% of all immigrants in Italy, Catholics are 18,3% of the group. Overall, then, religious diversity in Italy—that is to say, immigrant religions other than Catholicism plus Italian minority religions—amounts to more than 9% of the country's total resident population (Introvigne and Zoccatelli 2013; Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS et al 2015).

Although research institutes are constantly working to improve the methodologies used to collect data, many scholars argue that existing statistics on religious diversity remain problematic. The Dossier, for one, has been much criticized for deducing immigrants' religious affiliation from the religious profile of their countries of origin (so that a foreigner from a Muslim-majority country would be considered Muslim). This assumption is questionable for several reasons, including the internal plurality that characterizes most religions and the fact that religious affiliation and observance do not necessarily go together, as Italian Catholicism itself demonstrates (Pace 2007; Introvigne and Zoccatelli 2013; Cipriani and Roldán 2015). Recently, however, the ISTAT published a report on immigrant religiosity that relies on direct interviews with foreigners, conducted during 2011-2012 using a technique known as "Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing" or CAPI.[42] An integral part of the survey "Social condition and integration of foreigners"[43], the report "Religious Belonging and Practice among Foreign Citizens" contains information on several aspects of immigrant religiosity,

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[42] For more information, see the "Methodological Note" on ISTAT's website, which is available at: http://www.istat.it/it/files/2015/10/NotaMetodologica_Statistica-Report_Religione.pdf?title=Religione+tra+i+cittadini+stranieri+-+02%2Fott%2F2015+-+Nota+metodologica.pdf.

[43] The goal of this survey has been to "provide information on the living conditions of foreign citizens...to support immigration policies providing assistance, support and integration for the foreign population in the economic and social reality of the country" (Ministry of the Interior and ISTAT 2013, 20). For more information on the survey, see: http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/10825.

such as religious practice, education, and importance in life. The report, moreover, reveals figures that differ slightly from the ones presented above. For instance, when it comes to the proportion of foreigners by religious affiliation, the percentage of Christian Orthodox, i.e., 27% of the interviewees, surpasses that of Muslims, who account for 26,3% of the group. In any event, the report confirms Islam and Orthodox Christianity as the two largest non-Catholic communities in Italy (ISTAT 2015).

Beyond specific numbers, the fact that a whole section of the survey's questionnaire dealt with religion is per se intriguing, in that ISTAT does not typically collect data on religious affiliation in national censuses.[44] However, the institute's new focus on religiosity is not an isolated event. Since the mid-1990s, but especially from the 2000s, the Italian state has begun to take more interest in religion. With a view to grasping and governing an increasingly complex religious landscape—both domestically and internationally—it has created inter alia: the aforementioned Observatory on Religious Policies; new religious-oriented commissions within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers; consultative councils to manage relations with Islam; *ad hoc* initiatives to promote inter-religious dialogue, such as the 2014 "Inter-religious Round Table for Integration"; and a foreign policy agenda aimed to protect and promote religious freedom abroad (Annicchino 2013; Allievi 2014). Moreover, governmental offices such as UNAR and the Presidency of the Council's Institutional Studies and Relations Office (*Ufficio Studi e Rapporti Istituzionali*) have been working in collaboration with independent research institutes, such as IDOS and the Observatory of Religious Freedom and Institutions (*Osservatorio delle libertà ed istituzioni religiose,* OLIR), to improve existing knowledge on the religious reality of the country (Cipriani and Roldán 2015).

This demand by the state to identify and understand religious diversity appears to be directly connected to immigrant-driven diversification, as well as to the need to promote social cohesion and integration. For instance, in its website, the Central Directorate for Religious Affairs of the Ministry

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[44] A copy of the questionnaire on which the survey "Social condition and integration of foreigners" was based may be downloaded at: http://www.istat.it/it/files/2011/02/quest_condizione-sociale-stranieri_2011-12.pdf?title=Condizione+e+integrazione+cittadini+stranieri+-+17%2Ffeb%2F2014+-+Questionario.pdf.

of the Interior acknowledges that its subdivision on "non-Catholic religions" (*culti acattolici*) is becoming "progressively important in close correlation with increasing migration flows, which involve the development of new religiosity" (Central Directorate for Religious Affairs 2016).[45] However, such "development" is not always seen in a positive light. For example, in a ministerial memorandum of the Observatory on Religious Policies to the prefectures, it is argued that "religions diverse from the Catholic one" are often "religions that emanate from cultures profoundly diverse from ours...that instill their beliefs into lifestyles that sometimes conflict with those we are used to, and for this reason, create mistrust, cause dissent, rendering any type of desired integration more difficult" (Ministero dell'Interno, Dipartimento per le Libertà Civili e l'Immigrazione 2009, 01-02).

So articulated, this narrative raises two main issues. First, it seems that religious diversity is first and foremost a consequence of immigration and, as such, a phenomenon external to the Italian homogeneous Catholic reality—notwithstanding the historical presence of minority religions in the country. Second, the narrative presents cultural and religious diversity as a potentially problematic and disruptive social element. It is possible to find this negative reading in other governmental publications, which also associate Italy's "new religious diversity" with social conflict and disintegration, such as the Vademecum on "Religions, Dialogue, Integration" (Ministero dell'Interno 2013), the Institutional Studies and Relations Office's report "The Exercise of Religious Freedom in Italy" (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Ufficio Studi e Rapporti Istituzionali 2013), and UNAR's (2014) report on religious discrimination.

This is not to say that the Italian state does not recognize historical minority religions, or that it denies that cultural and religious difference may bring about positive social developments. In effect, in some cases, the above-said bodies emphasize the importance of making positive multicultural and inter-religious experiences known to the wider public, especially to promote further dialogue and integration (Ministero dell'Interno, Dipartimento per le Libertà Civili e l'Immigrazione 2009;

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[45] See more at: http://www.interno.gov.it/it/ministero/dipartimenti/dipartimento-liberta-civili-e-limmigrazione/direzione-centrale-affari-dei-culti.

Ministero dell'Interno 2013; UNAR 2014). Nevertheless, while conceding to these facts, state institutions do not rely on them to describe contemporary social circumstances and ensuing troubles. Rather, in the narrative structures of the documents mentioned previously, there is a tendency not only to attribute the current "multi-religious" character of Italy to immigration, but also to identify and/or reconstruct some contemporary social problems, such as discrimination and disintegration, as consequences of immigrant-driven pluralization. Notably, the documents identify a potentially disruptive nexus between religious pluralism and social integration, a nexus said to threaten the social fabric unless the state reacts actively. That is, the state is called to govern religious differences, lest the democratic political community is endangered. In particular, it is to guarantee the development of a "good" type of pluralism, characterized by dialogue, "peace, tolerance and harmony" — "the founding values of every faith" (UNAR 2014, 36)—and prevent the emergence of "bad pluralism", which leads to ghettoisation, separation, and distruction (Naso 2013, 42).

It is interesting to remark that this view resonates with public discourses in Italy, although the latter have frequently been characterized by approaches and vocabularies more extreme and exclusionary than the ones used in the documents referred to above. As in the institutional sphere, Italy's "new pluralism" has brought the issue of religious diversity back into the wider public debate. However, since the "Black September of Islam" in the year 2000, this debate has concentrated on Islam, Muslim and Arab populations (Allievi 2014). During that month, different political actors had taken vocal anti-Muslim public positions, including exponents of the LN, Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, Archbishop of Bologna, and Giovanni Sartori, a well-known political scientist. These positions were later strengthened by international terrorism, as well as by Oriana Fallaci's series of publications against Islam (Allievi 2014). These events contributed to setting the unfavorable context in which the public debate over immigration, cultural and religious diversity, and Islam would evolve in subsequent years. Notably, they have informed public controversies over the social and political role of religion, as well as the evolution of political and legislative debates on immigration and social diversity. Thus, in Italian public discourses, too, religious diversity, particularly Islam, has been

depicted as a foreign and potentially threatening element—"an-Other" against which the body politic may define itself. Like in the case of immigration, the state has contributed to this negative "othering" of religious diversity, not least by accentuating, problematizing, and exceptionalizing immigrant religiosity.

Citizenship, and Immigration and Immigrant Policies

The state has played an important role in managing, as well as in conceptualizing immigration and social diversity in Italy. This section elaborates on this role by providing an overview of policy developments in the field of immigration. Thus, it introduces parts of the institutional context relevant to the analysis carried out in this thesis, in addition to touching upon its consequences for the Italian politics of identity. Since immigration regulation requires more than border control, the following discussion also refers to immigrant policies, such as those providing for the integration of newcomers, and nationality laws, which regard, for instance, citizenship acquisition. Furthermore, the section outlines the heterogeneous positions of "symbolic elites" in respect to immigration and social diversity, notably those of political parties. These positions are important for, in articulating them, members of elites "formulate and effectively spread public opinion about immigration and immigrants" (Van Dijk 2000, 16). In the Italian case, moreover, the evolution of immigration policies can hardly be disentangled from party politics (Perlmutter 2014). As Zincone (2006) observes, immigration has been a controversial issue, which has often divided governing coalitions.

As discussed, immigration became a politicized issue in the mid-1980s, when the presence of foreigners was a minor, yet established reality in the Southern European country. Until then, foreign entry and residence had been largely unregulated[46], and consequently, prospective migrant workers benefited not only from a visa-free regime, but also from a considerable underground economy, in

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[46] Up until the mid-1980s, outdated laws going back to Fascist times regulated immigration in Italy. Moreover, ad hoc measures, such as ministerial memorandum, were issued from time to time to deal with particular issues, such as the abuse of domestic workers (Eiunaudi 2007; Zincone 2011; Perlmutter 2014).

which it was possible to find informal occupation. In this period, moreover, there were no specific provisions to social integration, whereas the issues of nationality and citizenship were discussed only insofar as they concerned Italians abroad. This lax situation did not last long. In 1986, the Italian state put in place a first attempt at regulating migratory inflows—Act n. 943/1986—with the purposes of managing new arrivals, regularizing undocumented foreigners, and safeguarding Italian jobs. It was in the 1980s that the state started to make sense of migratory inflows, with the Interior Ministry publishing its first comprehensive statistical study of the phenomenon, and politicians beginning to articulate narratives concerning its traits, causes, and implications. Back then, immigrants were primarily treated as foreign workers (Einaudi 2007; Zincone 2011). Moreover, in this period, terms such as "*extracomunitari*" and "*clandestino*" made their first official appearances in governmental bills and political discourses, which manifested signs of the contemporary solidaristic and repressive approaches to immigration.[47] The first pro-immigrant associations, volunteer groups, and social alliances also begun to take shape in those years (Zincone 2006; Einaudi 2007).

Although Act n. 943/1986 succeeded in legalizing the status of many undocumented workers, notably through the first mass regularization scheme, its provisions were deemed partial, inadequate, and complex. Additionally, they lacked institutional and financial backing (Eiunaudi 2007; Perlmutter 2014). Notably, even though the law briefly mentioned integration measures, it did not allocate funds to ensure their creation and operation.[48] These difficulties were compounded by domestic and international circumstances, which included the fall of the Iron Curtain, instability in neighboring states, pressures related to Italy's admission to the Schengen zone, and the outset of an internal crisis, which would destabilize the whole political system and lead to the rise of new forces, notably outspoken extreme right-wing parties. Furthermore, as immigrants became more visible in

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[47] For example, in 1982, the Minister of Labor and Social Security, Di Giese, presented bill n. 82/1912, entitled "Disciplina dell'occupazione in Italia di lavoratori extracomunitari".

[48] Article 9 of the law reads: "In order to encourage the integration of immigrant workers and their families in the Italian communities, the regions are to promote special language, and Italian culture, courses. Regions are also to favor the participation of non-EU workers in training, and job placement, courses" (Republic of Italy, Act n.943, December 30 1986. *Collocamento di Lavoratori. Norme in materia di collocamento e di trattamento dei lavoratori extracomunitari immigrati e contro le immigrazioni clandestine*).

public spaces, cases of xenophobic and racial violence started to make the news, adding social tension to the picture. In this scenario, the theme of foreign work, which had hitherto helped to frame the debate, was slowly replaced by border control and public order, indicating the emergence of a security-oriented rationale in the management of immigration (Einaudi 2007; Garau 2015).

Act n. 39/90, better known as Martelli Law, was an attempt to respond to social and political pressures originating in many levels, ranging from the European Commission to local realities. Like other initiatives on the issue, legislative efforts followed an emergency logic, and focused on the planning of annual immigrant inflows—the implementation of which fell short of the letter of the law—as well as on control measures, such as visa requirements and deportation procedures (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009; Zincone 2011). Despite efforts to reduce inflows, the law reflected the solidaristic approach contained in the original bill drafted by then under-secretary of the Interior, Martelli. For example, it provided for a new regularization, the requirements of which were less strict than those imposed by the 1986 one. Additionally, it reaffirmed immigrants' social rights, referring specifically to "social and economic interventions" to promote "the socio-cultural integration (*l'inserimento*) of foreigners".[49] Nevertheless, again, problems related to funding, administrative resources, and the implementation of specific dispositions made many regulative functions of the law null in practice. For instance, informal hiring continued to be a more viable option compared the formal alternative, whereas carrying out expulsions of foreigners remained a burdensome and difficult task (Zincone and Caponio 2005; Einaudi 2007; Finotelli and Sciortino 2009; Perlmutter 2014).

In the early 1990s, new waves of migrants, including refugees and foreigners in both regular and irregular situations, arrived in Italy, many of them escaping political instability elsewhere, especially in Albania. This situation launched a new round of legislative reform in Italy. However, before revising immigration policies, the Italian Parliament enacted in a new nationality legislation,

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[49] Republic of Italy, Act n. 39, Article 3, February 28, 1990. *Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 30 dicembre 1989, n. 416, recante norme urgenti in materia di asilo politico, di ingresso e soggiorno dei cittadini extracomunitari e di regolarizzazione dei cittadini extracomunitari ed apolidi gia' presenti nel territorio dello Stato. Disposizioni in materia di asilo.*

which surprisingly addressed neither immigration nor the increasingly diverse social reality of the country. Instead, Law n. 91/1992 was entirely based on a co-ethnic conception of the nation, and accordingly, reasserted *jus sanguinis* as the main criterion for the citizenship acquisition in Italy. In practice, reliance on this criterion meant that Italian expatriates and their descendants, as well as foreigners of Italian origin, received preferential treatment when it came to naturalization, nationality retention and re-acquisition. In fact, whereas the residence requirement for the naturalization of immigrants increased from 5 to 10 years— "a great leap backwards", according to Zincone (2011, 256)—, foreigners living abroad with at least one Italian grandparent have been entitled to full citizenship (Arena et al 2006; Zincone 2011).

This provision was a delayed action that replicated old national myths, such as those of "Greater Italy" and "productive return" (Arena et al 2006; Zincone 2011). Still, the 1992 law is telling in terms of Italy's self-conception: it suggests that until then political actors had been either reluctant to, or faced difficulties in, recognizing the new reality of the body politic, characterized by increasing immigrant presence and social diversification. This reading resonates with the troubled political context of the time, in which rising unemployment, the reshuffling of political forces, and the re-discovery of the national question made persistent inflows of migrants a reality difficult to grasp and accept. However, as domestic politics acquired clearer contours and immigration became important in the electoral competition, political actors began to articulate stronger ideological stances on the issue, even if only at the rhetoric level (Colombo 2013; Garau 2015).

As a result, from the 1990s onwards, it is possible to discern better-defined discursive positions on immigration, even if the political field has continued to change. These positions have, in many cases, reflected traditional cleavages between right- and left-wing forces. Together with Catholic parties, center-left coalitions have adopted a humanitarian, inclusive, and multicultural stance, emphasizing the promotion of civil rights and social integration, and the recognition of ethno-cultural difference—not without paternalism and condescension (Però 2005; Colombo 2013). Over time, however, such inclusive and solidaristic stance has been counterbalanced by a more repressive

one, mainly in response to popular fears and European demands (Einaudi 2007). Center-right coalitions, in turn, have been more ambiguous towards the migratory phenomenon. On the one hand, they have espoused increasingly exclusionary stances, which focus on restricting entry to Italy, combating all forms of illegality, and preventing the permanent settlement of immigrant communities. On the other hand, however, moderate right-wing parties have refrained from supporting outright anti-immigration stances, not least due to business interests in foreign workers (Bigot and Fella 2008; Geddes 2008; Colombo 2013).

Therefore, even though moderate parties in the Right have been tempted by the electoral success of the LN, they have been only partly influenced by its ideological commitments, founded upon ethnopluralism. LN's anti-immigration discourse has been premised on the image of immigrants as threats: not only are the latter said to steal native jobs, exploit welfare services, and engage in criminal activities, but they are also considered intrinsically incompatible with the Italian, European, and Western cultural traditions, especially if Muslim. According to this narrative, the cultural background of immigrants, however valuable in and of itself, cannot possibly be reconciled with that of Western societies; thus, it is best if immigrants are kept out of Italy (Colombo 2013; Richardson and Colombo 2013). As seen, this *identitarian* position has been increasingly articulated in civil terms, suggesting that social integration could only occur in the form of civilizational assimilation (Zincone 2006; Antonsich 2015).

Overall, while the left-wing coalition has held positions that are more welcoming, permissive and tolerant of immigrants, the Right has—to different degrees—portrayed immigrants as potentially threatening "Others", that is, as an out-group in contrast with "our people" (Riva et al 2008). To be sure, these discursive positions have not been stable over time, nor have the blocs articulating them been homogeneous and static. As mentioned, since the 1990s, immigration has been a particularly divisive issue and, consequently, political coalitions have been heterogeneous and fragmented. Moreover, there has been much discrepancy between politicians' rhetoric and legislative practice. Such discrepancy has resulted in policy continuity in the immigration field, regardless of the

discursive stances of the coalitions in power (Zincone 2006; Perlmutter 2014; Sciortino 2014).[50] In trying to explain continuity, authors have identified several factors upon which the management of immigration and diversity in Italy have been contingent, including the role of the EU and the judiciary, and the logic of party politics, which impels politicians to search for middle ground solutions (Zincone 2011; Perlmutter 2014; Sciortino 2014).

Overall, the management of immigration in Italy has been persistently caught between a restrictive orthodoxy and expansionist tendencies, in both policy and political discourse (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009). Whereas the labor market has demanded openness toward immigrants, public fear and anxiety, and political opportunism have often led politicians in the Right and Left to support closed-door policies, the main objective of which has been to control and, in some cases, stall immigrant inflows. Consequently, since the 1990s, political actors on both sides of the political spectrum have repeated many of the same arguments, such as the idea that immigration is an economic necessity, yet it is important to control the borders and to contrast illegality. These actors have also increasingly framed immigration as a cultural, rather than economic problem—a framing that resonates with the LN's discourse. In light of this evolution, Sciortino (2009, 11) suggests that "the defining orthodoxy of Italian immigration debate" has been "the triplet *absorbing the irregular population/making possible new legal entries/repressing new irregular entries*". From the early 1990s to the 2010s, decision-makers do not seem to have diverted much from this main direction.

Following a period of intense political debate but no legislative achievement, the Dini government approved decree no. 489 in 1995, which provided for an additional regularization and easier expulsion procedures. Like most subsequent legislation on the issue, the Dini decree was the result of bargain and compromise between opposing political forces, and as such, satisfied neither the original intents of these forces nor the practical needs of the country in terms of immigration

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[50] Però (2005) points out that such discrepancy between rhetoric and practice is also found in lower levels of analysis. In investigating the civil society in Italian provinces traditionally governed by the left-wing, he finds that the official commitments to social inclusion and multiculturalism of the latter coalition often do not find correspondence in the ordinary discourses and practices of grassroots organizations.

management. A comprehensive treatment of the subject was still missing (Einaudi 2007; Perlmutter 2014). Although its effects were limited, the decree brought about negative symbolic consequences. According to Dal Lago (2009), it helped to stigmatize immigrants as a social problem and to frame them as public enemies. Additionally, it confirmed the "closed borders" principle in immigration legislation. Although immigration was a clearly established reality in the country, social integration was not the main concern of state actors. Rather, their priority seemed to be controlling the territorial and symbolic borders of Italy—a rationale that, according to Garau (2015), is yet to be abandoned. The Dini decree was reissued a few times, but never converted into law. It was not until 1998 that the center-left government approved Italy's first systematic law on immigration, Act no. 40/1998.

This first systematic law, better known as Turco-Napolitano, not only broke with the emergency-driven approach to immigration legislation, but also departed from the piecemeal approach which had hitherto characterized policy-making in the field. Drawing on the input of academic experts and pro-immigrant organizations, this new comprehensive legislation impinged on several aspects of the migratory phenomenon, ranging from border control to immigrant integration. According to Zincone and Caponio (2005), the law was founded upon four pillars: the repression of illegal entry; the regulation and management of labor inflows; the promotion of social integration; and the recognition of individual rights of illegal immigrants.

Although the bill originally presented by Turco and Napolitano had been strongly influenced by inclusive ideas, such as the value of "open borders" and the defense of human dignity, the impingement such ideas on the final text of the law was attenuated in the phases of negotiation and deliberation, with some progressive, yet controversial provisions being put aside, such as immigrant's right to vote in local elections. Meanwhile, repressive measures, such as the strengthening of the expulsion regime, were included in the law in order to address popular anxieties, as well as to satisfy political opponents of the center-left and Italy's European partners, who were about to inaugurate the Schengen zone (Zincone 2006; Einaudi 2007).

Thus, as a result of political pragmatism and compromise, the Turco-Napolitano law was composed of progressive and repressive provisions, which sought to strike a balance between openness, integration, and control (Einaudi 2007). Regarding "control", the law reiterated and rationalized the "closed doors" mentality which had informed immigration legislation up until that moment (Dal Lago 2009). For example, some provisions hardened the path of those trying to enter Italy illegally, and made it more difficult for legal immigrants to acquire long-term residence permits. Other provisions strengthened the expulsion regime, not only through defining new types of forced expulsions, such as those motivated by public order concerns and a loose notion of socially dangerous individuals, but also through creating administrative centers of temporary stay (*Centri di Permanenza Temporanea*, CPTs), in which undocumented immigrants could be detained for a maximum of 30 days. Moreover, the text provided for the signature of readmission agreements with sending countries. As for "openness and integration", the law maintained much of that initial third-sector solidarist perspective, rooted in the acknowledgment that immigrants represented more than intermittent economic needs. Instead, they were considered whole human beings, whose lives and fates were interwoven with those of Italy and Italians. In other words, the Legislator seemed to have finally accepted immigration as a structural phenomenon in the country.

The Turco-Napolitano law was indeed a watershed for the Italian management of immigration. The law recognized the fundamental rights of regular immigrants—thereby, effectively equating them to Italians. It also provided additional and flexible channels for prospective immigrants to enter the country and created a long-term residence permit, the "residence card" (*carta di soggiorno*). Further, it granted basic rights to undocumented foreigners, notably access to health care and education, and treated the social integration of immigrants as a legitimate national concern. Finally, the law was accompanied by a large-scale regularization of irregular foreigners (Zincone and Caponio 2005; Zanrosso 2008; Dal Lago 2009; Finotelli and Sciortino 2009).

Despite these advances, the citizenship reform, initially advocated by Minister Turco, was not contemplated by the law, and neither was asylum. Furthermore, although the law referred to the

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notion of "reasonable integration" and allocated funds to ensure the local implementation of this principle through a National Fund, the chief public concerns of the time—immigrant criminality and illegal entry and stay—prevented a thorough treatment of the matter (Caponio 2013; Allievi 2014, 727). Neither the cultural nor the religious dimension of the migratory phenomenon were actual policy priorities. There was much public furor around immigration in the late 1990s, and "political entrepreneurs of fear", such as the LN, capitalized on episodes of foreign criminality and on the arrival of new "clandestine" boats from Albania, Tunisia, and Libya to advance a strong anti-immigration rhetoric, which reached new degrees of intolerance at the time (Guolo 2003; Allievi 2014, 733). It was in this period that, having vocally opposed the Turco-Napolitano law, the LN begun to consistently articulate its well-known intolerant, racist, and xenophobic stance against immigrants and Muslims, who have been portrayed as the source of all insecurity and criminality in the country (Guolo 2003; Einaudi 2007; Garau 2015).

Following the approval of the Turco-Napolitano law, the widespread perception of emergency and insecurity, together with the growing "institutional and social xenophobia", led the government to commission reports on the state of public security, which investigated inter alia the involvement of immigrants in criminal activities (Einaudi 2007; Garau 2015, 161). Such analyses were instrumentally used by right-wing actors to support the existence of a nexus between immigration and criminality, as well as the argument that foreigners were more prone than Italians to deviant behavior. During the 1999-2001 electoral period, although the demand for foreign labor was on the rise, there was much social and political suspicion towards both immigration and the idea that it represented an economic and demographic resource to the country.

Seeking to benefit from public unease, in the year 2000, the LN, the AN, and FI, Berlusconi's party, restored their right-wing alliance, advocating for a restrictive turn in the management of immigration. Notwithstanding the unprecedented strength of the regime of immigration control put in place by the Turco-Napolitano repressive framework, "the center-right managed to convey the idea that the law was too lax, and did not protect the territory from threats to security and public safety"

(Einaudi 2007, 266). In their discourses, the re-united Right replicated several ideological stances previously raised by the LN, emphasizing that the state should prevent illegal entry and stay, discourage long-term immigration to Italy—focusing instead on short-term, seasonal work policies—, and tone down talks on integration, not least because this goal was unattainable for many immigrants, especially Muslims (Einaudi 2007; Perlmutter 2014). Accused of hypocritical *buonismo* (a derogatory term that literally means "do-gooder"), the Left too shifted its solidarist political discourse to legalitarian and identitarian positions that were closer to those advocated by the Right, lest it alienated the electorate (Zincone 2006).

Following the 2001 general elections, in which the center-right coalition, *Casa delle Libertà* (CdL, House of Freedoms) obtained most seats in the Parliament, the Italian government passed Act no. 189/2002, a reform of the Turco-Napolitano framework known as Bossi-Fini law. Although the bills upon which the text of this law was based adopted a repressive approach to immigration, the law's final version was considerably more moderate than the extremist discourse of the governing coalition. Thus, it kept with the tradition of policy continuity in the field of immigration. For instance, the new law did not include the controversial crime of clandestine immigration, nor did it introduce quotes for family reunification. To be sure, it was not lax or welcoming of immigrants; on the contrary, the reform seemed to combat immigration as such, in that its provisions endeavored to curb all types of inflows to Italy, regardless of means and purposes. By shortening the length of residence permits, favoring temporary work, and making permits more strictly dependent on employment contracts, the law attempted to meet the economy's labor demand, while avoiding the permanent settlement of immigrants in the country. In fact, immigrants had to wait 6, instead of 5 years before they could apply to the "residence card". There were also substantial cuts in the funds allocated to promote integration. Notably, the law merged the National Fund for immigrant policies with a more general social fund (Colombo and Sciortino 2003; Zincone and Caponio 2005; Einaudi 2007).

According to Colombo and Sciortino (2003, 203), the Bossi-Fini legislation was "very close to factually equalizing legal presence and work". In addition to curbing long-term immigration and

settlement, the law eradicated job-seeking permits and reduced the period of acceptable unemployment from 12 to 6 months. Further, it required employers to provide immigrants with a regular work contract and accommodation, as well as to demonstrate they possessed enough resources to cover their employees' trip back home (Zincone 2011). Furthermore, since right-wing parties had long accused the Left of failing to respond effectively to illegality, the Bossi-Fini law was adamant about fighting illegal entry and stay. Accordingly, legislators resorted to particularly repressive measures, especially concerning expulsions. The law increased the maximum length of detainment in CPTs from 30 to 60 days, defined new grounds for expulsion (such as infringement of copyrights and counterfeit trade), and stipulated that undocumented foreigners could be escorted to the borders and expelled, without any hearing or right to defense.[51] Although no crime of illegal immigration had been established, some provisions of the law strengthened the nexus between irregular presence and criminality. Notably, the law created two criminal offenses—later rejected by the Constitutional Court[52]—regarding cases in which an immigrant failed to respect an expulsion order or was caught twice without proper papers (Colombo and Sciortino 2003; Zincone and Caponio 2005; Einaudi 2007). The Bossi-Fini law also established symbolically powerful measures, such as taking of immigrants' fingerprints, heavier sanctions to human traffickers and smugglers, and the admissibility of navy deployment in activities to contrast clandestine sea landings (Colombo and Sciortino 2003).

Overall, despite the repressive tone adopted by center-right politicians, the Bossi-Fini law did not bring about overwhelming changes to immigration policy, partly because the economy needed immigrants, and partly because parliamentary approval required negotiation and compromise, particularly with small Catholic parties within the governing coalition. As a consequence, the 2002 reform was accompanied by the largest mass amnesty to this day, which resulted in the regularization of nearly 650 thousand immigrants (Einaudi 2007).

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[51] In sentence no. 222/2004, the Italian Constitutional Court rejected the possibility of immediately expelling undocumented foreigners.
[52] Italian Constitutional Court sentence no. 223/2004.

Policy continuity notwithstanding, the Bossi-Fini law set the stage for further restrictive laws, which came about in 2008-2009, with the so-called "Security Package". The discriminatory messages of the Bossi-Fini law, together with the aggressive rhetoric of the center-right coalition, have contributed to altering once and for all the narrative underlying Italian immigration policy, which shifted from echoing solidarist voices in the society to reproducing exclusionary discourses that rest on public fear and security concerns. Hence, even if in practical terms the 2002 reform did not represent a drastic break with the previous legislation, it signaled the beginning of a "season of political discourse openly aimed at discouraging immigration and linking it to all the challenges Italy was facing, from pollution to crime to economic decline" (Garau 2015, 175).

The "Security Package" has corroborated this exclusionary turn, in both policy and discursive terms. In 2008, following a brief government by center-left parties, a more homogeneous and powerful right-wing coalition—*Popolo delle Libertà* or People of Freedom, PdL—came to power promising Italians "more security, more justice".[53] As this slogan suggests, the Right built its victory upon a fierce law-and-order platform, manipulating public anxieties to obtain electoral returns. In addressing citizens' right to be "free from fear", the coalition indirectly identified immigration, notably illegal immigration, as the fundamental security challenge facing the country.[54] In light of "urgent" security issues, the new government sought to approve extraordinary and promptly operative legislation. As a result, several public security measures were issued between 2008 and 2009, including a decree by law (later amended and converted into Law no. 125/2008), three legislative decrees, and a bill on public security. This last bill would become Law no. 94/2009, notable for having instituted the crime of "illegal immigration", at first punishable by imprisonment (Merlino 2009).

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[53] Original in Italian: "*Più sicurezza, più giustizia*". In: Il Popolo delle Libertà. 7 Missione per il Futuro dell'Italia. 2008. Available at: http://www.votaberlusconi.it/speciali/PROGRAMMA2008.pdf.

[54] See, for example, the speech by then Prime Minister Berlusconi on occasion of the Third Council of Ministers (Naples, 21st of May of 2008). Governo Italiano, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri. Audiovideo della Conferenza Stampa a Termine del Consiglio dei Ministri n.3, Naples, May 21st 2008.

In his first speech on the "national security emergency", Prime Minister Berlusconi[55] claimed that Italy was being called to fulfill its role as a nation-state, i.e., to guarantee security to the body of citizens. According to him, this role gave sense, and provided substance to the very idea of state, which in the discourse was associated with the notions of legality, public order, territory, and citizenship. Therefore, the right-wing coalition seemed to advance a traditional understanding of the nation-state as composed of the triad territory-people-government. Immigration, conversely, was indirectly portrayed as a threatening foreign element, which should be tightly controlled, disciplined, and when possible, excluded from the polity. In fact, although most laws and decrees of the "Security Package" referred to a general notion of public security, they reinforced in practice the repressive elements of existing immigration policies, which were indirectly altered by public order measures, instead of being subject to regular legislative procedures (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009). By resorting to extraordinary measures, such as declaring a "state of emergency" and changing the Penal Code, the Italian state conveyed the message that immigration was first and foremost a security threat, rather than a human phenomenon with economic, demographic, humanitarian, and cultural dimensions.

While Berlusconi did not establish an explicit causal relation between immigration and the national security crisis, the measures put in place by his government to address this purported crisis have revealed a tacit link between immigration and many problems of public security, such as criminality, drug trafficking, and terrorism (Saleri 2009). The very first measure issued by the center-right government—Decree by law no. 92/2008, thereafter converted into Law no. 125/2008[56]— considerably impinged upon the legal condition of foreigners, even though its declared purpose was guaranteeing the stability of the social order. Specifically, the decree rendered the expulsion of all categories of immigrants easier; altered Article 61 of the Penal Code, turning "illegal residence status" into an aggravating circumstance in criminal cases; stipulated the crime of "facilitation of clandestine

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[55] See footnote 16.
[56] Legge 125/2008. *Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 23 maggio 2008, no. 92, recante misure urgenti in materia di sicurezza pubblica*, Gazzetta Ufficiale no.153, 25th of July, 2008. http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/08125l.htm.

immigration", with a view to deterring landlords from renting out their properties to undocumented foreigners; regulated the deployment of the Army in activities to prevent criminality and other exceptional situations, including in the surveillance of CIEs; and renamed CPTs "*Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione*", that is, centers of identification and expulsion (CIEs), a symbolic change which emphasized that these centers' primary objective was expelling illegal immigrants (Merlino 2009; Naldi 2010). Furthermore, the decree expanded and strengthened the powers of local administrations in public security matters, granting mayors the competence to introduce autonomous measures to safeguard public order and urban safety in the case of security emergencies. As Ambrosini and Caneva (2012, 4) demonstrate, many of these local measures have turned into "policies of exclusion", in that they have created "institutional obstacles to the rights of several minorities (civil, social) and to their freedom of expressing their cultural and religious identity".

In 2009, Berlusconi's government passed the most substantial part of the Italian "Security Package", Law no. 94/2009, which built upon and complemented the 2008 decree by law. This new security act changed the Penal Code, the law on citizenship, as well as the Turco-Napolitano law, all without having promoted an actual reform of these legal frameworks (Naldi 2010). Its consequences to the regulation of immigration and social diversity have been widespread and negative. Like previous security measures, Law no. 94/2009 sought to restrict all types of immigration to the country, making it harder for foreigners to obtain and maintain regular residence permits. For instance, it raised the financial costs of visa applications, created new obstacles to the entry and stay of foreigners convicted for certain types of crimes, and limited the right to family reunification (allegedly to prevent polygamy). The law also strengthened the powers of mayors in the field of public security, with the excuse of granting them power to contrast potentially disruptive occurrences, including those involving immigrants. This measure has allowed mayors and the police to rely on the operation of the so-called "*ronde*", citizens' patrolling organizations that aim to identify and report threatening persons and events, particularly in socially degraded neighborhoods (Merlino 2009; Naldi 2010).

In addition, Law no. 94/2009 defined a number of stringent measures to combat illegal immigration, including the obligation of public administration and money transfer agencies to denounce undocumented foreigners (in the original bill, this obligation was extended to health care providers and educational institutions). It also increased the maximum possible length of stay in CEIs, which went from 60 to 180 days (Merlino 2009; Naldi 2010). Moreover, the legislators managed to establish a direct and explicit link between illegality and criminality. Notably, the *reato di clandestinità,* or "crime of illegal immigration", effectively criminalized foreign individuals in irregular administrative situations. Although this crime was later contested by the European Court of Justice (ECJ)[57] and modified by the Senate, its very existence suggests that a prohibitive and restrictive approach to immigration has been predominant in Italy over the past decade or so—an approach which treats immigrants as potentially dangerous outsiders. (Merlino 2009).

Notwithstanding the security purposes of Law no. 94/2009, legislators included provisions addressing immigrant integration in its final text. More specifically, Article 4-*bis* defines the notion of integration and stipulates the creation of an Integration Agreement, to be signed by most categories of non-EU citizens aspiring to obtain a residence permit in the Southern European country (Law no. 94/2009, Art. 4-*bis*). It is interesting to remark that even though the law puts forward that integration requires a "reciprocal commitment" between foreigners and Italian citizens, the Agreement and other integration requirements, such as language tests, are unilateral measures that target exclusively immigrants. The state largely neglects the other party to the aforesaid "commitment", i.e., Italians, as well as EU citizens and a few other categories of foreigners. Another problematic point is that Article 4-*bis* specifies that integration measures should be implemented without additional public expenses (Law no. 94/2009). Together, these issues beg the question of whether social integration and inclusion are in fact the rationale behind Italy's recent "civic turn".

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[57] ECJ. (2011). Causa C-61/11 PPU: Sentenza della Corte (Prima Sezione). *Domanda di pronuncia pregiudiziale proposta dalla Corte d'appello di Trento.* Procedimento penale a carico di Hassen El Dridi alias Karim Soufi. 28 aprile 2011. Available at: http://www.consiglioregionale.piemonte.it/organismi/dif_civico/dwd/2011/29.04.2011_TESTO_SENTENZA_CORTE_DI_GIUSTIZIA.pdf.

Following the approval of the "Security Package", the government has made several provisions operative through implementing regulations. Furthermore, since 2013, much political capital has been spent on a reform of the citizenship law.[58] If approved, this reform could weaken the co-ethnic principle upon which Italian nationality has been based, and thereby, reduce the gap between the fact of social pluralism and the existing citizenship framework (Locchi 2014). In fact, the revised law would provide for a moderate, yet broader application of *ius soli*, thereby promoting the inclusion of the so-called second generations. In addition, it would stipulate a new principle for citizenship acquisition, that is, *ius culturae*, according to which immigrants who have entered Italy at a young age (below 12 years old) and attended an educational program for at least 5 years would be entitled to citizenship. This legislative engagement with citizenship seems to respond both to factual needs, derived from the increasing number of permanent settlers in Italy, and to societal pressures, since large sections of the Italian public, as well as civil society organizations have been supportive of an inclusive citizenship reform. While many political actors oppose this reform, especially in the Right, it may represent an important turn in the politics of identity in Italy, since it signals a growing acceptance of immigration and social pluralism as structural features of the country. Still, as Garau (2015) notes, debates on Italianness and immigration remain worlds apart, and when they are brought together by political actors, such as in extreme right-wing discourses, this is generally to dismiss the possibility of true social integration, and to delineate a highly exclusionary Italian national identity.

In discussing immigration, this subsection has reconstructed Italian legislative decisions in this and related fields since the 1990s, in addition to having highlighted causes and implications of these developments. It has also identified the main institutional actors, roles, and procedures in the field. In this regard, the subsection has demonstrated that the government, legislators, and political parties have an important say on immigration. Still, it is important to remark that other domestic and

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[58] Senato della Repubblica. Disegno di Legge d'Iniziativa Popolare, Atto Senato n. 2092. "Modifiche alla legge 5 febbraio 1992, n. 91, e altre disposizioni in materia di cittadinanza". Available at: http://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/00940816.pdf.

international actors have played direct and indirect roles in defining the Italian approach to immigration. In this respect, the activism of Catholic lay associations and the Church are noteworthy, especially for their solidarity toward immigrants and religious "others" (Zincone 2006).

The media, too, has played an important role in the field, that that it has helped to politicize immigration and Islam, and to articulate dominant representations of, and narratives on, immigrants and religious diversity (Mai 2002; ter Wal 2002; Sciortino and Colombo 2004). In doing so, the media has relied considerably on political and institutional vocabularies and sources—a suggesting fact considering the "strong relationship between political and economic centres of power and the media" in Italy (Grassilli and Zinn 2002, 245; ter Wal 2002). Conversely, the voices of immigrants have rarely been heard in public and political debates. In this regard, Favell (2002, 239) observes that left-wing and Catholic activism has "colonized" immigrant representation in Italy, thereby obstructing the direct participation of immigrant organizations in the political domain. In any event, neither immigrant organizations nor pro-immigration coalitions seem to have been able to acquire or maintain enough power to resist the development of institutional discourses and practices that securitize and exclude Italian "others", as the approval of the "Security Package" indicates. This is because party politics still takes the upper hand when it comes to immigration management.

The Italian Secular State

This final section presents the secular architecture of the Italian state, that is, it provides an overview of the principles and institutions that have helped to define and govern religion since the mid-1980s in the country, when Italy officially became a "laic" republic. Since the history of Italian Church–state relations has been addressed previously, this section focuses exclusively on secular institutions and their underlying principles. Still, it does discuss the consequences of this legal and institutional architecture for the Italian politics of identity, in addition to touching upon the evolving position of political actors in relation to religion, ecclesiastical policy, and religious diversity.

Unlike immigration, religion has never been a depoliticized issue in Italy. For long, however, ecclesiastical law and its underlying principles referred primarily to the relationship between secular authorities and the Catholic Church, a heritage which has left a strong imprint on the current institutional architecture of the country. Yet, the contemporary outlook of the Italian secular architecture is relatively recent, dating back to the 1984 Villa Madama Agreement[59], which revised the 1929 Lateran Pacts and thus, the Concordat between the Italian state and the Vatican. Among other important modifications, such as those regarding religious education, this revised agreement abrogated the article which established Catholicism as "the sole religion of the Italian state" (Additional Protocol 1984, Art. 1). Therefore, while the new Concordat reaffirmed the long-standing principle of Church–state cooperation in ecclesiastical policy, it also launched a secular era in Italy, at least in constitutional terms (S. Ferrari 1995; Casuscelli 2015).

To be sure, in 1984, two of the founding principles of Italian ecclesiastical law had already been in place for decades, i.e., the principles of religious liberty and equality. Following the end of Fascism, the drafters of the 1948 Republican Constitution aimed to create a stronger system of religious freedom and, to this end, sought to temper the "cooperationist" approach to Church–state relations and the privileged position enjoyed by Catholicism in the country. Religious liberty, in fact, is based on article 19 of the Constitution, which grants all individuals, regardless of citizenship, the freedom to choose and manifest individually and collectively a religious conviction, as well as the freedom not to profess any such conviction. Hence, the article safeguards individual freedom in religious matters, establishing not only freedom *of*, but also freedom *from,* religion. Moreover, it sets the boundaries of this freedom, which lie in "rites...contrary to public morality" (*buon costume*)—a reference to the Criminal Code's notion of sexual decency (Constitution of the Italian Republic 1948, art. 19). Further, violations of law cannot be justified by reference religious liberty. Public order (*ordine pubblico*), conversely, is not a comparable limiting factor, although it is mentioned as such

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59 The full text of the Villa Madama Agreement is available at: http://presidenza.governo.it/USRI/confessioni/accordo_indice.html.

in article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights (S. Ferrari 1995; A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari 2010). In this light, Ventura (2005, 914) argues that article 19 manifests a broad "pro-freedom approach" in Italian ecclesiastical law.

Complementing this provision, the Republican Constitution provides for religious equality in articles 3, 8 and 20. More specifically, article 3 ensures the equality of all citizens before the law, regardless of religious convictions, thereby prohibiting discrimination based on religion. Article 8, in turn, stipulates not only that all religions are equally free before the law, but also that religions "different from the Catholic one" are free to organize themselves in accordance with their internal statutes, as long as the latter are not in conflict with the general law of the state (Constitution of the Italian Republic 1948, art. 8). Finally, article 20 protects religious associations from forms of discrimination motivated by religion. For this emphasis on religious groups, A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari (2010, 436) consider article 20 to be the "social side of Article 19".

Despite these equality provisions and the pro-freedom formulation of article 19, the practical effects of this system of religious freedom cannot be taken for granted; these effects result from the interaction of constitutional principles with other legal and political factors, notably the legal differentiation between religious groups and the social and political influence of the Catholic Church in Italy (S. Ferrari 1995; Ventura 2005; A. Ferrari 2008). Furthermore, as discussed below in reference to *laicità*, there is difference between constitutional principles, the jurisprudence of the lower courts, and the legislative and political domains (A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari 2010).

The legal differentiation of religious groups emerges from constitutional provisions, particularly from articles 7 and 8, which confirm the above-said "cooperationist" approach to Church–state relations. Article 8 refers to equality exclusively in terms of freedom, and thus, refrains from establishing absolute equality or equality of treatment between religions. In accordance with this narrower understanding of equality, article 7 confers a position of privilege to Catholicism within the Italian legal order. Specifically, it sets the legal basis for the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Italian state—two independent and sovereign entities. Therefore, ecclesiastical

authorities are considered autonomous and have sole control of the Church's internal affairs, laws and regulations. Relations between Catholic and Italian secular authorities, in turn, are guided by the "bilaterality principle", according to which the state may only regulate religions and issues pertaining to the religious sphere through a Concordat with the Catholic Church or through agreements (*intese*) with other religions (A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari 2010, 437). Accordingly, the Concordat is a mutually agreed way to deal with public matters which concern both religious and secular lives, ranging from religious education and holidays to the protection of cultural and religious heritage.

The concordatarian regime has been a model for the relation of the state with other religions, as the last paragraph of article 8 clearly demonstrates: "their relations with the state are regulated by law, based on agreements (*intese*) with their respective representatives" (Constitution of the Italian Republic 1948, art. 8). Initially, the rationale of the *intese* was similar to that of the Concordat, that is, they were "seen as a way to allow the churches to effectively contribute to the development of provisions which respect the church's identity and are appropriate to their needs" (S. Ferrari 1995, 427). Nevertheless, as mentioned, these agreements do not confer the same status and rights to minority religions as the Concordat does to the Catholic Church. For one, the latter is an international agreement, whereas the former are merely internal public law acts. Additionally, article 8 does not create an obligation for the state to proceed with the formulation of agreements—it may do so at its own discretion. This situation may open the door to discriminatory practices, as well as to the political exploitation of agreements. Finally, it is also noteworthy that article 8, paragraph 3 is only suitable to religions that organize themselves in "associations", more specifically, in "religious denominations" (*confessioni religiose*), an expression that, albeit lacking statutory definition, has been troublesome in some contexts. New religious movements and Islam, for instance, do not necessarily conform to this notion, which seems to imply the need for a cohesive, clear, and even hierarchical religious structure (Mantineo 2009; A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari 2010).

To date, only 12 non-Catholic denominations have signed agreements with the Italian state, and half of these agreements go back to the late 1980s and early 1990s—a period that preceded recent

drives to religious pluralization in the country.[60] In light of the increasing number of religious entities in Italy, the small number of agreements signed thus far begs the question of how the Italian state regulates relations with non-Catholic religions without an agreement. In such cases, constitutional provisions are indeed of no help. In the absence of the agreement instrument, the Italian state has resorted to the 1929 law on "admitted cults"[61], which provides religious entities with legal recognition and grants them some benefits, including tax privileges. In this regard, it should be specified that to enter agreement negotiations with the Italian state, a denomination must first obtain the legal capacity conferred on religious entities by this law on "admitted cults".

However, this legislation is both outdated and unsatisfactory, not least because it fails to ensure freedom, autonomy, and equality to minority religions. The very idea of "admitted cults" is problematic, in that it alludes not to liberty, but to tolerance—a conception that made more sense in 1929, when a confessional state was being instituted. In fact, the report "The Exercise of Religious Freedom in Italy", published by the Institutional Studies and Relations Office (2013, 8), acknowledges that there is a "need to overcome norms that still speak of "admitted cults" and that refer to a concept of "tolerance" that is no longer relevant today". In practical terms, "admitted cults" not only enjoy less favorable legal and political conditions in the conduct of their everyday affairs (for example, when it comes to accessing public funds for the construction of places of worship), but they are also submitted to norms that scarcely fulfill the standards of religious freedom set in place by the 1948 Constitution (A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari 2010). According to the Royal Decree n. 289/1930, issued to implement law n. 1159/1929, religions recognized as "admitted cults" may be submitted to

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[60] To date, the Italian state has concluded 12 agreements with non-Catholic religions, including the Waldensian Evangelical Church, the Assemblies of God in Italy, the Italian Union of Seventh-Day Adventist Christian Churches, the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, the Christian Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy, the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Italy, Holy Orthodox Archdiocese of Italy and Exarchate of Southern Europe, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Italy, the Italian Apostolic Church, the Italian Buddhist Union, the Italian Hindu Union, and Italian Buddhist Institute Soka Gakkai. More details on each of these agreements may be found at: http://presidenza.governo.it/USRI/confessioni/intese_indice.html.

[61] Law n. 1159/24 June 1929 "Provisions on the exercise of admitted cults in the State and the marriage celebrated before ministers of these cults". Available at: http://host.uniroma3.it/progetti/cedir/cedir/Lex-doc/It_1_24-6-29.pdf. See also Royal Decree n. 289/28 February 1930, available at: http://presidenza.governo.it/USRI/ufficio_studi/normativa/289%20del%201930.pdf.

direct governmental supervision and protection. In this respect, secular authorities are entitled to annul religious decisions, as well as to replace religious administrative bodies by a State commissioner should any administrative irregularity be identified. Furthermore, article 3 of the law stipulates that the names of religious ministers must be notified to, and approved by, the Ministry of the Interior (Law n. 1159/1929; Royal Decree n. 289/1930).[62]

Notwithstanding the problematic character of some of its provisions, the "admitted cults" legislation is unique, in that it acknowledges the religious nature of the groups requesting recognition. While religious groups that do not obtain/request state recognition in these terms may still apply for other legal statuses, these alternative statuses are available to all private associations and, thus, do not acknowledge the religious character of applicant groups. The overspecialization and selectivity of the existing ecclesiastical framework, together with the existence of these general legal statuses, end up "camouflaging" or concealing the religiosity of new minority groups (A. Ferrari 2011).

In addition to the agreement provisions and "admitted cults" regulation, religions in Italy may establish themselves as non-recognized and recognized associations (according to, respectively, articles 36-38 and articles 14-35 of the Italian Civil Code), as well as foreign legal entities (according to article 2 of the 1948 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Shipping with the United States). Each of these statuses is associated with a specific set of requirements and rights, although these rights are certainly more circumscribed than those granted to religions recognized through the agreement provisions and "admitted cults" law (S. Ferrari 1995; A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari 2010; Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Ufficio Studi e Rapporti Istituzionali 2013).

Overall, the foregoing shows that the Italian legal system is fragmented when it comes to religion and, moreover, that this situation leads to a strong legal differentiation among religious groups. Such differentiation may give rise to several problems, including discriminatory practices by

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[62] For an updated list of the religious groups that have attained recognition as "admitted cults", see: http://www.interno.gov.it/it/temi/cittadinanza-e-altri-diritti-civili/religioni-e-stato/enti-culto-diversi-dal-cattolico-dotati-personalita-giuridica.

the state (S. Ferrari 1995; Ventura 2005). For example, as mentioned, the legal system grants much discretionary power to state authorities, which may use this power improperly, as a political instrument. Furthermore, religions with "lower" statuses may be excluded from important benefits, such as public financing, religious education and pastoral care (S. Ferrari 1995). In this regard, it is noteworthy that these religions are often those professed by the immigrants.

As their "foreign" and nontraditional character indicates, these "immigrant religions" often lack the social influence and political power of long-established faiths and, in some cases, face difficulties ensuring that local and regional authorities respect their rights. For instance, following the approval of the "Security Package", many Italian mayors, especially in the North, sought to safeguard urban security "by controlling the places of worship, banning the construction of mosques, and preventing Muslims from worshipping together" (Ambrosini and Caneva 2012, 18). Regional authorities have also resisted funding the construction of places of worship and granting tax reductions to some minority religions, even though they have the right to receive these benefits (A. Ferrari 2011; A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari 2010). Beyond the critical effects of legal differentiation, the lack of an organic law on religious freedom means that the state must negotiate ordinary secular–religious issues—which could be effectively settled through uniform norms—with each individual religious community that applies for legal recognition (S. Ferrari 1995).

Since the mid-1980s, several actors have attempted to clarify and solve these problems, including the Italian Constitutional Court, the government, and the Parliament, each of which have specific institutional roles in the governance of religious diversity. The Constitutional Court has contributed to expanding the regime of religious freedom in the country, notably through sentence n. 203/1989[63], in which it referred to "*laicità*" as a supreme principle of Italian ecclesiastical law. Although the principle is not explicitly stated in the constitutional text, the Court argued that it is "one of the profiles of the form of state that is outlined in the Republican Constitution" (Italian

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[63] The full text of the sentence may be found at: http://www.giurcost.org/decisioni/1989/0203s-89.html.

Constitutional Court 1989, sentence n.203/1989, paragraph 3). Indeed, in the sentence, *laicità* appears as a corollary of the two founding principles mentioned above, i.e., religious freedom and equality (and thus, of articles 2, 3, 7, 8, 19 and 20 of the Constitution).

In delineating the principle, the Court did more than reaffirm Church–state separation and state neutrality; it also fashioned an original conception of secularism, which has been described as "open" or "positive" *laicità*.[64] According to Pin (2010, 146), this concept is characterized by "a marked openness to pluralism and to the concrete demands of civil society, which outlines a disposition to serve the needs of the religious landscape". The Court not only established the secular character of the republic, but also specified the peculiar inflection of secularism *all'italiana*, that is: it means neither that the state is indifferent toward religion nor that religion should be strictly confined to the private sphere; rather, Italian secularism should be seen as inclusive and accommodating, in that it seeks to safeguard religious freedom in a plural state (Pin 2006; Pin 2010). Accordingly, the Court recognized religious traditions and, more specifically, Catholicism, as important elements of the Italian cultural heritage—that is, as elements that have contributed to establishing a secular state.

Subsequent Court decisions have strengthened this interpretation of *laicità*, especially in 1991, when in sentence n. 13/1991, the Court reiterated that rather than opposing the secular nature of the state, religious education gave expression to the principle of *laicità*, insofar as it manifested the principle's multiple possibilities in a plural society. In this light, it may be argued that Italian open *laicità* does not correspond to that strict version of secularism devised by eighteenth-century liberal states to guide relations between, as well as to separate Church and state (Pin 2010). Thus conceived, the secular nature of the Italian state has given rise to extraordinary legal, political, and legislative situations, well-illustrated by controversies over the public display of religious symbols. Here, however, it is interesting to stress the cultural importance the Court has ascribed to religious

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[64] Italian legal scholars have interpreted the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court concerning secular–religious matters in different ways. For more information on the prevailing threads of interpretation of sentence n. 203/1989, see Pin (2006, 207-208) and Pin (2010, 144-145).

traditions, notably Catholicism, considered "the historical heritage of Italian people" (Italian Constitutional Court 1989).

There is a strong political message in this legal reading, which seems to corroborate the argument that Catholicism functions as a civil religion in Italy. That is, even though the Court evokes social and cultural pluralism in its decisions, it simultaneously contributes to reinforcing the cultural hegemony and social influence of Catholicism and the Church in Italy. This is not to say that through its sentences, the Court has hampered the social and cultural inclusion of minority religions. On the contrary, some of its decisions have helped to expand and safeguard the rights of new religious communities (Pin 2006; Pin 2010; Sicardi 2010). Yet, over the past 20 years, a narrative linking Catholicism, secularism, and the Italian identity has emerged in the country. State and political actors engaged in the Italian politics of identity, including political parties and regional administrative tribunals, have appropriated and used this narrative in ways that have not always been inclusive of "non-Catholic" groups. Notably, in delineating reactive Italian identities in the face of the "diverse", the "immigrant", the "religious", and the "Muslim", these actors have in many cases referred to Catholicism as a historical basis of *laicità*, and thereby, have used the Court's interpretations in ways that seem to betray the inclusive purposes of constitutional judges.

In this respect, a few words about the political and legislative processes concerning the governance of religion in Italy are in order. Since the early 1990s, the government and the Parliament have presented several bills on religious freedom, none of which has been approved thus far (see Annex 3). In advocating for comprehensive legislation, politicians have been motivated by the needs to: first, do away with the 1929 and 1930 laws through clarifying the constitutional status of religions that have not signed an agreement with the state; and second, set general standards for the enjoyment and exercise of religious freedom in Italy (Broglio 2014).

These issues have become even more pressing in the face of social and religious diversity. However, different matters have hampered the legislative process, including the fall of governments and disagreement as to whether a common law is in fact needed (De Gregorio 2012). Still, it is

interesting to remark some aspects of this long-term legislative debate on religion, for while it demonstrates difficulties and uncertainties surrounding the issue, it also reveals the evolving concerns and interests of governmental actors in the management of social and religious diversity.

Annex 3 demonstrates that in nearly all legislatures since the 1990, political actors have proposed bills on "religious freedom and the abrogation of the legislation concerning admitted cults". However, only once, in the XIV legislation, was the matter discussed outside of preparatory parliamentary committees, in the Parliament's assembly. Like the titles of these bills, their substance and structure have not differed much over time. In general, the first part of their texts specifies provisions on individual and collective religious freedom, the second part refers to denominations and their legal statuses, and the third part stipulates rules under which state–religion agreements may be signed. Further, political forces from both the Right and the Left have presented and supported these bills. Together with the fact that their contents overlap considerably, such bipartisan support suggests that the failure to take the proposed legislation to a vote should not be attributed to disagreements over specific provisions (De Gregorio 2012; Cipriani and Roldán 2015).

According to De Gregorio (2012), although political forces tend to recognize that abrogating the "admitted cults" legislation is necessary, there has not been widespread support for a comprehensive law on religious freedom, not least because constitutional provisions on the theme already exist. Furthermore, as the social and political context changes, so do the interests of, and pressures over, these political forces. Since the first bill on religious freedom in 1990, the Italian and international situation have changed considerably. Notably, the country has been coping with increasing immigration and social diversity, as well as with rising security concerns, related inter alia to religiously motivated terrorism. Therefore, over time, the reform of ecclesiastical legislation and the governance of religion have raised different problems and themes, which since the early 2000s have had much to do with Islam, i.e., with the feelings and fears it generates, as well as the questions

it poses (De Gregorio 2012). It is interesting to point out that the latest bills on religious freedom have dealt specifically with places of worship, a problem that in Italy is primarily related to mosques.[65]

Moreover, these recent problems and themes have also been associated with the Italian national identity and the Catholic foundations upon which this identity allegedly rests. For example, in a 2007 investigation (*indagine conoscitiva*) on religious freedom, promoted by the Commission for Constitutional Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies (January 9, 2007), several members of the Parliament expressed concern over Italy's ability to maintain its character—variously described as civil, laic, democratic, Catholic, Judeo-Christian, and family-oriented—in the face of diversity, immigration, multiculturalism, and of course, Islam.[66] Thus, it may be argued that the legislative debate on the governance of religion has replicated to some extent broader public and political debates on social diversity and immigration, and as a result, some of the aforementioned self–other categorizations. The empirical chapter discusses this issue further.

In the absence of an organic law regulating religious freedom, religious groups have depended on the institutional structure of the state to have their legal existence and rights recognized and safeguarded. The agreement instrument (*intese*) exemplifies such dependence, for denominations seeking to benefit from this constitutional provision need the assent of the Government, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the State Council, and the Parliament. Moreover, as indicated, several state administrative bodies are responsible for maintaining relations with religious groups and for implementing provisions derived from ecclesiastical principles and legislation.

The Ministry of the Interior is one of the most important governmental organs: through its Central Directorate for Religious Affairs—a subsection of the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration—the Ministry monitors the observance and safeguards the enforcement of religious

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[65] These are, first, bill no. C. 2186 on "Provisions for the implementation of the right to religious freedom in regard to places of worship", presented by the Deputy Zaccaria et al in 2009; and second, bill n. S.2738 on "Provisions on buildings used for worship by religious confessions of non-Catholic minorities and delegation of the matter to the Government", presented by the Senator Mazzatorta et al in 2011.

[66] The transcripts of this investigation are available at: http://legxv.camera.it/cartellecomuni/leg15/documenti/progettidilegge/AttivitaConoscitive_wai.asp?ns=2&pdl=134.

freedom in the country. To this end, the Directorate operates in two broad areas: whereas the first one deals specifically with the Catholic religion, an exception justified by the institution of the Concordat, as well as the "role it [Catholicism] plays in the historical and religious culture of our country", the second area is fully devoted to "non-Catholic religions", the importance of which is said to have grown considerably over the past years as a consequence of immigration and social diversification (Italian Ministry of the Interior 2016).[67] To obtain legal recognition from the state, non-Catholic religions without an agreement ought to convey their request to the Ministry of the Interior first. The ministry is also responsible for approving religious ministers, who may then carry out juridically valid acts. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind, as discussed later, that since the early 2000s, Interior Ministers have been trying to establish an exceptional governance regime to deal with Islam.

In addition to this Ministry's activities on religious matters, other ministries and central state organs have been responsible for religion in Italy, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has recently founded an "Observatory of Religious Freedom", and the Presidency of the Council, with the Institutional Studies and Relations Office, many Commissions, and the Department of Equal Opportunities. Overall, together, these and other governmental bodies make up a complex and evolving institutional structure. Despite the lack of legislative innovation, governmental actors have been trying to adapt to new domestic and international environments, notably by setting up new organs and offices, such as the observatories on religious freedom. In doing so, they contribute to changing power relations and to defining religion in Italy.

This subsection has presented the legal and institutional arrangements that regulate Church-state relations and, more broadly, religion in Italy. In doing so, it has indicated some of its consequences for different social groups. As with immigration, the subsection has also identified the main institutional actors, roles, and procedures in the field, highlighting not only the part played by the government, legislators, and political parties, but also that of the Constitutional Court. As the next

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[67] For more information on this issue, see: http://www.interno.gov.it/it/ministero/dipartimenti/dipartimento-liberta-civili-e-limmigrazione/direzione-centrale-affari-dei-culti.

chapters show, other domestic and international courts, such as local administrative courts and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), have influenced Italy's governance of religious diversity (and immigration). Now, to further understand the working and consequences of these frameworks, it is necessary to examine actual discourse practices, which is the purpose of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Unravelling Illiberal Secularism in Discourse: The Political Discourse And The Politics Of Discourse Of Italian *Laicità*

This chapter investigates the discursive enactment of ideological secularism by Italian state actors in three different, yet related contests over the governance of diversity, i.e., the Crucifix and Full-face veil controversies, and the Charter case. By analyzing concepts, texts, and discursive practices, the chapter seeks to understand how the Italian conception of open and positive *laicità*—an important form of political thinking about the governance of religious and social diversity in Italy—has been discursively transformed so as to allow for the emergence of illiberal secularism.

Over the past couple of decades, illiberal and post-secular trends have characterized Italian developments in the governance of religious and social diversity, especially when it comes to immigrant-driven diversity. In trying to regulate religious symbols and to promote social integration, state actors have put forward secular discourses and practices that have risked jeopardizing the liberal foundations of the Italian state, not least for betraying the normative structure of liberalism. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, these discourses and practices have risked infringing valuable products of liberal and secular societies, including freedom, autonomy, and political unity.

By analyzing concepts, textual features and discursive practices, this chapter endeavors to understand changes in the ideational, relational, and identity dimensions of meaning that have made such instances of illiberal secularism possible. This analysis corresponds to CDA's description and interpretation phases, and to the study of ideological secularism as a "cluster concept". The theories and contextual knowledge presented earlier in this thesis are used below as heuristic devices and interpretative resources that allow for the identification of explanatory connections between texts, discourse practices, and the wider social context.

This chapter is structured as follows. The first section introduces the cases chronologically, surveying their history and emphasizing legal and political developments, as well as the political field, composed of a myriad of actors and positions. In doing so, the section clarifies how and when

religious symbols have become subjects of contestation and their connections to wider discussions on national identity and on social and immigrant integration. Moreover, it discusses the illiberal inclinations of the discourses and practices meant to regulate, direct, and control diversity and their consequences for the country. The second section turns to the discursive landscape of the Crucifix and *Burqa* debates, describing the main positions taken by social actors in each case and identifying general themes, discourse types, genres, among other traits that may help in the discourse analysis. The third section, in fact, uses this first content analysis, as well as the contextual information presented previously, to examine the discourses of state actors from a textual and interactional viewpoint. Finally, the fourth section focuses on the conceptual networks that make up secularism as an ideological formation, with the main purpose of identifying conceptual connections and/or revisions that have contributed to the emergence of illiberal secularism.

On Symbols, Symbolic Controversies and Illiberal Tendencies in Italy

Minarets, veils, crosses, and turbans: since the 1990s, it has become increasingly common to discuss and read about religious symbols in secular Europe. Italy is no exception to this trend. Symbols of both majority and minority religious have sparked heated controversies in the country. While these controversies could be considered "silly" or "useless", the social visibility and political relevance of religious symbols suggest that they are powerful political resources, which "show and declare who counts in a community, who is in and who is out" (Annicchino 2010, 2). As seen, whether religious or not, symbols play an important part in the process of identification, in that they allow actors to redefine socially established boundaries. In fact, the constructivist perspective considers symbols human-made products that generate consensus on social meanings and contribute to uniting and dividing individuals. Albeit incomplete and polysemic—like other social products—symbols help to define the foundations of political communities: the boundaries that delimit them, the

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identities that support their functioning, and the categories of understanding that give sense to the world (Azzoni 2005; Dieni 2005; Sublon 2006; Gedicks and Annicchino 2013).

In the face of uncertainty, symbols may serve to control social reality, including prevailing identities, beliefs, and meanings. In this light, the rediscovery of symbolic politics in Europe and Italy is not surprising, especially considering the context described previously, marked by socioeconomic and political instability and the rebirth of the national question. La Rosa (2008, 1) argues that in Italy, "the issues and debates raised around the theme of religious symbols and their display in the public space" are primarily a "manifestation of the question of collective identity". As seen, this question has been aggravated by immigration and social diversification, which brought forth new "reactive identities" to the political landscape (Triandafyllidou 1999; Allievi 2005a). In this context, religious symbols may be particularly reassuring: in evoking unquestionable and comprehensive understandings, these symbols may contribute to harmonizing meanings and to restoring fractured identities, while allowing actors to identify, categorize, and even exclude outsiders.

To be sure, religious symbols have been just one of the issues around which debates on Italian secularism and national identity have been articulated (Garelli 2011; Ozzano and Giorgi 2015). Still, symbolic forms have been valuable ways of marking similarity and difference and redrawing social boundaries, especially when used by state actors. As discussed, states engage in symbolic and identity politics, indicating who and what is legitimate in its public and political domains—and who and what is not. While the 1948 Constitution and the Presidency of the Republic identify the tricolor flag, the national anthem, and the republican emblem as symbols of power in Italy, the state may resort to countless symbolic resources to try and achieve its secular governance goals, ranging from language to religious clothing (Ciotola 2012; Wimmer 2013).

That states resort to symbols to advance their goals is not problematic as such; as Pacillo (2004, 1) observes, "in the Western legal tradition, power needs symbols". However, symbolic controversies in Italy and Europe have led state actors to occasionally overstep their roles as liberal and democratic authorities, generating illiberal trends in discourse and practice that could put

fundamental rights and political unity in jeopardy. In Italy, state actors have struggled to maintain the crucifix in schools and public offices, whilst trying to ban the *burqa* and other face-veiling garments from public spaces. Moreover, they have demanded that immigrants, particularly Muslims, undersign an Integration Agreement (IA), including the Charter, and explicitly accept Italy's allegedly core values. While symbolic, these legislative, administrative, and judicial acts have generated doubts and concerns about the respect of fundamental rights, the neutrality of the state, intolerance and Islamophobia, and exclusionary understandings of political community.

Moreover, these acts have had as much to do with the national identity as with religious governance: the Italian conception of secularism—often subsumed under the principle of *laicità*—has been mobilized and deployed in all instances with the purpose of governing diversity, as discussed below. Although this conception is regarded open and positive, A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari (2010, 448) argue that the crucifix issue appears to reveal that "a particular interpretation of national identity prevails on both neutrality of institutions and individual rights. These latter would also be violated by some draft laws which propose to ban the burqa from public spaces".

Like A. Ferrari and S. Ferrari (2010), other scholars have criticized the position of the Italian state, referring to liberal and democratic principles to identify problems and contradictions in the approach it has adopted. Although arguments vary, several of these scholars contend that throughout the crucifix and full-face veil controversies, many Italian state actors have risked curtailing religious freedoms, infringing the autonomy of both religions and individuals, promoting double standards in the treatment of religion, and generating divisiveness and exclusion (see, for instance, Colaianni 2004; Pasquali Cerioli 2006; Martinelli 2006; Mancini 2009; 2014; Annicchino 2010; Ciotola 2012).

Moreover, many scholars worry that by resorting to Christian resources, such as the crucifix or historic and cultural Christianity, to underpin social integration and political unity, Italy and other European states may exclude or discriminate against non-Christian worldviews, which should be welcomed into national communities. As Ciotola (2012, 178) contends, even if one concedes to the polysemous nature of crucifix, the fact remains that its imposition by the secular state does not

contribute to the progress of the social body in a pluralistic direction. This concern is also valid for the Charter, which addresses, through a partial interpretation of history and constitutional principles, the Judeo-Christian tradition of Italy, religious symbols, the principle of *laicità*, and several additional issues meant to apply primarily to the Muslim population in the country. These critical arguments gain force in light of the different treatments that majority and minority religious symbols have received across the European continent over the past couple of decades: whereas majority symbols have frequently been subject to a "pluralism of tolerance and of maximum respect for religious sentiment", the minority symbols, particularly Muslim ones, have had to face a "pluralism of militant secularism", which has tended to disavow their legitimacy in the public sphere (Colaianni 2004; A. Ferrari 2008; Joppke 2013, 117; Mancini 2014).

The problematic issue here is not so much whether the display of crucifixes in classrooms, for instance, should be upheld or not, but rather how state actors have defended the practice and its consequences to individuals, religions, and the political community. Again, this thesis is interested in what ideological secularism does; specifically, in how governmental authorities enact this ideology in discourse to achieve their goals. This is to say that this thesis does not mean to engage in the defense of any single position, for it is how these positions are articulated and their (potential) social consequences that may render them illiberal.[68] Thus, the following sections analyze primarily how state actors have put forth their secular perspectives, focusing on the concepts, arguments, discursive strategies used and on the consequences of their utterances and texts to individuals, religious groups, the Italian political community, and finally, the prevailing conception of secularism in the country.

From Symbolic Controversies to the "Muslim" Charter: Timelines of the Case Studies

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[68] Of course, the crucifixes on the walls of public institutions and full-face veils are symbolically charged. Nevertheless, since symbols take on meaning in social and political contexts, and tend to be abstract and polysemic, it is difficult to determine their contents and implications outside of situational contexts.

While the public display of Catholic symbols in Italy is certainly not a new practice, it may be argued that the Crucifix and Full-face veil controversies, as well as the Charter case have been largely contemporaneous, in that the politicization of all subjects came about in the early 2000s. However, to fully understand these cases, it is often necessary to take a step back and refer, for example, to law sources that precede any of these issues. In what follows, the three cases are chronologically presented. In doing so, this section discusses when they became subjects of political contestation and mentions relevant historical facts, emphasizing key legal and political developments.

In introducing the crucifix issue, scholars typically refer to the 1920s royal decrees that to this day provide for the display of crucifixes on the walls of educational institutes. However, until the early 1990s, the tradition was considered a relic of the past, a practice that alluded to the outdated confessional character of the state. As such, it was deemed an irrelevant, marginal political issue (Casuscelli 2005; Fiorita 2006). Although the issue only took the contours of a cultural debate in the past couple of decades, it made its first public appearances in the mid-1980s, when isolated citizens first demanded the removal of the symbol from public offices (Ozzano and Giorgi 2015). These demands led the supreme administrative court, the Council of State, to issue an advice on the matter.

In opinion no.63/1988, the Council of State upheld the legitimacy of the Fascist decrees that included the crucifix as an item of furniture in classrooms, arguing that since the new Concordat had not touched upon the matter, the administrative dispositions had not been abrogated.[69] In fact, the two royal decrees that provide for the crucifix display, no. 965/1924 and no. 1297/1928, preceded the 1929 Lateran Pact, and thus, neither the Pact nor its revised version contain regulations on the matter.[70] The 1988 opinion is notorious for being the first state document to deliberate on the "historical and cultural significance" of the crucifix, and to treat the symbol as a part of Italy's

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[69] Consiglio di Stato, Parere no.63/27 aprile 1988. Available at: https://www.uaar.it/uaar/campagne/scrocifiggiamo/04.html/.
[70] Regio Decreto no. 965/1924 e Regio Decreto no. 1297/26 aprile 1928 (in SO alla GU 19 luglio 1928, n. 167).

"historical heritage". Politicians would later adopt and sponsor this portrayal of the symbol, as discussed below.

In this period, cases brought against the crucifix had secularist motivations, and did not concern national identity, immigrant-driven diversity, and Islam. It was only years later, when the issue became a subject of contestation, that the very identity of Italy seemed to be put in question, and social and religious outsiders were directly and indirectly associated with some sort of national destabilization. According to Fiorita (2006, 232), the issue surfaced in the early 2000s as one of "the battlefields in which the revenge of the sacred or better, of the Catholic Church manifests itself...and the 'identitarian' character of the Western culture is delineated in light of the much-evoked 'clash of civilizations'". In fact, the politicization of the crucifix coincided with the launching of anti-Muslim narratives in the country, which begun to be articulated in the year 2000, during the so-called "Black September of Islam" (Allievi 2014, 730). Roughly a year later, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the participation of the controversial leader of the Union of Italian Muslims (UMI), Adel Smith, in the talk show *Porta a Porta* turned the crucifix into a subject of public concern and debate (Ciotola 2012; Ozzano and Giorgi 2013; 2015).

Following Smith's derogatory depiction of the Catholic symbol, both the media and political actors sought to position themselves in relation to the issue. The LN, for instance, adopted a strongly identitarian and civilizational stance, emphasizing the importance of Italy's Christian identity and roots (Ozzano and Giorgi 2013; 2015). To be sure, Smith's comments did not generate a backlash against Muslims, but they drew public attention to Islam at a delicate moment: 9/11 had strengthened civilizational narratives and religious identities had acquired a renewed salience in the turn of the millennium. Further, the outset of the controversy coincided with the European-wide debate about the continent's Christian heritage (Casanova 2004; Colaianni 2006a).

Overall, these events contributed to the unfavorable context in which debates over the national question, cultural and religious diversity, immigration, and Islam would evolve in subsequent years. Moreover, as discussed in the previous chapter, Italian immigration policies and debates experienced

a cultural turn in the early 2000s. First sponsored by the right-wing coalition that came to power in 2001, this turn ignited fears of social and religious diversity, raised civilizational concerns, and inaugurated a cultural phase in the Italian management of diversity—a phase marked by the emergence of a security approach to immigration and the articulation of public narratives against multiculturalism and Muslims (Allievi 2005a; Caponio 2013). It was in this context that the Crucifix and Full-face veil controversies, and the Charter case developed.

The Crucifix controversy came about earlier in time, and was more widespread than the other cases, forcing Italian state actors to publicly engage in symbolic politics. While parliamentarians from different parties presented bills to either abrogate or better define the obligation to hang crucifixes on the walls of public institutions, the Ministry of Education, through a 2002 explanatory bylaw and corresponding note (respectively no. 2666 and no. 2667) tried to establish once and for all the mandatory character of the display of crucifixes in elementary and middle public schools. Before that, Letizia Moratti, then Minister of Education, had been subject to a triple parliamentary interrogation regarding the mounting controversy, during which Senators emphasized the need to respect Italy's culture and tradition. Due to the identitarian turn of the debate, secularist and religious politicians have subsequently sponsored several draft laws aimed to further clarify the constitutional character of the Italian state, which depending on the text presented, ranged from Judeo-Christian to strictly secular. These and other governmental texts are analyzed in the following sections (see Annex 1).

In the meantime, judicial powers were called upon to rule on individual cases brought against the state by citizens who contested the presence of the Catholic symbol in public offices. It was in this early stage of the controversy that the well-known *Lautsi* case begun. Moreover, the case was followed by other two notorious legal battles, the *Ofena* and *Tosti* cases. Even though it succeeded *Lautsi*, *Ofena* was the first legal case to make it to the press, not least because it involved Adel Smith, who had already become a controversial public figure in the country. In the early 2003, after having tried to contact several Italian ministries about the crucifix issue, the UMI representative turned to a lower ordinary court in the city of Aquila, challenging the display of the crucifix in his children's

school. Despite the pro-crucifix 1988 Opinion of the Council of State and the 2002 ministerial bylaw, the ordinary judge ordered the removal of the symbol from classrooms, arguing that public schools should be neutral and that the presence of a religious symbol in educational venues violated the principles of *laicità*, religious freedom, and equality. Furthermore, he dismissed the validity of the 1920s Royal decrees, relying on the 1984 revision of the Lateran Pacts, which according to him, had nullified the Fascist regulations (Mancini 2006; 2010).

The sentence spurred immediate and incisive reactions from virtually all political actors in Italy and was eventually overturned. According to Ozzano and Giorgi (2013, 264), the debate which begun in 2001 and reached its apex in 2003 was "the most intense of the decade, with dozens of newspaper articles and [political] statements". The press review search mechanism available in the website of the Ministry of Education, University and Research proves this point: the number of newspaper titles related to religious symbols is much broader in the biennium 2004-2005 than in subsequent years.[71] It is also noteworthy that many of these articles concerned other types of Catholic symbolism, notably the tradition of setting up nativity scenes in public schools, suggesting that the crucifix debate gave rise to additional conflicts, even if in a smaller scale.

As for political reactions, both the Left and the Right condemned the judge's reasoning, classifying the order to remove the crucifix as legally and culturally problematic. The sentence was not only described as "abnormal", "illegal", and "illegitimate", but also repudiated in the name of tradition, culture, history, and identity. There were also references to an obligation to respect the majority religion in the country, Catholicism (La Repubblica 2003). Moreover, some right-wing politicians and governmental actors, such as the Interior Minister Giuseppe Pisanu, associated the case to other pressing events of the time, including immigration, pluralism, and religious fundamentalism, contending that successful social integration depended upon mutual respect, especially respect for Italy's legal and political systems—in a clear allusion to immigration and

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[71] The Ministry's press review research engine is available at: http://rstampa.pubblica.istruzione.it/rassegna/rassegna.asp.

integration problems (La Repubblica 2003).[72] Even the President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi was called upon to give his opinion on the matter, to which he responded that the crucifix should be considered "a symbol of the values that underlie our Italian identity" (Presidenza della Repubblica 2003).

Only a few political exponents of the Left supported the Aquila Tribunal's sentence, justifying the stance against religious symbols as compliant with the principle of *laicità* (Ozzano and Giorgi 2013; 2015). Still, the widespread and bipartisan support for the crucifix led the Commission on Culture, Science and Education of the Italian Chamber of Deputies to adopt Resolution no. 8-00061, which describes the removal of the crucifix as an action detrimental of the culture and sensitivity of the Italian population and presents the crucifix as the foundation of liberal and secular values.[73]

The *Lautsi* case contributed to politicizing the issue further. After her children's school refused to remove the crucifix from classrooms, Soile Lautsi—an Italian citizen of Finish origins, and a member of the national association of atheists and agnostics (UAAR)—challenged the decision before Veneto's Regional Administrative Tribunal (TAR), which referred the question to the Constitutional Court, arguing that the controversy regarded the supreme principle of *laicità*, and articles 2, 3, 7, 8, 19, and 20 of the constitution. Nevertheless, in the late 2004, the Constitutional Court refrained from deliberating on the matter: it held the question "inadmissible", in that the Fascist decrees concerned were mere regulations and, as such, administrative law sources. Unlike statute law, the latter cannot be submitted to constitutional revision (Chizzoniti 2004; Pasquali Cerioli 2006; Martinelli 2006).[74] The question was then reassigned to Veneto's TAR, where proceedings resumed.

Meanwhile, the politicization of the *burqa* and other face-veiling garments had begun in the local level, with small towns in the Northern part of the country having enacted regulations (ordinances and bylaws) targeting aspects of immigrants' and Muslims' lives, including clothing,

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[72] La Repubblica. 2003. "Crocifisso, l'Anm a Castelli "Interferenza inammissibile"." October 29, 2003. http://www.repubblica.it/2003/j/sezioni/cronaca/crocifisso/papa/papa.html.

[73] Italian Chamber of Deputies, Commission on Culture, Science and Education. Resolution no. 8-00061, presented by Adornato and others. "Display of the Crucifix in Classrooms". Approved by the Commission on the 6th of November, 2003. http://dati.camera.it/ocd/aic.rdf/aic8_00061_14.

[74] Some commentators have considered the Court's cautious stance a missed opportunity, since constitutional judges could have used the case to clarify secularism and its legal effects (Chizzoniti 2004; Pasquali Cerioli 2006; Martinelli 2006).

notably *burqas*, *niqabs* and *burquinis* (Ambrosini and Caneva 2012). Referring to Art.85 of the Royal Decree n.773/1931, which prohibits masking one's face in public, and to Art.5 of Law 152/1975, which prohibits the use, without a legitimate reason, of helmets or any means that may prevent or obstruct identification in public places or open venues, these regulations vetoed face-veiling by adding the clause "also veils that cover the face" to the text of the law. While Art.85 is a vestige from Fascist times, the latter is part of the Public Order Protection Act, approved to contrast internal terrorism in the 1960s and 1970s (A. Ferrari 2012; Möschel 2014).

Unlike the Crucifix case, these local measures did not generate nationwide debates on face-veiling, a void that has earned the subject the title of "top-down controversy". Subsequent attempts to regulate the matter, in turn, have been called "manifesto law proposals" (A. Ferrari 2012, 40-41). Still, it is important to stress these regulations because they served as catalysts of legislative interest on the matter, especially after the approval of the Security Package. Already in 2004, local regulations were followed by parliamentary interrogations and Advisory Opinion n.11001/65, in which the Interior Ministry recommended that mayors annulled anti-*burqa* ordinances. As discussed below, the issue would also reach the Council of State in 2008.

However, in 2005, long before the supreme administrative court dealt with this minority symbol, it was called upon to rule on the *Lautsi* case. After the TAR of Veneto found the display of the crucifix in classrooms to be compatible with the principle of *laicità*, Lautsi appealed to the Council of State. Concurring with the TAR, the Council ruled for the legitimacy of the crucifix in public schools. Despite the technical character of these rulings, they received close academic and political attention. Notably, the broad interpretation of the crucifix as a cultural, historical, as well as religious symbol lent support to those who saw in the symbol a representation of Italy and its underlying civic and liberal values. Many scholars, however, condemned this interpretation, and accused the administrative courts of overstepping their authority and entering the realm of theology and history (Pasquali Cerioli 2006; Fiorita 2006).

These decisions also helped to generate further debate on the crucifix, and related controversies continued to emerge, concerning, for example, the display of crucifixes in pooling stations and the tradition of setting up nativity scenes and celebrating Christmas in schools. Moreover, in 2005, the *Tosti* case contributed to reigniting the issue, since it regarded a judge who, in an attempt at having the Italian state reassert its secular character, refused to hold hearings in courtrooms that had crucifixes on the walls. Although the Tosti's fight for *laicità* has been much discussed, it was the European turn of events in the *Lautsi* case that provoked the loudest political and journalistic outcry in Italy, with a sentence that would come in 2009.

Meanwhile, social and cultural integration, particularly of immigrants and Muslims, had become a central political concern. However, since Italy still lacked a clear policy framework for the management of diversity, integration concerns passed first by the field of religious governance (Allievi 2014). Although religiosity constitutes solely one aspect of immigrant-driven diversity, Italy's current model of integration has been substantially shaped by the principles underlying its secular character. Italy's integration agreement (IA) goes back to the drafting of the Charter, which was firstly conceived as a mechanism to govern a specific religion, Islam (Colaianni 2009).

The history of the Charter goes back to 2005, when the shift toward a cultural understanding of integration began. Giuseppe Pisanu, then Interior Minister, established a consultative body for Muslims in Italy (*Consulta per l'Islam Italiano*), thereby by-passing the traditional constitutional route for the establishment of church–state relations in the country—the *intesa*. In 2006, the newly elected center-left government supported the existence of the Council, confirming its underlying rationale: formed by selected religious and governmental exponents, it was to serve as an advisory body to the Italian government, which would to contribute to designing integration policies targeting Muslim communities (Allievi 2008). In this sense, the body could be thought of as a compensation for the lack of an official agreement (*intesa*) with Islam, especially in the face of domestic and international challenges associated with the religion.

Considering the difficulty of reaching an agreement with a multifaceted religious community, the Council could in principle be seen as positive development. Muslims had become legitimate interlocutors of the government and, albeit relying on extraordinary means, this achievement concurred with the guiding principle of church–state relations in Italy—cooperation. The establishment of a consultative body was in line with the Italian conception of open *laicità*. While it circumvented the constitutionally established route for church–state relations, the Council was a top-down attempt to acknowledge a "new" religious group and to establish dialogue between this group and the government—an effort that could have led to the solution of practical problems faced by Muslims, such as those related to mosques. Moreover, the corporativist approach used to create the Council corresponded to a loose Italian multicultural approach, characterized by the top-down recognition of public social actors, especially religious groups (A. Ferrari 2008). Since corporativist modes of religious incorporation "acknowledge the social reality and political significance of groups", they may be seen as restrictive forms of multiculturalism (Modood 2013, 159).

Building on these ideas, it could be argued that the Italian government was informed by a multicultural sensibility in establishing the Council: instead of reifying secular institutional arrangements or vilifying a minority religion, the Ministry of the Interior accommodated a new religious reality by beginning a conversation with it. To be sure, the exceptional means used to promote this dialogue speaks of the limits of the Italian constitutional framework, which privileges certain types of religion—i.e., religions that bear resemblance with Catholicism—over others—religions without, for example, clerical hierarchy (Colaianni 2006a). But, in light of these limits, the formation of a Muslim Council appears to allow for the factual inclusion of Islam in a multicultural and post-secular Italy. The body may be seen, in other words, as a provisional means to handle cultural and religious diversity, one made possible by the open conception of *laicità* adopted in Italy.

Nevertheless, the Council did not meet these expectations. Fraught with internal and external dissent, it worked in practice as an exceptional way to govern and discipline a religious reality considered foreign to the Italian (Catholic) tradition. To be sure, in setting up a channel of

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communication, the Interior Minister Pisanu helped to prevent the complete vilification of Islam in the aftermath of the London and Madrid bombings. While conceding that Pisanu had been particularly sensible in handing the difficult situation of Muslims then, Allievi (2008), as well as Colaianni (2006a; 2006b; 2009) identify several problems with the purportedly inclusive mechanism, not least the tendency of the state to "exceptionalize" Islam, curbing constitutional norms to address security concerns rather than striving to make progress in the field of religious regulation.

The consultative status of the Council implied that it was not devised to represent Muslim opinions and concerns, but rather to provide, as it were, expert opinion to the government regarding very specific matters. In fact, the Council was a unilateral and top-down initiative, and this meant that the government had the upper hand on its religious interlocutors. Notably, it set the Council's agenda and nominated Muslim representatives, a particularly controversial practice, given the difficulty faced by Muslim organizations in creating an overarching representative body (Colaianni 2006a; 2006b; Allievi 2008). All in all, it is hard to see how the Council, so conceived, could promote integration; instead, it resembled an emergency measure taken in face of an imminent threat (Colaianni 2007).

By forging a representative body unilaterally, the government's initiative ran into problems. The Council heightened political and ideological competition among the main Italian Muslim associations. In this strained context, the publication by one of the members of the Council, the Union of Islamic Communities in Italy (UCOII), of advertisements comparing Israeli actions in Palestine to the Holocaust triggered a crisis and generated further doubts about Muslim loyalty to the Italian state (Zincone and Caponio 2011). This led to the adoption of yet another exceptional measure: Giuliano Amato, Interior Minister after Pisanu, proposed the drafting of a Charter of Values in 2006, to be signed at first only by Muslim associations. The ratification of this document was made into a condition for the participation in a "moderate" and overarching Muslim body, which would eventually pursue an agreement with the Italian state (Allievi 2008, 57). In other words, to take part in the official state–religion dialogue, Muslim actors were required to be or become "moderate" and to prove this character by subscribing to a list of purported Italian values and principles.

The Charter was officially presented by Minister Amato in 2007. It had, by then, lost much of its religious and Muslim bias. It was to guide Ministry of the Interior in its relationship with religious groups, immigrant communities, and even young Italian citizens. As mentioned, the Charter subsequently supported the design of immigrant integration policies and ended up being incorporated into the IA (Cardia 2008). Although its scope has been broadened, the substantive content of the Charter is still telling in terms of religious governance. For in attempting to outline the values and principles that underlie the Italian society, it provides a clear representation of "an-Other", namely, religious extremism and fundamentalism, particularly of Islamic inspiration. In this light, Cuttitta (2016, 294) argues that the Charter is not only problematic from a constitutional viewpoint, but also it is "not culturally and religiously neutral, not is it equally addressed to all 'immigrants and religious communities'." The text of the Charter is analyzed in subsequent sections.

As discussed, public anxieties and security concerns fueled the 2008 national elections, with the winning coalition establishing direct and indirect nexuses between immigration and insecurity. Thereafter, local authorities and members of the Parliament started to revive attempts to ban the *burqa* and other face-veiling garments. Following the strengthening of the powers of mayors by the "Security Package", local ordinances banning the *burqa* and similar dresses multiplied. At the national level, in turn, parliamentarians presented several draft laws with the same purpose. Introduced between 2008 and 2013, these draft laws aimed to modify Art.5 of Law 152/1975, the scope of which was to be extended to any garments that conceal one's face, regardless of their traditional or religious character. Interestingly, whilst these draft laws allegedly intended to "make clear" (*puntualizzare, fare chiarezza, esplicitare, precisare*) and to "improve the effectiveness" (*rendere più efficace*) of Art.5, the garments concerned are worn by a negligible minority of Muslim women in Italy—in other words, the problem hardly exists at the national level.

In response to local ordinances and in accordance with the constitutionally guaranteed right to wear religious dresses (Caridi 2000; Pastorelli 2012), administrative courts worked consistently to restrict the multiplication of *burqa* bans. Moreover, in 2008, the Council of State clarified that Art.5

of the law no.152/1975 is non-applicable to the *burqa* insofar as the dress is not used to hinder personal identification. Instead, the court recognized religious and/or cultural reasons behind this traditional attire (A. Ferrari 2012; Pastorelli 2012). The Court of Cremona has complemented this view by establishing that public security concerns are sufficiently satisfied if veiled women agree to briefly remove the garment, so as to allow for personal identification (Gatta 2009). Such clarification, however, did not preclude the mobilization of deputies and senators in favor of the ban, with parliamentary works continuing throughout the following years.

In late 2009, Commission I for Constitutional Affairs, Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister, and Affairs of the Interior Ministry began to examine some of these draft laws, the texts of which were later unified. The Commission promoted an explorative inquiry (*Indagine Conoscitiva*) on the matter, inviting intellectuals, journalists and professors to discuss the proposed changes to law no.152/1975. In total, four law professors have expressed their expert opinion on this occasion and, despite different views on full-face veils, all remarked that the proposed modifications were problematic from a constitutional standpoint, in that they could be deemed discriminatory, and infringe the principle of equality and fundamental rights, which are safeguarded not only by the Italian Constitution, but also by European and international agreements. Providing different reasons, they also pointed out that the instrument chosen to prohibit the garments, i.e., law no.152/1975, was inappropriate, be it because such a prohibition should not be sanctioned at all or because legislators risked banning all types of head gear that prevent identification (see Annex 1).

The last months of 2009 were also marked by the unfavorable sentence of the European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) on the *Lautsi* case. As explained, after having exhausted domestic legal remedies, Lautsi had turned to the ECtHR, lodging an application against Italy for violating the principle of *laicità*, as well as a number of individual rights protected by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), including freedom of belief and religion, and the right of parents to educate their children according to their own convictions (paragraphs 30-33 of the judgment). The government rejected Lautsi's arguments, maintaining that the display of the crucifix in classrooms

was compatible with the supreme principle of *laicità* insofar as: "The message of the cross was...a humanist message which could be read independently of its religious dimension and was composed of a set of principles and values forming the foundations of our democracies" (ECtHR 2009, par. 35). Finally, in November 2009, the Strasbourg Court sided with Lautsi on most accounts, declaring that the crucifix was predominantly a religious symbol and, as such, should be removed from classrooms, so as to prevent discrimination and encroachment upon individual rights. Furthermore, it emphasized that the state had a duty to respect neutrality in public education (ECtHR 2009, paragraphs 56-62).

Neither the Italian political establishment nor the media received the unfavorable sentence well. Immediately after the verdict, the government announced that it would appeal against the judgment. Silvio Berlusconi, then the country's Prime Minister, described the sentence as "absolutely unacceptable", and stressed that Italians "cannot not call themselves Christians", paraphrasing the title of a book by Benedetto Croce (La Repubblica 2009)[75]. The decision raised negative reactions from across the political spectrum. Only a few left-wing politicians departed from this condemnatory stance. While some of the latter defended that the Court had merely reaffirmed *laicità*, others tried to divert the public debate to more important issues and accused political opponents of instrumentally using the controversy to obtain electoral returns (Ozzano and Giorgi 2013). Nevertheless, such dissenting voices constituted a minority in the debate.

Although articulating their criticism of the Strasbourg Court differently, most political actors disapproved of the sentence and defended the existence of some type of symbiosis between the crucifix—and by implication, Christianity—and Italy's tradition, identity, history, and culture. Right-wing social and political actors, including right-wing media, tended to be more vocal, and put forward what were perhaps the harshest critiques against the ECtHR. These actors also sought to provide concrete responses to the ruling, taking matters in their own hands: while PdL politicians presented a

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[75] La Repubblica. 2009. "Crocifisso in aula, Bertone ringrazia "Apprezzo il ricorso del governo"." November 4, 2009. http://www.repubblica.it/2009/11/sezioni/scuola_e_universita/servizi/crocefissi-aule/bertone-su-sentenza/bertone-su-sentenza.html?ref=search.

bill that made the public display of crucifixes compulsory and drafted a resolution on the judgment to be submitted to the European Parliament, members of the LN proposed holding a referendum on the matter, as well as incorporating a cross in the Italian tricolor flag. In the meantime, local authorities started to issue bylaws aimed to ensure that crucifixes would not be taken down from the walls of public offices (Annicchino 2010, 9; Ozzano and Giorgi 2013; 2015).

In this turbulent scenario, the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR admitted the Italian appeal of the first *Lautsi* judgment. Italy's case was actively supported by a number of third-party interveners, including civil society actors and a coalition of states composed of the governments of Armenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Russia, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, and San Marino. As Ozzano and Giorgi (2013) observe, even before the Strasbourg Court reached a final decision, there was some tension and anxiety in the Italian public sphere, with many newspapers devoting space to discuss the legal dispute and related issues, such as the notion of *laicità* and the meaning of religious symbols. National and international intellectuals, such as professors Carlo Cardia and Joseph Weiler, were invited to comment the matter in both academic and non-academic contexts.[76]

During 2010, before the Grand Chamber reached a final decision on the crucifix display, Italian Parliamentarians continued to insist on the ban of full-face veils. To this end, they presented additional draft laws, disregarding the opinion of administrative courts, as well as the limited impact a ban would have had on the country. Further, Roberto Maroni, then Interior Minister, requested the Committee for Italian Islam (*Comitato per l'Islam Italiano*)—a reformed version of the Council instituted by Pisanu—an opinion on the proposed modification to law no.152/1975, which would effectively ban the *burqa* and the *niqab*. Criticized for being even less representative of Muslims than its predecessor, the Committee gave legislators a seal of approval, arguing that the alleged religious nature of full-face veils should not be a valid exception to the law.[77] Members of the Committee also

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[76] See, for example, Cardia (2009) available at http://www.tracce.it/detail.asp?c=1&p=1&id=12951 and Weiler (2010).
[77] Comitato per l'Islam Italiano (2010). "Burqa and Niqab. Parere del Comitato per l'Islam Italiano." http://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/19/00036_Comitato_Islam_-_relazione_Burqa_07_10.pdf.

held that despite conflicting opinions within Islam, such veils do not constitute a religious obligation, and thereby reinforced arguments in favor of the ban. Finally, they expressed concern with the "confessionalization" of the matter, urging state actors to abandon specific references to Islam and religion, since such references could have strengthened ongoing controversies (Comitato per l'Islam Italiano (2010). The Committee's opinion was then sent to the Commission I of the Chamber of Deputies, which had been analyzing the draft laws on the matter.

Subsequently, in 2011, following the approval by Commission I of the bills examined, the unified text "Provisions concerning the prohibition of wearing clothing or using other means that prevent personal identification, the introduction of the crime of coercion to the concealment of the face and amendments to the law of 5 February 1992, n. 91, on citizenship" began to be debated in the plenary of the Chamber of Deputies. These debates are also analyzed in the upcoming sections.

As the new, extensive name of the unified draft law indicated, in addition to prohibiting face-veiling garments, "such as the *burqa* and the *niqab*", the Commission supplemented the text with two new articles. While article 2 created the crime of coercion to conceal one's face, article 3 intended to preclude anyone condemned for this new crime from obtaining citizenship. Together, these proposed changes were problematic for several reasons, including the specification of garments traditionally associated to Islam, the creation of a crime with penalties that were lower than penalties for the crime of domestic violence, and the discriminatory assumption of article 3, which suggested either that only foreigners would commit the crime or that foreigners would receive more severe penalties than Italians. Although this unified version of the draft law reached the plenary, the debates were not concluded and the law in question was not modified. However, the end of Berlusconi's IV government did not mean the end of attempts to ban full-face veils; thereafter, parliamentarians resumed their efforts and started to present new draft laws concerning the matter.

As for the Crucifix case, in March 2011, the Grand Chamber reached its final decision, which reverted the ruling of the Second Chamber and, thus, upheld the mandatory display of crucifixes in state schools. The court resorted to the margin of appreciation doctrine, emphasizing that there was

no common European consensus on the matter (paragraphs 26-28). Furthermore, it argued that, hanged on a wall, a crucifix could be essentially considered a "passive" symbol, and since the display of this symbol was not accompanied by actual attempts at indoctrinating young pupils, its mere presence did not indicate any form of intolerance against those who held different religious and philosophical beliefs (paragraphs 63-77). Although the favorable decision did not draw as much attention as *Lautsi I*, many political actors still reacted publicly to it, celebrating the judgment as a victory of Italian and European history, culture, tradition, and identity over secularist tendencies across the continent (ECtHR 2011; Ozzano and Giorgi 2013; 2015).

While the European victory of the pro-crucifix bloc led the debate to deescalate, public interest on the controversy has not faded out completely. Religious and cultural symbols, as well as self and other identities remain troublesome in Italy. The media occasionally reports on new disputes over the crucifix, on local bylaws enacted to ensure the display of the symbol in state offices, and on batches of crucifixes being awarded to schools with "naked" walls, especially in Northern provinces. Moreover, national politicians still raise the issue from time to time, discussing it in reference to the country's Judeo-Christian heritage or its increasingly plural social landscape. Together, these issues still require political attention, analysis, and action. Similarly, the political debate on face-veiling did not die out. As discussed below, together with the crucifix, these veils have been immersed in a discursive landscape that includes popular discussions on social integration, religious governance, and Islam, and are thus, re-evoked from time to time.

Weighing Pros and Cons: Discursive Landscape of the Crucifix and *Burqa* Controversies

The Crucifix, Full-face veil, and Charter cases have attracted political and public attention, having engaged a variety of actors, including judges and politicians, as well as academics, journalists, and religious representatives. In this light, it may be argued that the political fields of "law making" and "executive and administration"—and, by implication, the discourses produced therein—have

been immersed in wider discussions occurring in the public sphere, with government positions often responding to and/or echoing these discussions. Glancing at this wider discursive landscape, this section describes the main positions taken by actors throughout the crucifix and full-face veil controversies, identifying some general contents and themes, discourse types, topics, and genres. The Charter is analyzed separately because it includes one single document that does not represent a full-blown public debate. Still, the analysis of its textual corpus refers to resources of the two other cases, in that they are closely related and contemporaneous.

Concerning the Crucifix and *Burqa* controversies, public debates have been structured around two main positions—pro and con—even if arguments within each of these blocs differed substantially. Given this caveat, the following should not be read as an exhaustive description of public debates. Yet, it is useful insofar as the discourses of the government, parliamentarians, judges, amongst other state actors, have in a way or another reflected these positions and arguments.

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the pro and con positions and corresponding arguments and, thereby, specify the main contents of discourses on the crucifix and full-face veil. These arguments have been divided in more general topics, such as "crucifix as a symbol" and "face-veil as a symbol". While often intersecting one another in reality, these topics indicate that discourse participants have typically resorted to similar genres, frames, and topoi, which influence and are influenced by linguistic traits, such as vocabulary items, metaphors, verbal modality, scripts, *etc.*

Table 1: Arguments against and for the Crucifix Display	
Cons	**Pros**
Crucifix as a symbol • Religious symbol • Catholic symbol • Relic of state confessionalism	Crucifix as a symbol • Polysemous symbol • In public offices: cultural meaning, Italian history, tradition, and identity
Secularism as a constitutional principle	Secularism as a constitutional principle

• Separation Church–state • Duty of neutrality and impartiality • "Equidistance" of the state • Religious equality	• "Open", "positive" *laicità*, not French-style secularism • Religion as an inherently social, cultural and public fact
Democratic rule • Quantitative superiority of a worldview should not come at the expense of minority protection	**Democratic rule** • Removing the crucifix is denying the culture and tradition of most of the country's population
Liberal rule • Violation of religious autonomy • Violation of freedom of conscience • Violation of parents' right to educate their children in accordance with their own convictions	**Liberal rule** • "Naked" walls are not neutral and violate the sensibility of the faithful • Italian schools are plural environments, and no imposition of religious education • Passive character of the crucifix
Italian Post-secularism • "Open", "positive", "inclusive" *laicità* requires the state to recognize and promote all worldviews	**Italian Post-secularism** • "Open", "positive", "inclusive" *laicità* is compatible with a plural public and institutional sphere

Table 1 presents the main public arguments for and against the display of the crucifix in classrooms. As mentioned, the crucifix debate has taken place in different fora, such as courts and the media, each with its own genres, and thus, styles, conventions, and requirements. Obviously, journalists, political communicators, and courts of justice have produced texts that differ in terms of purpose, audience, content, *etc*. Despite differences, however, the table demonstrates that reiterated discourse topics have crisscrossed all genres, leading journalists to engage with very technical legal material, while judges and politicians tried to cope with sociological and theological arguments. The same may be said about the *Burqa* controversy, described in table 2, even if the public debate about the matter has been more circumscribed. In this case, while religious actors discussed whether the

mentioning of Islam in the text of the law was constitutional, political actors found themselves quoting passages of the *Koran* and well-known Muslim figures.

Such hybrid articulation of discourses and genres suggests that interdiscursivity and intertextuality have characterized the cases studied in this thesis. To untangle these relations, the next section conducts a detailed interactional analysis of the textual material, which contributes to understanding changes within the Italian secular ideology. Here, however, it is interesting to review the content and themes of the debates to identify inter alia discourse contents and types, which may relate to certain genres, styles, frames, *etc*.

Table 2: Arguments against and for the Burqa Ban	
Cons	**Pros**
Full face veil as a symbol • It is not for the state, the legislator, or the judge to decide on religious precepts or on the religious character of symbols	Full face veil as a symbol • Not a symbol, but an item of clothing, a style, a garment • Not a religious symbol, but traditional, ethnic, cultural • Symbol of fundamentalism, extremism, integralism, irrationality • Symbol of social division, separation, diversity, distinction, oppression
Secularism • Violation of religious freedom • Violation of religious equality • Impingement on religious realm • Discriminatory and Islamophobic • Rather than social integration, the ban may promote marginalization	Secularism • No violation of religious freedom or equality, insofar as the real Islam does not require full-face veiling • Promotion of civil "living together", common values, and social integration • Protection and promotion of real, moderate Islam
Human Rights • Unconstitutional and violation of international human rights conventions • Violation of freedom of expression and religious freedom	Human Rights • Full-face veils violate freedom and equality • The ban guarantees fundamental rights, such as freedom, equality, and autonomy

• Discriminatory measure • The restriction would not proportionate to a legitimate goal	• Freedom is not absolute, and the state must strike a balance between freedom and security
Feminism • Women have the right to freely choose their clothing, including full-face veils • Italian criminal law affords women better protection against domestic violence and other types of oppression	Feminism • Violation of women's rights • Violation of gender equality • Full-face veils are oppressive and annul women by turning them into slaves and ghosts
Security • Security and public order are safeguarded if the women concerned agree to briefly unveil their faces to public officers • Existing legislation suffices to guarantee security and public order • Proposed changes are not about security	Security • Balance between freedom and security • Right to security, without concessions • Purpose of security: respect for life and protection of fundamental rights
Procedural arguments • Changes to existing law are unnecessary • Minor or inexistent problem • Draft laws are irrational • Inappropriate means of intervention • Appropriate means of intervention would be law on religious freedom, law on citizenship, better approach to integration	Procedural arguments • Changes are necessary, pressing, urgent • Problem exists and is growing • Judges apply the law in uncertain and erroneous ways; clarifications are in order • Appropriate means of state intervention to ensure fundamental rights, including the right to security

Table 1 indicates that, in the crucifix controversy, discourse participants have frequently relied on particular understandings of the symbol, of secularism, and of the identity of Italy, that is, the identity of the state as a distinctive liberal democracy and of its people as culturally Christians. In other words, in opposing or defending the crucifix, social actors have engaged directly with fundamental political questions, regarding not only the constitutional meanings and institutional purposes of *laicità*, but also the country's definition of the national identity and answer to the problem of diversity (Martinelli 2006; Colaianni 2010).

Specifically, relying on philosophical and constitutional arguments, the "con" side argued that the display of the *religious* symbol of the crucifix not only violated those principles meant to safeguard the plural character of the state—i.e., equality, neutrality, and impartiality—but also breached individual freedoms and religious rights. Crucifix advocates, in turn, resorted to a primarily sociological argument, contending that the crucifix is a polysemous symbol, the historic and cultural character of which has underpinned not only Italy's national identity, but also its most basic civic values, including the very notion of *laicità*.[78] Moreover, the latter group has touched upon the difficulties of separating culture and religion and on the partisan character of "naked" walls, especially in a predominantly Catholic country, where an open and positive notion of *laicità* is prevalent. Curiously, in asking the state not to privilege any religion, a few groups, especially religiously-based, also spoke of Italy's inclusive type of secularism, capable of welcoming all religious groups into the political community (Ferri 2004; Fusaro 2004; Luther 2004; Colaianni 2004; 2010; Pasquali Cerioli 2006; Martinelli 2006; Morelli and Porciello 2008; Annicchino 2010; Weiler 2010; Cardia 2010; 2012; Ciotola 2012; Gedicks and Annicchino 2013). As said, these two sides of the debate are not unanimous and, further, their arguments are not without internal contradictions and inconsistencies (for a detailed analysis of the public debate, see Ozzano and Giorgi 2013; 2015).

Although incomplete, this overview indicates thematic interconnections between the crucifix controversy and the wider societal and institutional contexts presented previously. Notably, the controversy reflects and revives debates on, first, the national question and what principles and values underlie the Italian political community; second, the Catholic myth of the nation and the notion of civil religion; third, social integration, particularly concerning religious and immigrant-driven diversity; and finally, Italy's exceptionality and peculiar institutional framework. Moreover, as the conflation of civil, religious, and national arguments shows, these themes are interconnected,

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[78] To be sure, this and other arguments have been built in a variety of ways, for example, either denying or giving priority to one particular meaning of the crucifix.

suggesting again that there is interdiscursivity between larger discourses on national identity, religious governance, and immigrant integration, for example.

Still in terms of content, discussions about identity, i.e., about what defines the Italian state and people, have prevailed over those about difference, i.e., about who is the "Other" of Italy—French *laïcité*, secularists, Islam, immigrants? Yet, most of the aforementioned discourses and themes relate to and reflect broader ideological stances about how to best govern diversity and generate political unity. In this respect, Table 1 suggests that social actors not only carried out politics in discourse, but were also engaged in the politics of discourse, with ideological secularism being a central subject of contention. General topics mobilized by both the "pro" and "con" blocs, such as "secularism as a constitutional principle", "liberal rule", and "Italian post-secularism", bespeak the essential contestability of secularism and indicate that this cluster concept, with its grammar, principles and assumptions, has been a means through which to engage in politics, as well as a stake therein.

For instance, many in the "con" bloc, such as Ms. Lautsi, the UAAR, the Radical Party, and academics, have resorted to the political discourse of liberal secularism to oppose the public display of the crucifix, even when recognizing Italy's particular *laicità* or the polysemous character of symbols. This suggests that the liberal secular discourse type could not always be straightforwardly applied to the case and required social actors to actively engage in the politics of discourse of secularism. One way of solving incongruencies has been to appeal to rationality or logic— foundational concepts related to the secular episteme—to claim that "in reality the crucifix, over and above all else, had a religious connotation" and that, as such, the neutrality of the state should be upheld (ECtHR 2009, 7). Another route, taken by some religious groups that opposed the display of the symbol, has been to refer to the notions of pluralism and democracy, two purposive concepts related to secularism. Specifically, in asking the state not to privilege any one single religion, these groups have spoken of an inclusive type of secularism, capable of welcoming all religious groups into the Italian political community. The "pro" bloc has also adopted a more pluralist discourse type, as well as a post-secular one, defending the crucifix as a symbol of Italy and its underlying, universalistic

values, including tolerance and *laicità* itself. To be sure, actors adopting civilizational discourse types, such as the Northern League, have often made similar points, problematizing the separation between religion and culture to argue that the crucifix is an intrinsic part of the historical heritage of Italy, Europe, and the West—as opposed to both stringent secular societies and immigrant societies.

Table 2, in turn, indicates that throughout the full-face veil debate, discourse participants have relied on particular understandings of full-face veils and their relation to Islam; security and its relation to fundamental rights and freedom; women's rights and feminism; and finally, secularism and the basis of "living together" or social integration. Differently from the crucifix case, social actors did not engage as much with political questions concerning the Italian identity as such. However, they did confront issues that contributed to delineating difference or otherness, especially when formulating or reacting to arguments in favor of the face veil prohibition.

In doing so, they engaged with the national question, as well as with themes that appertain to ideological secularism, notably the definition of religion/religious practices and cultural/traditional ones, the definition of public spaces, the principles of autonomy and freedom, and their relation to public order and security, and of course, the notion of social integration and its bases. Furthermore, in formulating their arguments, discourse participants have resorted to a few historical themes and tropes mentioned previously, including the North-South duality, the backwards metaphor, the myth of character regeneration, and the notion of *incivilimento*. Before going into some of these arguments, it should be recalled that this was a top-down debate, circumscribed to the political class, intellectuals, some media, and a few religious representatives (Ferrari 2012; Ozzano 2013).

Specifically, those who opposed the ban, such as intellectuals and the UCOII (a more radical Muslim organization), often resorted to legal arguments, contending, first, that it is not for the state to decide whether certain symbols and practices are religious or not, and second, that women had the right to choose their clothing. Partly derived from a liberal secular discourse type, this argument implied that any such prohibition would not only correspond to an unadvised encroachment upon the religious realm, but also violate religious freedom, equality, individual autonomy, and freedom of

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expression. Further, they pointed out that because garments and religions were often named in the texts of most draft laws, if approved, they would have been discriminatory and unconstitutional. In fact, even the Committee for Italian Islam argued, in its opinion favorable to the ban, for the "deconfessionalization" of the unified text of the draft law (Comitato per l'Islam Italiano 2010). The con side also dismissed the alleged security motivations of the law, relying on legal and sociological reasoning, and thus, appealing to logic and rationality. According to them, the law was disproportionate, as well as unnecessary, seeing that it would curtail fundamental rights to handle a security problem that hardly existed. They contended that since security concerns could be easily appeased—if women agreed to remove briefly the veil to allow for identification—the sole predictable consequence of the modified law would have been the further marginalization of those women obliged to cover their faces by their partners or families (Fiorita 2008; Quattrocchi 2011; A. Ferrari 2012; 2013; Pastorelli 2012; Ceccanti 2013; Ozzano 2013).

Conversely, those supporting the ban frequently drew upon a securitized discourse type to build urgency around the necessity to address full-face veils (Fiorita 2008). Across Europe—a crucial geographical referent to the pro-ban bloc—public debates on the matter have been imbued with security discourse and themes, such as terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, and violence against women. In fact, countries such as France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, have also sought to modify laws regarding public order and security to include the prohibition, even if public debates addressed other themes, such as religious and cultural traditions, immigration, social cohesion and integration, feminism, and fundamental rights (Grillo and Shah 2012).

Table 2 shows that in Italy, too, there was intersection between the discourses on security, religion, immigration, integration, feminism, and human rights. Although the focus of the debate changed throughout time in response to domestic and international occurrences (see Ozzano 2013), many in the pro-ban bloc argued for a balance between security and freedom, an equation which implied that fundamental rights could and should be restricted under exceptional, threatening circumstances. Interestingly, the ban was also said to further fundamental rights, in that it would inter

alia afford women dignity and equality, as well as promote the "right to security". Notably, actors from different political affiliations relied on feminist discourses to defend the ban, arguing that it was a symbol of women's oppression and submission (Ozzano 2013).

Concerns with immigration and social integration were also associated to the security discourse. Frequently rejecting multicultural discourses, the pro-ban bloc argued that full-face veils not only allowed for the subjugation of women and other abusive practices against them, but also prevented socialization and integration, thereby endangering social cohesion. In such arguments, the stress on difference/otherness often became evident, since many discourse participants apparently conflated Muslims and immigrants and assumed that forms of violence against women were foreign to Italy (A. Ferrari 2013; Mancini 2012).

Another crucial topic in the public debate has been religion. Although Islam and religious governance were topics of discussion, those supporting the ban argued that full-face veils did not constitute a religious obligation of Muslims and that, as such, the proposed prohibition did not infringe religious rights. This argument gained force after the Committee for Italian Islam declared that face veiling is not a religious obligation (Comitato per l'Islam Italiano 2010). This non-religious categorization allowed for a reconciliation between the Italian open and positive notion of secularism and the *Burqa* ban, even though the pro-ban arguments were often, perhaps instrumentally, dispersive and contradictory, as Ozzano (2013) shows. Although this suggests that discourse participants did not refer to the particular notion of *laicità*, the foregoing paragraphs clarify that they did engage with the politics of discourse of secularism, having relied on, for example, specific notions of religion, culture, public sphere, rights, and integration to put forth their viewpoints.

None of these varied positions on the crucifix and full-face veils—nor the interpretations they entail—are without consequences. Notably, they contribute to determining what voices and material manifestations are legitimate in the public and institutional spheres of the Italian community, as well as the boundaries of this community. The consequences of pro-crucifixes and pro-ban discourses are particularly relevant here and not only because most Italian state actors fought to maintain the crucifix

display and to prohibit full-face veils, but also because, first, the pro-crucifix bloc was ultimately victorious[79], and second, the largely bipartisan *Burqa* ban was scarcely opposed and had good chances of being approved. As mentioned above and further discussed below, in defending both positions, state actors have put forward secular discourses that have illiberal undertones, not only for encroaching upon the religious realm and individual autonomy, but also for opening new forms of discursive exclusion, which establish boundaries between liberal, secular, civic, Christian Italy and Europe and outsiders, notably Islam and Muslims. The next section analyzes these discourses.

Textual and Interactional Analysis

This section examines the discourses of Italian state actors in each of the three cases described above, conducting both textual and interactional analyses. Starting from the analysis of formal, linguistic features of texts, the section also takes note of the concepts deployed by discourse participants, an exercise that contributes to reconstructing parts of the conceptual grammar of Italian secularism in the next section. The whole analysis is guided by the tentative research questions presented in the third chapter of Part I, concerning those dimensions of meaning—ideational, relational, and identity—that may be modified in discursive practice.

In respect to the ideational dimension, the main research question proposed is: how have illiberal ways of governing religion and diversity been conceived, considering concepts, epistemological assumptions, beliefs, prevailing knowledge, among others? This question may be further developed considering the case studies. Specifically, seeing that state actors have sought to govern religion and diversity in response to allegedly difficult, problematic, often pressing situations, a proper starting point for the textual analysis is to ask how discourse participants have defined and substantiated the social problems that required state intervention. In other words, what concepts,

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[79] This is not to say that debates on the issue have died out completely. However, they do not constitute currently a major, central theme in the national debate.

assumptions, argumentative strategies have they used to reconstruct reality and justify attempts to govern religions and to regulate their symbols?

In addition to shaping government's actions and reactions, the definition of social problems speaks of how actors conceive and perceive reality and themselves, and thus, touches upon both ideational, identity, and relational dimensions of meaning. Further, this starting point concurs with the structure of the formal, well-structured genres to which most of the textual corpus belongs: draft laws typically begin with reasons for new legislation; court sentences with the facts of the dispute; and governmental acts with a situation in need of executive action. In linguistic and interactional terms, relevant textual features to address the aforesaid question may be nominalization, rhetoric devices, vocabulary features, and recourse to authoritative voices, such as statistical reports, academic studies, and religious authorities.

In defining social problems, many of the texts analyzed, especially draft laws, adopt introductory *schemas* depicting social transformations that, albeit slow, may create dangers for both Italians and Europeans. Further, these texts attempt to create a sense of urgency and anxiety by resorting to textual features that convey the notion of an ever-progressing reality, subject to structural changes that cannot be completely controlled. This scenario, then, opens the way to worrisome future conjectures—conjectures that will be materialized unless legislative action is taken. Although texts from the executive and the judiciary branches tend to focus on single cases and relevant legal and institutional frameworks, judges on the Crucifix case, for example, have found space in sentences to communicate their interpretation of the problematic social reality of the country, which, again, appears to require immediate state action.

Since the Crucifix case extends across a longer period, introductory *schemas* differ over time: while in 2002 and 2003 there is a more general concern about "repeated controversies" (*ripetute polemiche*, also *querelle*) around the symbol, from late 2003 onwards, many discourses start from specific, yet notorious cases, such as Adel Smith, *Lautsi*, and Europe's Christian roots. Differences notwithstanding, most texts go on to mentioning and/or discussing larger social issues related to the

crucifix display, such as the bases of Italian identity and civic life, pluralism, the secular nature of the state, and even civilizational clashes. Still, it is in response to the Christian heritage debate and to the European phase of *Lautsi* that discourse producers engage more directly with these problems, explicitly discussing issues such as the putative loss of values and the identity crisis of Italy, immigration and integration, and security and Islamic fundamentalism. Thus, in formulating social problems, these discourses largely replicate contextual features presented in the previous chapters.

In bills and interrogations concerning the crucifix and Italy's Christian heritage, temporal adverbs contribute to constructing the exceptional character of present times ("as never before, in recent times," "those were certainly different times," "the current historical moment"), whereas adverbs of frequency help to impart a sense of urgency ("increasingly," "constantly", "repeatedly"). These adverbs are often connected to unpredictable and uncontrollable global transformations, which are introduced as external and unquestionable. The following passage exemplifies such transformations:

> the extracommunitarian migration, the Eastern enlargement of the European Union and the progressive expansion of an Islamic fundamentalism that is not sufficiently fought by governments...invoke the West (Garagnani et al 2008)[80]

Three formal linguistic features are noteworthy in this passage. First, the transformations mentioned are the subject of the sentence. Thus, they are active, independent variables, as opposed to the passive West, which receives the action. Second, they are nominalizations, i.e., social processes converted to nouns. Nominalization renders the existence and character of these processes unequivocal—they are a given, and by implication, reified. Third, and related to the previous point, the usage of definite article "the" reinforces the presupposed character of the transformations. Other texts adopt similar strategies: they talk about "uncontrolled immigration", "usurpation of popular

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[80] Original in Italian: "la migrazione extra-comunitaria, l'allargamento dell'Unione europea ai Paesi dell'est Europa e il progressivo dilatarsi di un certo fondamentalismo islamico non sufficientemente contrastato dai governi...chiamano in causa l'Occidente" (Garagnani et al 2008).

sovereignty", "widespread loss [of the national ethos]", "tumultuous encounter with other cultures", amongst other troubling changes said to impact Italy, Europe, and the Western world. Interestingly, even the crucifix controversy is nominalized in some instances (e.g., Sodano et al 2002; Bricolo 2006; Thaler Ausserhofer 2009). Thereby, regardless of its multifaceted aspects, the controversy seems to acquire the active power of "questioning", "hurting", even "cancelling" (*mettere in discussione*, *ferire* and *cancellare*) the Italian and Christian culture and civilization.

However, the crucifix display itself is presented as a nonproblem. Rather, it is the proposed exclusion of the symbol from a variously defined "public sphere" that is deemed problematic—and a sign of other problems, such as the lack of social integration and loss of values. Again, the logical consequence of these arguments is that disputes over the crucifix can only be described as "polemics", which "hurt", "offend", and aim to "cancel" the symbols, and thus, values and principles of Italy. To build the notion of nonproblem, state actors often rely on reiterated negation, using negative clauses to dismiss not only opposite legal arguments ("not been modified", "does not prescribe", "it is not believed that", "nothing is established", "does not contrast"), but also the validity of the question and even the possibility that someone may be offended or feel disquieted by the cross ("not harmful", "not offensive", "far from offending", "cannot contradict", among others). The Charter of Values, directly quoted in some texts, illustrates this last point, since it states that "No one can say to be offended by the signs and symbols of a religion different from his/her own" (The Charter 2007, 4).

Interestingly, while state actors invalidate the emotional distress of those who contest the crucifix, Resolution n.8-00061, for example, presents the removal of the crucifix as a "fact of utmost gravity" for offending the culture and "sensibilities" of the Italian people. Similarly, the Memory of the Italian government for the ECtHR appeal talks about Catholic values deeply rooted in the "sentiments" of the population.[81] Some draft laws, such as Perlini (2003), mention a "disturbance in

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[81] Original in Italian: "fatto di assoluta gravità" and "sensibilità" (Commission on Culture, Science and Education of the Chamber of Deputies 2003).

the consciousness of the population".[82] These discursive instances seem to rehearse Garelli's (2007, 2) notion of "diffuse Catholic sensibility" and indicate that the relationship of Italians and Catholicism is indeed unconventional. They also suggest that, in defining the social problem, state actors engage with both the ideational and identity dimensions of meaning, making incursions into the subjective states of citizens and using secular assumptions, such as the idea that the crucifix also represents *laicità*, to separate emotions deemed reasonable from those deemed unreasonable. This particular secular logic seems to support state's attempts to govern and regulate the subjectivity of citizens, as well as of citizens-to-be, such as children and immigrants. Here, it contributes to establishing the crucifix removal—rather than its display in public schools—as the real problem facing Italy.

In interrogating the Minister of Education, deputy Volontè asks "how, then, can the crucifix return to public places, including the school?"[83], indicating that the social problem goes beyond single disputes over the symbol. Questionable, yet powerful ideas are implicit in this short query. First, the use of the modal verb "can" in the future tense, together with the verb "return" (*potrà tornare*) suggest that the crucifix is no longer displayed in any walls and that its return is only a possibility. Second, the specification of "schools" after "public places" conveys the wrongful idea that the crucifix has been removed from the public sphere as a whole. This generalization, also present in other texts that conflate schools, public institutions, and the wider public sphere, feeds into the notion that the culture and tradition of Italy, materialized in its architecture, for example, are being questioned or even cancelled. As a result, many draft laws extrapolate from the school to public structures, proposing an obligation to display the crucifix in all public offices.

In this problematic context, political inaction and lethargy are presented as dangerous; in fact, the conditional tense is rarely chosen to introduce future scenarios, even though they are speculative. Rather, as Volontè query shows, future conjectures are described in ambiguous, yet concrete ways, as though they were already, or were about to become factual realities. The following excerpt

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[82] Original in Italian: "turbamento nella coscienza della populazione" (Perlini 2003).
[83] Original in Italian: "come, quindi, il crocefisso potrà tornare nei luoghi pubblici, tra cui la scuola?" (Volontè 2002).

illustrates this point further: "It is unacceptable to cancel the emblems of our identity, indisputable cement of a community; this is tantamount to depriving of meaning the principles upon which our society is founded" (Sodano et al 2002; Bricolo 2006).[84] The usage of the present tense in this and other passages prevents debatable equivalences and conclusions from being questioned, and demonstrates the text producer's commitment to the truth of the proposition. Moreover, by using the present tense, this and other utterances acquire a subtle performative character: they convey actual threats, which can only be mitigated by reasserting either discursively or symbolically the identity, in most cases the Christian identity, of the state.

Another example comes from the draft laws concerning Italy's Christian heritage: "a Europe that renounces its own soul is destined to die" (Cota et al 2009).[85] Again, the text producer uses the present tense to speak about a possible, threatful future. Another interesting point is the metaphor used to convey the idea of a value-less and culture-less future: that of a country or continent without a "soul". Considering the aforesaid emotional distress of the population, this choice seems appropriate for it reinforces the image of Italy, Europe, and the West as integral, united bodies, which must be "protected" from wounds and other harmful actions. This metaphorical language speaks of ideational, as well as relational meanings. In ideational terms, Italy surfaces from many discourses as a body politic, whose body, soul, and consciousness cannot be separated from Christianity and its symbols—or, rather, from some version of them.

This speaks of ideological secularism in Italy, suggesting that the Catholic myth of the nation is still operative, although it now seems to be a Christian, rather than a purely Catholic myth. Italy, a united and civilized country, is founded upon secular values and principles that derive—partly or chiefly—from its Christian past, present, culture, tradition, civility, symbols, *etc.* Many different terms are used in reference to this originally Christian pool of resources. Although it has been

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[84] Original in Italian: "risulta inaccettabile cancellare gli emblemi della nostra identità, collante indiscusso di una communità; ciò significa svuotare di significato i principi su cui si fonda la nostra società" (Sodano et al 2002).
[85] Original in Italian: "un'Europa che rinuncia alla propria anima è destinata a morire" (Cota et al 2009).

mentioned in previous chapters, it is interesting to highlight the discursive articulation of this loop from liberalism to Christianity. In using terms such as culture, tradition, and heritage, state actors help not only to culturalize Catholicism/Christianity, but also to culturalize and, thus, particularize liberalism, an ideological framework that is allegedly neutral, procedural, and universal. As discussed below, in doing so, state actors can discursively justify secular utterances, measures, and actions that could infringe liberal values by endangering religious autonomy and political unity.

In this context, the legislator is called upon to defend the foundations of Italy, and thus, the state and the society as a whole. However, before going into proposed ways of handling the social problem, it is interesting to compare the foregoing to discourses about the face-veiling controversy. Draft laws concerning the so-called *Burqa* ban are seemingly more formal in the articulation of the social problems they purport to address. In accordance with draft laws' declared purpose—a technical modification of a law on public order—initial paragraphs of their illustrative relations are marked by the abundant use of legal language and quotations from expert reports and judicial documents. Such language and sources lend legitimacy to the text: the draft laws are apparently technical, objective, neutral, in short, they seem to address a factual problem.

However, closer examination reveals biases in the legal narratives of most proposals. In their intertextual references, the instrumental selection of courts' decisions and expert opinions is evident: these sources are emphasized when they support the legislator's arguments/intentions and overlooked when they do not. The proposal by Sbai and Contento (2009), for example, goes as far as adding to article 5 the nonexistent sentence "the prohibition also applies to clothing".[86] When legislators do engage with opposing legal decisions and/or opinions, it is to disqualify them as lacking, out of date, or just wrong. For example, speeches and several draft laws talk about "lack of clarity", "disapplication" or "nonhomogeneous application" of the law (respectively, "*non sufficientemente chiara*", "*disapplicazione*", and "*applicazione non omogenea*"), as well as about the need to "make

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[86] Original in Italian: "il divieto si applica anche agli indumenti" (Sbai e Contento 2009).

clear" the law (*puntualizzare* and *fare chiarezza*) and to "render [it] more efficient" (*rendere più efficace*). They also discuss new historical circumstances, and the importance of having legislators—rather than judges or administrative organs—deal with the matter.

In the first hearing of experts, for example, Jole Santelli, vice-president of the session, used her authority to reprimand law professor Domianello, who had argued that neither judges nor the police force deemed the proposed modification necessary. Before giving the floor to the next speaker, as usual, the vice-president suggested that judiciary needs are different from political ones and went on to clarify that parliamentarians considered the change necessary and that this was enough a reason to address the matter. This incident illustrates how political actors relied on legal voices and sources differently throughout the crucifix and face-veil controversies: allies in the former, they become unreliable partners or suspects in the latter. In fact, following the expert hearings, parliamentarians often quoted Muslim journalists and representatives, while largely ignoring critical legal advice.

Going back to draft laws' illustrative relations, opening legal narratives, then, give way to the definition of the social problem. By and large, draft laws assume the existence and increasing incidence of Muslim women who wear the *burqa*, the *niqab* and similar dresses in Italy and Europe, despite the lack of statistical support for these claims. The same is valid for the speeches delivered during parliamentary debates, even when discourse producers do not support a complete ban. These claims may be seen as a part of the wider public narrative on Islam presented in previous chapters, which depicts the religious group as a divisive problem, as a potential threat, and as Italy's "Other".

Due to their nature—less orchestrated than written texts—parliamentary debates contain fewer legal references than draft laws and tend to start directly from the definition of the social problem. Differences notwithstanding, in all texts, adverbs create a sense of urgency, whilst a scientific-like language helps to lend objectivity to the problem: "*more and more often*, we *observe* people, generally women, in public places with their faces covered due to allegedly traditional or

religious questions" (Malan 2009, Italics mine).[87] Other grammatical categories are also used to convey urgency. For example, in presenting the unified text of the law in the Chamber of Deputies, Souad Sbai resorts not only to adjectives such as *impellente* (pressing) and *urgentissima* (superlative of urgent), but also to the neologism *afganizzazione* ("afganization"), which in addition to expressing urgency, suggests that an extremist culture is already taking hold in Italy. These features, typical of security discourses, indicate that the problems parliamentarians aim to address are bigger than the items of clothing concerned, and include societal transformations, such as immigration and terrorism.

Moreover, legislators seem to assume that, like the crucifix, the full-face veil constitutes a problem that is much debated in society, even if critics have often questioned this assumption. Whereas some draft laws use silence to convey this idea (the necessity of a law presupposes the actuality of the problem), others state them outright: "the debate on the use of the veil...that has been opened in Italy, and that has seen [as] protagonists especially the Muslim women, needs examination".[88] In this passage, it is noteworthy how nominalization and the usage of two subordinate clauses contribute to constructing a given, commonsensical reality. This "reality" is further corroborated when other headscarf controversies are brought up, as though a debate and/or ban in France, Belgium, and other European countries generated a popular and legislative need in Italy.

Notwithstanding the public security inspiration of article 5, it is never completely clear why full-face veils are considered a problem. As indicated above, their problematic character is not confined to the fact that they obstruct identification. Instead, garments such as the *burqa* and the *niqab* seem to stand for, and to encompass large-scale modern dangers, particularly uncontrollable global transformations. Immigration, terrorism, religious fundamentalism, and the violation of human rights (especially of women): all of these are somehow attributed or related to the dresses in question, in often complex, contradictory, and scattered ways. Unusual paragraph divisions, long and complex

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[87] Original in Italian: "sempre più spesso, si osservano persone, generalmente donne, in luogo pubblico con il volto coperto per presunte questioni tradizionali o religiose" (Malan 2009).
[88] Original in Italian: "Il dibattito relativo all'utilizzo del velo,...che si è apperto in Italia e ha visto protagoniste soprattutto le donne di origine musulmana, necessita di un approfondimento" (Binetti et al 2008).

sentences, and narrative breaks signal uncertain and confusing nexuses between these phenomena and full-face veils. Moreover, the use of generalizing synecdoche, where the whole stands for an alleged part, supports the idea that face veils are more than items of clothing: they are "a system of oppression and cancellation of the woman", "cultural *jihad*", and "radicalisms", for example.[89]

Unlike the crucifix, the *burqa*, the *niqab*, and similar garments emerge from this context as symbols that should not be displayed, used, or even seen in the country, for they somehow represent the negation of those values and principles considered foundational to Italy, such as equality, human dignity, and *laicità*. In this light, full-face veils and the crucifix seem to be diametrically opposed: whereas the latter represents the very foundations of Italy, the former negates them and, in doing so, poses a threat to the country that resembles the one posed by the crucifix removal. Hence, differences notwithstanding, the two cases may be said to address similar social problems, that is, problems related to the underlying identity of the Italian state and political community.

Indeed, in full-face veil discourses, the notion of incompatibility with the "unifying tissue" (*tessuto unificante*) of society, as metaphorically put by Lanzillotta, raises additional questions of identity, citizenship, and social integration. Further, following the 2009 expert hearings, draft laws and speeches begin to address more directly themes not related to security discourses, including citizenship, integration, feminism, and the history and meaning of the veil. In doing so, discourse producers resort to intertextuality and interdiscursivity, using quotations from Muslim voices and even sacred books to make their points (and, as mentioned, ignoring critical legal voices).

In intertextual terms, these voices lend credibility to the social problem. Such credibility is furthered by the fact that parliamentarians presenting the draft laws and defending the b*urqa* ban are often women. Notably, Souad Sbai, the main author of the unified draft law, is a woman of Moroccan origins, who presents herself as a legitimate voice and authentic representative of all communities involved—Italian, immigrant, and Muslim. As a result, it seems that women, Italian and Muslim,

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[89] Original in Italian: "un sistema di oppressione e di annullamento della donna" (Sbai 2011, p.19); "*jihad* culturale" and "radicalisms" (Lorenzin 2011, p.30).

oppressed or not, are given active voice in the Parliament. Here, ideational, relational, and identity dimensions of meaning work together to support the articulation of the problem, as well as the solution proposed: the modification of a security law sponsored by women, to protect women and Italian values, and to ensure the formation of "good citizens". Thereby, it is said to promote "real" or "right" integration—as opposed to "indeterminate" multiculturalism or "false" integration. It is noteworthy that Italian values are presented, again, as equivalent to liberal, secular values. Furthermore, references to adjectives such as "good", "bad", "right", and "real" seem to reproduce narratives discussed in the previous chapters, which divide and classify both immigrants and pluralism—only, in this case, they do not necessarily apply only to foreigners.

In ideational terms, the intelligibility of this problem articulation depends on particular understandings of full-face veils. Specifically, it depends on these garments *not* being recognized as personal choices and religious symbols. To this end, parliamentarians challenge the rationality and the religious character of the practice. Using the vocabulary of the secular critique of religion, they deem full-face veils violent, oppressive, absolutist, irrational, extreme, in sum, an imposition that by no means may be considered a reasonable, autonomous decision. Further, most texts disregard the notion of "purpose" or "intentionality" (*finalità*) put forth by the Council of State, according to which Art. 5 of law n.152/1975 meant to prevent that helmets and other means were *deliberately* used to preclude recognition. Although the administrative court established individual intention as a relevant variable, most parliamentarians disavow the idea that the usage of face-veiling garments may be the result of a legitimate, personal choice; thereby, they deny women any say on the matter.

In linguistic terms, the use of passive voices, together with the fact that "women" are often part of the predicate of sentences—rather than the subject—reinforces the notion that they can only be victims. Linguistic realizations such as "women are forced to", "induced to", "an obligation imposed on them [i.e., women]", and "garments that the Muslim tradition requires women to use" not only deprive women of agency, but also strengthen traditional representations of femininity, according to which women are weak, immature subjects. Thus, while advocating women's rights,

many discourses end up relegating women, notably Muslim and immigrant women, to the background. They are passive subjects, victims that the Italian state must protect, who would, moreover, never choose to conceal their faces.

As for the religious character of the garments, nearly all parliamentarians deem full-face veils a cultural, archaic, backward, ethnic, and extreme practice, which cannot be afforded any liberal protection. They do so drawing on Muslim voices, as well as on fluctuating demarcations between religious, cultural, and secular. For instance, according to these demarcations, religiously-inspired extremism can hardly be considered religion, not at least in "civilized" countries. Such understandings, however, infringe religious autonomy, in that they actively define religion—the "real" or "moderate" Islam, in the words of some politicians—rather than merely constraining those practices believed to be in contrast with the law or constitutional principles. Moreover, a seemingly new version of the metaphor of backwardness supports these claims, creating the impression that modern, civilized, real religion comes along with modernity and development.

Together, the subject-positioning of women and the secular delineation of religious practices suggest that, as in the Crucifix case, state actors try to interfere with the subjectivity of citizens and to define religion (on subject-positioning in discourse, see Åhäll and Borg 2012). First, they tell citizens what they may and may not autonomously, rationally choose; and second, they tell believers what religious practices are legitimate and what are not. In effect, it is possible to find echoes of the myth of character regeneration/*incivilimento* in many of the texts analyzed—supported, from a relational viewpoint, by the backwards metaphor. This fact indicates, again, that in regulating religious clothing, state actors aim inter alia to form "good" religious citizens or citizens-to-be.

As mentioned, state actors also rely on interdiscursivity to articulate and substantiate the problem. Shifts from a security discourse to discourses on human rights, feminism, secularism, and social integration contribute to turning the latter themes into security matters. The following passage, from Paola Binetti's speech in the Chamber of Deputies, illustrates how these themes become intertwined in complex ways:

The measure that we wanted had a simplicity and a linearity attributable to just two premises: yes to freedom and yes to security; yes to an individual right and yes to a social responsibility; yes to women's dignity and no to violence, above all, to that of the male who arrogates to himself the right to constrict women's fundamental freedoms. Yes to freedom of religion, but not to prejudice and superstition devoid of content; yes to men–women equality in choices that involve security and yes to men–women equality in defining how to dress oneself; yes to freedom of religion in full respect of mutual diversity; yes, therefore, also to the right to change religion when there are solid motivations, without this affecting family bonds and belonging to one's emotional nucleus. We would like this to remain in the provision: respect for personal freedom and respect for security in social responsibility.[90]

While the "yes/no" argumentative structure seems to separate two different issues, freedom and security, the text producer not only fails to respect her own script, but also combines diverse themes, creating a sense of continuity between security, freedom, women's rights, and freedom of religion. For example, towards the end of the passage, men–women equality and freedom of religion emerge as both rights and security matters. Convoluted passages such as this one allow for the presentation of the full-face veil ban as a "battle for liberty" and a means to safeguard an ill-defined "right to security". These expressions illustrate how the registers of security, legal, and rights discourses are combined, thereby furthering the idea that full-face veils represent a complex bundle of modern problems, including terrorism, fundamentalism, domestic violence, misogyny, uncontrollable immigration, social disintegration, and the loss of values.

As in the Crucifix case, the foregoing scenario makes political, legislative action urgent, necessary, "ineludible", "un-delayable". In this case, too, parliamentarians describe more than a future possibility of conflict; rather, they use the present tense to tell of ongoing violence, oppression,

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[90] Original in Italian: "Il provvedimento che avremmo voluto aveva una semplicità ed una linearità riconducibile a queste due sole premesse: sì alla libertà e sì alla sicurezza; sì ad un diritto individuale e sì ad una responsabilità sociale; sì alla dignità della donna e no alla violenza, soprattutto, a quella del maschio che si arroga il diritto di comprimerne le libertà fondamentali. Sì alla libertà di religione, ma no ai pregiudizi e alla superstizione priva di contenuto; sì alla parità uomo-donna nelle scelte che coinvolgono la sicurezza e sì alla parità uomo-donna nel modo di definire come vestirsi; sì alla libertà di religione nel rispetto pieno delle reciproche diversità; sì, quindi, anche al diritto di cambiare religione quando vi sono motivazioni solide, senza che questo pregiudichi i legami Pag. 25familiari e l'appartenenza al proprio nucleo affettivo. Questo vorremmo che restasse nel provvedimento: rispetto della libertà personale e rispetto della sicurezza nella responsabilità sociale" (Binetti 2011, p.24-25).

radicalization, *etc*. In this light, article 5 must be clarified, given precision, made clear, lest terrorism, intolerance, fundamentalism, and rights violations become pervasive.[91]

This necessity brings the analysis to the proposed ways of handling social problems. Although state actors rely on similar mechanisms to address these problems, such as law proposals and court sentences, their immediate purposes are different. While most of those dealing with the crucifix seek to ensure the public display of the symbol, those addressing full-face veils try to remove all such garments from the public sphere. To be sure, these purposes are different, but not exactly opposite. The social problems presented above, and the measures proposed to address them suggest that state actors have similar, conterminous objectives when trying to regulate religious symbols.

Regarding the crucifix, state actors propose the following main measures: a general obligation to display the crucifix; actions to ensure the presence of the crucifix in classrooms and, in some cases, in all public offices; sanctions to those who remove/fail to display the crucifix; establishing spaces/times to get together and discuss diverse cultural and religious experiences; and actions to raise popular awareness as to why the crucifix is publicly displayed. As for full-face veils, the main measures proposed are: a prohibition to use items of clothes, including the *burqa* and the *niqab*, that cover in part or fully one's face or a permission to use these items, provided that the user's face remains visible; pecuniary sanctions and/or imprisonment of those who disrespect the prohibition; the creation of the crime of coercion to the concealment of the face; the preclusion of anyone condemned for the latter crime from obtaining Italian citizenship; and finally, the introduction of integration obligations to those who use face-veiling garments.

These measures and their rationale say a lot about crosses and full-face veils and reveal important ideational and relational assumptions supporting most of the textual material. First, crosses and veils are not mere artifacts, as the terms "item of furniture" and "garments" would suggest. Insofar as they carry messages, meanings, representations, they are symbols, which invite government

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[91] The proposal presented by Vassallo et al (2010) is the only one that poses the question of whether the prohibition may be effective, later reaching the conclusion that it may not.

regulation because they are socially consequential. Such symbolic character implies, again, that actions concerning crucifixes and full-face veils aim to regulate and to achieve more than the mere display and/or removal of these items. Measures such as the creation of spaces for dialogue and the preclusion of obtaining Italian citizenship suggest as much.

This is perhaps clearer in the crucifix case, since state actors, including administrative courts, openly recognize the symbolic import of the item. They recurrently refer to it as "symbol", "emblem", "image", and describe it as "essential", "constitutive", "indispensable", and "foundational". As these adjectives suggest, the crucifix is considered social consequential, with its removal being depicted as the denial of Italy's defining values and principles. Although it is not possible to talk precisely about collocation and co-occurrence, the words "symbol" and "values" often appear alongside each other or in the same sentence, indicating that the crucifix is a "symbol of values" (*simbolo di valori*), as Resolution 7-00326 puts it. Interestingly, however, while highlighting the importance of the crucifix in classrooms, some state actors try to defend its display by classifying it as a passive, inert symbol, since it is not accompanied by any attempts to indoctrinate pupils.

State actors do not afford the same type of recognition to full-face veils. They are rarely referred to as symbols, with this term being scarcely used throughout discourses. When these garments are explicitly approached as symbols, they are presented as symbols of oppression, violence, extremism, and worldviews that violate human rights. Only a few texts identify them as either symbols or religious symbols. As mentioned, such categorization—or the lack thereof—directly informs measures/courses of action state actors propose to deal with the symbolic disputes. Notably, while draft laws and resolutions dealing with the crucifix address the item directly and aim to regulate its display, measures addressing full-face veils only do this indirectly, in that their alleged purpose is the maintenance of public order and security.

That full-face veils are not recognized as symbols may be related to arguments supporting the defense of the crucifix display. Specifically, the rationale for introducing an obligation to display the crucifix depends on the sociological argument that reckons symbols polysemic. For instance, the legal

material analyzed contains many intertextual and interdiscursive references to sociological and historical discourses that contribute to seeing crucifixes and crosses as secular symbols. Accordingly, the crucifix and the cross are not merely Catholic, Christian, or even religious, but are "also and above all" historic and cultural symbols, symbols of national identification, of the values and principles that are foundational to Italy and Europe. In this light, the outright recognition of full-face veils as symbols could open the discursive field to the same logic, which would require state actors to concede that these garments may indeed represent something other than oppression, fundamentalism, *etc*. Therefore, the fact that they are not presented as either symbolic or religious supports and reinforces the proposed prohibition. Moreover, it logically averts comparisons between the *burqa* ban and the obligation to display the crucifix, in that crosses and veils cannot be deemed one and the same.

Still, full-face veils are indirectly considered social consequential, since their proposed removal from the public sphere is premised on the idea that they not only obstruct identification, but also violate fundamental rights, subjugate women, support extremist cultures, and prevent personal interaction and social integration. The use of metaphorical language helps to inscribe the symbolic import of full-face veils onto texts. For example, state actors talk about "ghosts", "cloth prison", "evil", and invisibility (*fantasma, prigione di stoffa*, and *male*), while also suggesting that full-face veils function as a wall, a barrier, an obstacle, an instrument of separation, which hides powerless victims, as well as powerful dangers. This dubious message, according to which both victims and perpetrators lie underneath the veil, is translated into the problematic set of measures presented above, which requires, for example, presumed victims to pay a fine for concealing their faces. Inconsistencies notwithstanding, victimization provides a strong motivation for the ban, whilst the specter of violence, oppression, fundamentalism, and terrorism justifies the modification of a law on public order. In other words, the edifice of the argument, however questionable, seems to work.

This is in sharp contrast with the crucifix, which is depicted as an instrument of unity. As mentioned, that it serves as an instrument of national identification is the main argument used by those who defend its public display. Still, to justify its obligatory presence in public institutions, state

actors must confront the symbol's undeniably religious character, which may be considered divisive, as well as a source of bias in favor of one single religion. Therefore, like full-face veils, crucifixes and crosses must be secularized. As indicated, to do so, state actors turn to sociological and historical arguments, thereby attributing both cultural and universal meanings not only to the crucifix, but also to Catholicism and Christianity as a whole (and even to Judaism). Specifically, by arguing that the crucifix is *above all* a symbol of Italy's culture, history, and identity, state actors effectively secularize it; by arguing that it is a symbol of those firstly Christian, and currently universal values and principles that are foundational to all civilized, liberal, and democratic societies, state actors universalize the symbol. As a result, secular–religious demarcations are subject to discursive revisions and it becomes unclear where the division between these two realms lies.

Again, this is a dubious argumentative edifice, especially considering the selective use of historical and religious sources. According to the TAR of Veneto (2005, p.14), for example,

> in the central and constant core of the Christian faith, despite the inquisition, anti-Semitism and the crusades, one can easily identify the principles of human dignity, tolerance, religious freedom, and therefore, ultimately the very foundation of the secular state.[92]

In this passage, it is striking that the administrative judge mentions, together and only in passing, the inquisition, anti-Semitism, and the crusades. The fact that these long and important episodes are quickly introduced in a subordinate clause or, as in the Council of State's sentence, only appear in between parentheses and followed by "*etc.*", contributes to diminishing their historical importance. They appear as mere setbacks in a long and progressive road towards the development of the modern liberal state, founded upon secularized Christian values, such as human dignity, equality, tolerance, and of course, secularism. These incomplete historical accounts resemble on

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[92] Original in Italian: "nel nucleo centrale e costante della fede cristiana, nonostante l'inquisizione, l'antisemitismo e le crociate, si può agevolmente individuare il principio di dignità dell'uomo, di tolleranza, di libertà anche religiosa e quindi in ultima analisi il fondamento della stessa laicità dello Stato" (TAR Veneto 2005, p.14).

occasion teleological narratives of secularization and modernization, as they insinuate that the modern state, in its liberal democratic variety, has always been the necessary endpoint of the history of Christian civilizations. However incomplete, these arguments are effective, insofar as they convincingly depict liberal and secular values, principles, and societies as at least partly derived from Christianity. If this is the case, Christian symbols cannot be said to contrast secular systems of values.

This reasoning promotes more than the secular appropriation of a religious item; it also implies a certain, narrow understanding of Catholicism and other religions. Specifically, these religions are instrumentally reduced to those phases and notions that have somehow informed the development of modern liberal and democratic states. These accounts largely disregard (or diminish the importance of), for instance, the conflictual history of secular–religious relations in Italy and Europe, as well as the fact that religions are not simply systems of beliefs. They involve mind and body, belief and action, they are filled with rituals, and are immaterial and material.

As discussed previously, full-face veils are also secularized in discourse. However, instead of being depicted as universal, they are particularized, they are said to represent only small, divisive, and extremist cultures and traditions—again, neither "real" religion nor "real" Islam. If the full-face veil cannot be understood as a symbol, an expression of personal autonomy, a religious obligation, or an acceptable cultural manifestation, then its users and/or defenders cannot claim any liberal entitlement. Thus, in categorizing the garment and its users, state actors take individual and religious rights away from both women and Muslims. They are no longer able to choose their clothes and to subscribe to certain religious interpretations. In practical terms, this reasoning allows state actors to claim that full-face veils do not fall under the "justified reason" clause of article 5. Here, too, the discursive revision of secular–religious demarcations helps the state to achieve its governance goals.

Regarding these goals, there seems to be some congruence between measures targeting crucifixes and face veils: by classifying and regulating these symbolic artifacts, state actors partake in the process of identification and seek inter alia to govern diversity, as indicated by measures on citizenship refusal, integration obligations, and the promotion of intercultural/interreligious dialogue.

Although most actors do not say so explicitly, they endeavor to do away with certain types of difference and to promote some sort of unity and integration. In fact, in both the crucifix and face veil texts, there are similar discourses on how debates concerning these symbols represent an opportunity for Italy to reassert itself, as well as to reaffirm the model of integration that it wants to pursue.

The foregoing suggests that significant relational and identity assumptions underlie discourses on the crucifix and full-face veils. Notably, it raises questions concerning self–other relationships: without understanding how state actors see themselves, Italy and Europe, national and foreign-born populations, religious individuals and groups, and social diversification and religious pluralization, many of the aforesaid arguments and measures would not be fully intelligible.

The methodological chapter of this thesis has presented a set of guiding questions to support the analysis of the relational and identity dimensions of meaning. The former, relational questions, regard relationships state actors enact and (re)negotiate in secular discourses, via the creation/usage of categories and the resetting of social and symbolic boundaries, for example. Identity questions, in turn, concern the (re)positioning of subjects in discourse and the emergence of new forms of subjectivity. As explained, revisions or changes in these dimensions of meaning may bring about consequences for social identities, social relations, as well as for broader social structures.

To approach these questions in practice, it is interesting to start from the processes of social diversification and religious pluralization. The ways state actors present, define, and substantiate these processes not only go back to the formulation of social problems, and thus, to ideational dimensions of meaning, but may also shed light on self–other relations and, more broadly, on proposed forms to deal with diversity, notably secularism and its conceptual framework.

As the problem formulation anticipates, in most discourses, social diversity, especially religious diversity, is not approached as an inherent characteristic of human life, but rather as a problem or even a threat. Nor does it seem to be generated from within Italy, Europe, or the West. Diversification is attributed first and foremost to immigration from outside of these undefined geographical referents, and Italy and Europe are often depicted as nearly homogeneous bodies.

Nevertheless, social and religious diversity are constructed in complex ways, both in texts concerning the crucifix/Christian heritage and in those concerning the *burqa* ban. Although a negative approach prevails, there are texts that do not touch upon the issue at all, that do so in ambiguous ways, and finally, that adopt a primarily positive view of diversity.

Concerning the Crucifix/Christian heritage case, discourses that address diversity take by and large a negative perspective. However, this perspective is complemented by a similarly negative view of the homogeneity promoted by a strict type of secular liberalism. In fact, the notion of "laic culture" (*cultura laica*) interacts in complex ways with the idea of a soulless political body:

> the image of a Europe without cultural passion, a Europe 'without a soul', which considered finding the lifeblood of its values exclusively in convenience and not in conviction...a Europe with a negligible cultural breath, defined 'by markets and bankers'" (Biancofiori et al 2008).[93]

In this and other passages, long and intricate sentences create equivalences as well as relationships of subordination between ideas that, on closer inspection, are questionable. Still, they are effective in conveying the metaphorical idea that a neutral and secular community is a soulless body, a body that promotes a "unified life style", an "indistinct amalgam", and "relativism," which, in turn, lead to hedonism, materialism, and individualism. Moreover, the neutral and general "laic culture" is said to "sin" for bringing together heterogeneous values, considered sources of conflicts. The origin of such threatening heterogeneity is, however, mostly external: when Europe becomes soulless, the continent is exposed, open to external attacks, to Islamic fundamentalism, to cultures and religions that are stronger than the void European ones. Here, two points are interesting. First, in interdiscursive terms, the argument logically feeds off both liberal and multicultural critiques, as though these frameworks were the same or the former somehow led to the latter. Second, in

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[93] Original in Italian: "l'immagine di un'Europa senza passione culturale , di un'Europa « senz'anima » che ha ritenuto di trovare la linfa dei suoi valori esclusivamente nella convenienza e non nella convinzione... Un'Europa con un respiro culturale irrisorio, un'Europa definita «di mercanti e di banchieri»" (Biancofiori et al 2008).

illustrating sources of diversity, many texts talk about Islam, fundamentalism, and Muslims, even if the bloc of crucifix contesters is formed by a variety of actors, including atheists and even Catholics.

Discourses on the *burqa* ban are more ambiguous in their approach to diversity. Several of the texts present negative views of diversity, especially those by members of the right-wing coalition. These views resemble those encountered in the crucifix texts: diversity is deemed external and Muslim, with immigration posing the problem of integration. Such discourses seem to go back to those identitarian narratives on immigration, discussed in the preceding chapter, which were firstly put forward by parties such as AN and LN. For example, the draft law by Reguzzoni et al (2010), from the LN, creates an extremely alarming (and patently false) scenario that reconstructs the Muslim community as foreign (as though there were no Italian Muslims), intrinsically incompatible with Italy, and actively engaged in opposing the rule of law and national culture. In interdiscursive terms, the language used in this particular illustrative relation resembles at times that of tabloid press, with many complex issues being presented in a concise and sensational fashion, such as the debate on the construction of mosques and Islamic centers in Italy. However, as the unified text of the draft law indicates, this proposal is not alone in presenting diversity as external and Muslims as foreigners. As mentioned, the citizenship provision of the unified text clearly suggests that state actors do not consider Muslims to be Italians. Further, closer examination of the self–other representations found throughout the textual material reinforces this notion, as discussed below.

Conversely, some draft laws and speeches adopt a resolutely positive perspective of diversity (for instance, Binetti et al 2008; Amici et al 2009; Vassallo et al 2010), and lean either to the multicultural or to the liberal view of society. Such positive attitudes toward diversity are noticeable not only in vocabulary features that convey ideas of openness, reciprocity, and dialogue, but also in intertextual references to comments/speeches of members of the Italian Muslim community. However, such positive perspectives still imply that diversity is problematic:

these moments of opening and exchange are likely to be also those of greatest conflict and mutual misunderstanding, particularly problematic when there are religious symbols or cultural traditions that find expression also in an outer and public dimension (Amici et al 2009).[94]

In this passage, the symmetry between subject (moments of opening and exchange) and complement (those of conflict and misunderstanding) supports the formation of meaningful pairs of concepts—opening-conflict, exchange-misunderstanding—which convey the idea that engaging with the "Other" is a potentially positive, yet menacing practice. This danger requires the legislator to act, that is, to reign over diversity. Another noteworthy point in the passage is the aggravation of the problem of diversity by religion and its ostensible public character, which replicates a well-known liberal and secular view of the public and political realms. Paradoxically, it is difficult to understand the reference to religion's "outer and public dimension" in light of the crucifix controversy and the public character of Catholicism in Italy. This puzzle is apparently solved when legislators claim that the Christian character of Italy finds expression in its liberal and democratic principles.

This argumentative edifice depends on certain self–other representations and inclusion–exclusion strategies. These representations and strategies provide actors not only with understandings of their own identities and groups, and of the world that surrounds them, but also with power to act in relation to others, to modify boundaries, and to re-negotiate relationships. In doing so, they may alter meanings, knowledge, assumptions, and bring about social consequences to themselves and to others. This means that these representations and strategies ought to be investigated.

In the textual material examined, state actors rely extensively upon "us–them" discourses, notably when trying to make sense of social and political contexts. However, there are many ways of conceiving this relationship, and thus, the protagonists of contemporary symbolic controversies in

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[94] Original in Italian: "questi momenti di apertura e scambio rischiano di essere anche quelli di maggior conflitto e incomprensione reciproca, con particolare problematicità quando vi sono interessati simboli religiosi o tradizioni culturali che trovano espressione anche in una dimensione esteriore e pubblica" (Amici et al 2009).

Italy cannot be rightfully identified. In other words, definitions of "self" and "other" seem to fade away and to be reassembled unceasingly.

Religious symbols directly contribute to this process of identification. However, the role they perform is as complex as definitions of "self" and "other". In the discourses analyzed, both crucifixes and full-face veils are emptied of their religious character (at given points) and used instrumentally to demarcate boundaries between social and religious groups. Since it is not possible to clearly identify and define "selves" and "others", Table 3 attempts to bring together the manifold constructions encountered in the textual material. In doing so, especial attention was paid to the use of pronouns and metaphors (examples: "our country," "our story, our culture, our traditions," "civilized living," "Italian and European culture," "the history and traditions of our peoples").

Table 3 – Untangling "us-them" relationships	
"Selves"	**"Others"**
Crucifix case: • Italians, Italian population, our country, our people, our national identity, Christian civilization • Europeans, European Union, Christian Europe, Eastern European Christian countries, European civilization, the West • liberal and democratic state, secular state, • Catholicism, Christian confessions, Christianity • monotheist religions, moderate Islam	**Crucifix case:** • Immigrants, extra-communitarian, minorities, other religions, Muslims, other cultures • totalitarianism and fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalism and integralism • extreme secularism, laic culture, non-believers, secular and soulless Europe, confessional regime, cultural relativism, extreme leftist groups
***Burqa* case:** • Italy, Europe, the West, civil and developed states, France, Belgium, Great Britain, Denmark, Germany • Liberal and tolerant state, secular state, multicultural state, • Secular Arab states, Turkey, Morocco, • Western women	***Burqa* case:** • Immigrants, ethnic and religious others, Muslims, minority Muslim groups, • Women, immigrant women, Muslim women • Islamic and Arab states • Tribal customs, chauvinism, sexism, extremism, extremist culture, jihadism, terrorism, Islamic terrorism,

• Muslims, secular Islamic culture, moderate Muslims, real Islam, Committee for Italian Islam	• Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, extremist regimes, radical regimes, Taliban, theocratic regimes • Vague multiculturalism, distorted notion of secularism, public religion

Table 3 is difficult to untangle, especially because relational identities may only be understood considering specific social and situational contexts. Yet, it contains insightful facts about identity construction in the two controversies at issue. To begin with, it is striking that, whereas the "self" assumes a consistent identity (Italian-European-Western-liberal-secular), the "other" takes on a multifaceted one (immigrant-female-religious-Muslim-terrorist-secularist-leftist). This imbalance is evident across controversies and suggests that the identity of the "Other" is by and large externally imposed. In fact, the "Other" is typically voiceless in these controversies. There is no real social interaction between selves and others, and thus, no negotiation of identities between putative adversaries can possibly occur. What does seem to occur is a one-sided, subtly orientalist construction of otherness, especially of Muslim women with an immigrant background. Moreover, state actors use historical tropes and past narratives and categories, as those on immigration, to generate difference.

To be sure, this is not equally the case for both controversies. Although "othering" strategies are also complex in the Crucifix case, it is in discourses concerning the *burqa* ban that the aforesaid patronizing attitude gains force. Two facts lend support to this hypothesis: first, no nationwide societal debate on the matter has taken place; and second, Parliamentary agreement on the need to ban such attires is bipartisan and far-reaching. The following passage illustrates the terms in which such discourses have been articulated:

> To wear clothing such as the *burqa* and the *niqab*, which have nothing to do with the culture of the majority of immigrant women living in Italy, but is rather an obligation imposed on women by extremists from Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries where the extremist culture and the legacy of inhuman customs and of silent family violence prevail is unacceptable, both

in principle and, in particular, if the women [concerned] live in civilized countries (Sbai and Contento 2009).[95]

In this passage, Sbai and Contento (2009) depict the "Other" in complex and multifaceted ways, which incorporate many of the identities cited in Table 3. This depiction depends on many tacit assumptions mentioned previously: first, only foreigners are Muslim; second, there is a shared immigrant culture in Italy; third, only immigrant Muslim women would wear such dresses; fourth, neither the *burqa* nor the *niqab* are religious clothes; fifth, their usage cannot reflect the individual choice of the woman; sixth, the states mentioned (including the elusive "other countries") are not civilized, whilst Italy is. It is also noteworthy the extent to which the identities of "others" are essentialized, even when putative "others" do not constitute factual groupings. In effect, their disgraceful characteristics and ways seem to be sequentially listed with the intent of creating a shocking contrast with the civilized world, considered liberal, democratic, tolerant, etc. This narrative seems to replicate historical and hierarchical conceptual divisions, such as modern–backward and North–South, with Muslims being associated to the latter terms in these dyads.

This contrast, present in several texts, legitimizes discourses and legislation that are prohibitionist and socially exclusive, while closing in advance any possibility of religious and/or cultural accommodation. Without civilized others with which to interact, coexistence is not conceivable; that is, diversity cannot be handled, it must be surmounted. It is based on this negative depiction that multicultural and dialogic approaches to the management of diversity are foreclosed in many of the speeches and draft laws. After all, engaging with uncivilized others would be tantamount to "tolerat[ing] ideologies of death and of negation of human dignity" (Mantini and Tassone 2009).[96]

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[95] Original in Italian: "Indossare indumenti come il burqa e il niqab, che nulla hanno a che vedere con la cultura della maggioranza delle donne immigrate che vivono in Italia, ma che costituisce un obbligo imposto alle donne da stremisti che vengono dall'Afghanistan, dal Pakistan e da altri Paesi dove prevalgono la cultura estremista e il retaggio di costumi disumani e di violenze familiari inaudite e inammissibili sia in linea di principio sia, in particolare, se le donne vivono in Paesi civilmente evoluti."

[96] Original in Italian: "tollerare le ideologie di morte e di negazione della dignità umana" (Mantini and Tassone 2009).

These and other passages, especially those that use war metaphors, as in "battle for freedom", securitize not only full-face veils, but also social and religious diversity as such. Securitization supports exclusive identity and relational strategies, in that it contributes to the discursive construction of threats, which generate a sense of urgency and the need for extraordinary action—regardless of the threat's actuality (Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde 1998). While securitization may be more evident in the *Burqa* case (perhaps due to the unambiguous foreign nature of perceived "others"), reiterated calls for the "defense" of Italy's cultural identity indicate that it has some explanatory power in the crucifix controversy as well (e.g., in militarized discourse).

However, exclusive discourses are not omnipresent in the material assessed. Rather, there are several instances of inclusive discourses and strategies, especially when religion enters the picture. Table 3 signals the existence of such inclusive strategies: secularism (*laicità*, *laico*, and related terms), religion, Muslims, and Islam are found on both sides of the table. This dual placement indicates that none of these terms may be defined a priori and without qualification. Religion and secularism are outstanding in this respect. These concepts interact with the larger cultural and situational contexts in complex ways. On the one hand, when discussions concern the crucifix or the Christian heritage of the country (i.e., majority religion), secularism is either demeaned or qualified. On the other hand, when controversies regard minority religious symbols and practices, religion is to be tightly controlled by a strong secular and liberal state, especially if the religion in question is Islam.

Still, this scenario does not seem to capture entirely the complex discursive treatment given to religion, secularism, and Islam. For one thing, Islam is the subject of both inclusive and "othering" discourses. In trying to understand inclusive/exclusive strategies in relation to religion and religious diversity, it is helpful to pay attention to the adjectives that qualify the terms concerned. In the Crucifix case, it is not secularism or Italian *laicità* as such that is deemed problematic, but rather a "laic", "extreme", "Jacobin" type of secularism, which allegedly endeavors to ban religious traditions from the public sphere. While this open view of secularism resonates with multicultural, "Habermasian", and constitutional ideas, it seems to apply exclusively to Catholicism or Christianity,

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sometimes Judaism. Furthermore, these religious traditions are said to deserve public standing not for their spiritual inputs, but for being and/or representing the backbone of Western culture.

As said, the crucifix is repeatedly identified "not only" as a religious symbol, "but also, and above all" as a cultural one (*non solo, ma anche e soprattutto*). The religious character of the crucifix, the cross, and even of Catholicism and Christianity is downplayed in these passages. By doing so, state actors may claim that the crucifix and the cross represent the "soul" of Italy, Europe, and the West, and Catholicism and Christianity assume the role of a civil religion, responsible for uniting the country. Overall, although the Italian version of secularism is seemingly amicable toward the majority religion, most state actors do not take advantage of this potentially inclusive framework to accommodate real religious needs. Rather, they pose as theologians, historians, and anthropologists, trying to instrumentally determine what is religious, what is cultural, and what is unacceptable in order to achieve secular goals, particularly a certain, exclusive concept of political unity.

The crucifix receives its ruling, as does the *burqa* and other garments. Full-face veils are, similarly to crucifixes, distanced from their religious substance. However, the *burqa* ruling is even harsher than the crucifix one: full-face veils are said to be exclusively cultural attires. Most discourses make this claim and, thereafter, specify that the cultures to which these garments belong are extremist, fundamentalist, tribal, ethnic, sexist, violent, amongst other pejorative adjectives, many of which reenact the backwards metaphor. Here, the identity-building role of symbols, as well as the theological role played by legislators are evident: when the legislators demarcate the cultural character of full-face veils and relate it to fundamentalist regimes, they also distinguish these regimes from the "real", "moderate" Islam, and from "secular Islamic countries". Ultimately, real Islam does not require women to cover their faces and represents a civil, or rather, civilized religion that may be or become—this is not clear—compatible with the Italy, Europe, and the West.

Still, the notions of compatibility and incompatibility contribute to constructing Islam, moderate or not, as external, as a foreign religion and culture that must be gauged against the Italian and European ones and integrated into the society. Legislators seem open to discussing

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accommodating strategies with the real Islam, within established constitutional limits. Therefore, they leave some space for dialogue and cooperation between different communities. This is an inclusive strategy, premised, however, on the exclusive assumptions discussed above. Moreover, this inclusive strategy is not without its negative counterparts. First, it seems to require Islam and other religions to resemble (a certain, ideal) Catholicism or Christianity. Second, it excludes any possibility of dialogue with, and accommodation of, those women who choose to wear full-face veils.

The Charter of Values re-proposes many of the themes, categories, assumptions, and identities described previously. The document's purpose and structure reveal thematic interconnections with the Crucifix and the *Burqa* cases. Notably, its very name, "Charter of Values of Citizenship and Integration", indicates that it speaks directly to the national question, as well as to the challenges created by diversity and the problem of integration. Further, that the Charter is now a part of the Integration Agreement but was originally devised having Islam in mind, suggests that it must be read in light of historical and current attempts to regenerate the character of, or civilize those living in the Italian territory. In fact, in the introduction to the Charter, the President of the committee responsible for drafting the document, Carlo Cardia (2007), argues that it has both an informative and a pedagogical function, especially for immigrant and religious communities. This comment alone indicates that the Charter does not concern all of those living in Italy—or not in the same way.

Skimming through the document, it is possible to identify considerations about culture and history, human rights, women's rights, the secular nature of the state, social integration, and even religious symbols. While direct intertextual references are scarce (only a few legal sources are mentioned in passing), interdiscursivity plays an important role in putting together an image of Italy that is both incomplete and problematic. To begin with, the preamble aims to outline "Italy as a community of persons and values" (Charter 2007, 1), an attempt that, given the complexity of the national question, is likely to fall short of this goal. Furthermore, throughout the other six sections, a treaty-like language introduces a few, select constitutional principles and corresponding rights and duties. These are often followed by examples, qualifications, and explanations, all of which related

to the current domestic and international environments. To be sure, this selection/ranking of constitutional values and principles is in itself questionable. Still, the illustrative addendums, which exemplify and explain these values and principles, are even more striking, for they contrast with the abstract and universal character of the legal genre. They seem to degrade the Constitution and its principles, even if they make the text more educational and relatable to readers (see, for example, Colaianni 2007; Cuttitta 2014).

In terms of content, the Charter reinforces the premises of both the Crucifix and the *Burqa* cases. The preamble establishes that Christianity, alongside Judaism, paved Italy's "way to modernity and to the acquiring of the principles of freedom and justice" (Charter 2007, 1). This claim is certainly consonant with most of the textual material concerning the crucifix and reinforces the discursive revision of the secular–religious dyad proposed by many in the pro-crucifix bloc, which secularizes the symbol, as well as Christian history and culture. Yet, neither the cross nor the crucifix are mentioned in the document. Paragraph 25 addresses religious symbols in general, replicating the open and positive secular approach described above. Although crucifix defenders have quoted it on more than one occasion, this paragraph does not make any claims regarding the cultural and historical import of Christian symbols. The preamble, in turn, not only reflects the idea that Christianity somehow led to the development of liberal values and principles, but also argues that the Judeo-Christian tradition is one of the foundations of Italy's "receptive attitude toward foreign peoples". No explanation is provided as to what characterizes this attitude. While it is unclear whether this attitude is a popular disposition, an institutional trait, or a widespread political ideology, it does seem to reproduce the notion of "*Italiani brava gente*" and the exceptionality of Italy. However, considering the previous chapter, none of these alternatives seem to be a fully adequate response, seeing how Italy has been less welcoming of foreigners than the assertion would lead text readers to believe.

Differently from many of the discourses on the crucifix and full-face veils, the Charter often presents social and religious diversity in a positive light. The preamble identifies diversity as a constituent part of Italy, of its story and people. In respect to religious diversity, the Charter

expressively recognizes the positive import of religions to the political community and reiterates the open character of Italian *laicità*. This is certainly a post-secular outlook. However, the very existence of the document indicates that diversity is or may become a social problem. In this regard, the Charter raises concrete instances of the problem of integration, most of which refer to well-known controversies concerning Muslim beliefs and practices. It addresses, for example, polygamy and forced marriages, gender equality, full-face veils, and bodily mutilations. This Muslim bias also means that other crucial diversity-related issues in Italy, such as the legal status of foreigners, are disregarded (Bova 2012). Therefore, although the Charter is allegedly meant to address all of those who reside in Italy—it does, after all, claim to elucidate and describe citizenship values—it is still meant for "others", especially Muslims. In this light, the document corroborates the semantic shift in the conception of "otherness" in the country, from the "immigrant" to the "Muslim" (Allievi 2005a).

As in the other two cases, relational and identity assumptions are central to understanding the Charter and its post-secular approach. It delineates a particular, idealized conception of the Italian self, which contributes indirectly to the construction of the "immigrant-cultural-religious-Muslim other". The Italian self seems to be first and foremost a civic and liberal subject, who is cognizant of the Italian language, history, and culture. Immersed in a European, Western, Northern, and Christian context, the Italian self is allegedly plural and open to the positive contributions of others—if they respect the liberal values upon which the Italian society is founded. While presented as open, liberal, and unencumbering, this symbolic construction of the self is simultaneously associated with the history of Italy, notably to its religious heritage. As in the Crucifix case, the Charter makes a loop from liberalism to culture and history—Christian nonetheless—which as discussed below, supports the idea of "liberalism-as-culture" (Mouritsen 2008; 2009). As argued in the previous chapter, the civic articulation of this *identitarian* position makes it harder to see how immigrants are to be integrated without assimilating this universal, yet national ethos (Zincone 2006; Antonsich 2015).

In interdiscursive terms, it is possible to identify ideational traces of different integration approaches in the Charter, from liberalism and civic integration to multiculturalism and post-

secularism. This mixture of discourses is fully operative when it comes to religion, particularly Islam. Signatories of the Charter are asked to subscribe to a particular conception of religion, deemed compatible with Italy's secular tradition. This is a moderate, reasonable religion that does not condone backward and/or extremist practices, such as polygamy, religious courts, the oppression of women, and full-face veils. Interestingly, these practices are presented as though all pertained only to Islam and to the same extent (Cuttitta 2014). In this light, the scope of the Charter seems to be integration by exclusion of the religious "garb" considered incompatible with Italian values, for being too diverse, diverse in a bad way, non-liberal, and unreasonable. This may be considered, again, a means to re-setting secular–religious boundaries around a notion of "real", "moderate" religion, which may encroach upon individual and religious freedoms, as discussed. However, Christian religions and Judaism are not subject to any such compatibility test. They appear in the text of the Charter as seeds of Italian civic and liberal values and principles. Thus represented, they seem to be quintessentially modern, moderate, and reasonable religions, as do Italian citizens.

This discursive association between different approaches to the governance of diversity in the Charter, notably post-secularism and civic integration, takes this discussion back to the network of meanings that make up ideological secularism and its conceptual grammar in Italy. The analysis presented thus far has revealed that discourse participants bring together many contemporary and historical themes, discourse types, and genres in building their cases, and that these discourses carry several ideational, relational, and identity assumptions. These assumptions speak of the process of identification, as well as of the social categories and boundaries that underlie illiberal attempts to regulate social and religious diversity in the country. Relying on these findings, the next section investigates the politics of discourse of Italian secularism, trying to identify and understand elements in the conceptual framework of this ideological formation that have allowed for the emergence of illiberal ways of governing religious diversity in the country.

The Politics of Discourse and the Conceptual Grammar of Italian Secularism

The previous sections have shown that, in trying to govern social and religious diversity, Italian state actors have resorted to, and engaged with, ideological secularism and its grammar, replicating and seeking to alter its ideational edifice in discourse. Drawing on the contextual knowledge presented in previous chapters, this section elaborates on this politics of discourse, identifying the main foundational, purposive, and operational concepts of Italian ideological secularism, investigating the relations between them, and trying to understand how they have been used to support the crucifix display, the *burqa* ban, and the Charter of Values.

Since words have the power to impart ideas, the section begins surveying vocabulary items used to refer to the Italian secular framework, including, for example, legal and philosophical terms. Drawing upon the conceptual configuration that has underpinned ideological secularism in Italy throughout time (recollected from the first and second chapters of Part II), the section attempts to track the position of concepts within the conceptual constellation that makes up the Italian secular ideology, with a view to identifying revisions that may have contributed to the emergence of illiberal instances of ideological secularism.

To be sure, the prior textual and interactional analysis sheds light on important concepts to understand ideological secularism in Italy. For instance, in epistemological terms, foundational concepts associated to the notion of rationality and to the secular critique of religion help defining objects, behaviors, and feelings as acceptable, reasonable, and possible, whereas operational revisions of social and symbolic boundaries allow for their categorization as secular, religious, cultural, historical, ethnic, among other labels. However, to reconstruct parts of the grammar of secularism as a cluster concept, it is necessary to approach concepts more systematically and focus on the conceptual networks that make up the ideological formation.

Since the Crucifix case raises more direct questions concerning legal and institutional aspects of secularism, it presents the most extensive and complex conceptual structure of all three cases

considered in this thesis. Conversely, although the *Burqa* and Charter cases certainly concern the governance of religious diversity, their primary focus is, respectively, on public order and immigrant integration. As a result, state actors mobilize the secular vocabulary derived from legal and institutional narratives to a lesser extent. However, as seen, this does not mean that these actors do not draw upon the discourse of secularism or engage in politics of discourse to put forward their goals.

In the Crucifix case, state actors frequently resort to legal and institutional secular concepts to discuss the display of the symbol. Not surprisingly, judiciary discourses contain the most abundant use of such terms. Since parliamentarians and governmental actors often quote legal texts, they also refer to these concepts often, even if in scattered and instrumental ways. Therefore, together, political and legal texts largely replicate the Italian secular order introduced in the previous chapter. Notably, the normative axis of the state receives much attention, with the Republican Constitution and the Lateran Pacts (and subsequent revision) being often recalled in the textual material.

Since *laicità* is considered a supreme constitutional principle, the Constitution is closely associated to the Italian understanding of secularism, especially articles 3, 7, 8, and 19. Further, in specifying the notion of *laicità* that emanates from the constitutional text, legal discourses bring forth several other concepts, notably equality, neutrality, impartiality, non-denominationalism, equidistance, and, of course, autonomy and freedom (of thought, consciousness, and religion). These foundational concepts are closely related to each other, as well as to *laicità*, and depending on the argument and intentions of discourse participants, they appear in texts as synonyms, as effects of one another, as more or less general, among other possibilities. It is noteworthy that the secular nature of the state is said to derive from and, at the same time, enact the concepts of liberty, freedom, and equality, and that all of these concepts are introduced as cardinal to Western liberal democratic systems, although different states approach these concepts differently.

The foregoing depicts an ideal conceptualization of secularism, which does not seem to differ from the one introduced in the first chapter of this thesis. Still, it does conform with the Italian definition of secularism, in that none of its terms are conceived in opposition to religion. Instead, the

conceptual network that orbits this ideal suggests that the Italian version of secularism is about giving rights to, and accommodating religion, rather than about keeping religions at bay or carving out a clearly defined secular realm. The following passage provides an example of how state actors bring together these concepts:

> *Laicità* or non-denominationalism does not mean at all the opposite of religion or religiosity, but more simply that the democratic state recognizes an autonomous value to the religious sphere as external to its determination, in essence it proclaims itself neutral in respect to the different religions to which the citizen can freely adhere or even not adhere, in the case of atheistic convictions or simple indifference with respect to the religious fact.[97]

In defining *laicità*, Veneto's TAR brings together some of the aforementioned concepts to convey an open and positive approach towards religion, which departs from strict liberal secularism. In fact, state actors hardly ever use the concept of separation to define *laicità,* a choice that morphologically speaking, seems to put this operational concept further away from secularism's conceptual core. Furthermore, none of these foundational concepts seem to convey or imply an opposing, inimical, and conflicting relation to religion. In qualifying *laicità* and related concepts, state actors sometimes mention "active" and "French" secularism, as well as "exclusive" conceptions of *laicità*. These qualifiers are related either to stark anti-religious positions, or to religious indifference, nihilism—even to the loss of tradition, culture, and values. Thereby, state actors envisage different branches of the concept of secularism and stress that the Italian branch does not defy religion; rather, it seeks to establish fair and respectful conditions under which peaceful secular–religious relations may occur. In practical terms, the Concordat and agreements reflect this open, positive, and accommodating relation of the Italian secular state with religion.

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[97] Original in Italian: "Laicità o aconfessionalità non significa affatto l'opposto di religione o religiosità, ma più semplicemente che lo Stato democratico riconosce una valenza autonoma alla sfera religiosa come estranea alla sua volontà di determinazione, in sostanza si proclama neutro rispetto alle diverse religioni a cui il cittadino può liberamente aderire ovvero anche non aderire, per convinzioni atee o semplice indifferenza rispetto al fatto religioso" (TAR Veneto 2005, paragraph 7.1).

This practical, institutional side of the concept begs questions concerning the objectives of Italian secularism and the concepts used to describe them. To be sure, freedom, liberty, and equality still appear closely associated to the concept of *laicità*, as its ultimate, ideal objectives. However, state actors also resort to other concepts to define secular objectives, such as coexistence (*convivenza*), respect, tolerance, democracy, pluralism, peace, and even citizenship. Insofar as these concepts refer to goals, they may be approached as purposive. However, they are also operational to some extent, in that they describe processes or procedures, not final products. In this light, the pursuit of some sort of political unity, in a context characterized by diversity, may be indirectly identified as one of the goals of Italian secularism. Interestingly, these purposive concepts do not refer merely to the relation between state and religion, but also to that between all different groups in society—be them religious or not—and between these groups and the state. This implies that, as an ideal, secularism in Italy is to function as a general, unifying concept, and that as a modality of political rule, it is also about governing that which is considered diverse. In other words, as discussed previously, the Italian concept does appear to be more far reaching than suggested by the conventional notion that secularism is about religion.

Still regarding its scope, *laicità* does not pertain only to, or is enacted exclusively by, the state. Despite the reiterated use of the expression "the secular nature of the state" (*laicità dello stato*), the concept is often defined as a "common principle" or "shared value" of the state and religious groups, notably the Catholic Church and Christian denominations. This understanding reflects the institutional history of Church–state relations in the country, as well as the secular approach discussed above. In line with contemporary post-secular viewpoints, discourses on the crucifix, on Italy's Christian heritage, and the Charter openly acknowledge the spiritual and moral contribution of religion to the political community. In these discourses, terms that are not necessarily secular or religious, such as "principle", "value", "contribution", and "legacy", serve as conceptual bridges between the two realms, surpassing ordinary boundaries and bringing the secular and the religious closer together. As a result, it is possible to envision a connection between the Italian conception of

secularism and religion, a connection that goes beyond the semantic necessity generated by a relation of opposition. While the secular is still antithetical to the religious, this does not mean that the former is anti-religious, nor that the secular state, the public sphere, and the political community should always disregard, discard, and/or disavow religious moral and social resources.

However, Italian state actors do more than acknowledge that religions contribute to the unity and functioning of the political community. As seen, they also create close conceptual relations between Catholicism, Christianity, and even Judaism, on the one hand, and Italian secularism's core concepts, including freedom, tolerance, and equality, on the other hand. To do so, they argue that these religions have contributed to the development of the liberal and secular state and to the delineation of the national identity—and it is often unclear what is the difference between the state and its identity. In conceptual terms, state actors refer to "culture", "roots", "heritage", "tradition", and "history", using this apparently factual, objective vocabulary to promote the secular appropriation of Christian history, thought, and material culture, notably the crucifix and the cross.

Further, they turn to religious terms and discourses, first, to describe secular entities and, second, to secularize religious resources. Regarding the latter, they try to secularize the crucifix and Christian principles, such as mercy and "love thy neighbor", by including them in the conceptual networks of those concepts orbiting *laicità*. As for the former, they use terms such as "soul" and "spiritual" to talk about the national identity and the political community, indirectly evoking debates on civil religion. Thereby, they re-arrange secular–religious boundaries with two main consequences. First, they draw a nexus between secularism and Christianity that turns the cross into a symbol of *laicità*. Second, they revive, or rather, propose a new version of the Catholic myth of the nation, that is, the idea that Christianity functions as Italy's civil religion and, thus, as a basis for citizenship.

The operational dyads public–private and individual–collective lend support to the civil role attributed to Catholicism and Christianity. Discourses on the crucifix recognize and give prominence to the collective, social, outer dimension of religion, as well as to the religious dimension of social reality. It is this collective expression of Catholicism, including its symbols, that is considered a

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constituent part of Italy's culture and identity. Accordingly, state actors do not endeavor to delineate a public space strictly separated from, or deprived of, religious influences. However, as mentioned, the concept of "public" is variously defined, and often includes the institutional apparatus of the state. While this is considered problematic by those who oppose the crucifix, many state actors argue that the institutional display of the symbol is not in contrast with secular neutrality and religious equality: since the crucifix is a collective expression of cultural Catholicism, which, in turn, is a defining element of Italy's liberal and secular identity, it may be legitimately hanged on the walls of public offices. In other words, the conceptual ramifications of Italian secularism, notably the notions of religious heritage and cultural religion, allow for the crucifix display in state institutions to be represented as an inclusive, rather than potentially discriminatory practice.

This whole conceptual articulation is problematic for two main reasons. First, it allows for the secular, and thus, political appropriation of religious terms, resources, and entities, with the result that the state can legitimately determine the meaning and scope of elements pertaining to the religious realm, such as the cross and the "hard core" of Christianity, as Veneto's TAR puts it. Second, it particularizes and culturalizes liberal and secular arrangements, not only because liberal and secular values and principles are depicted as intrinsic to, pertaining to, or deriving from certain religious traditions, but also because the identity of Italy, Europe, and more broadly, the West, is said to be characterized by these values and principles—or rather, by a certain reading of them. Therefore, this conceptual articulation turns liberalism and secularism into culture and establishes that Italy, Europe, and the West are secular insofar as they are, or have been, religious—more specifically, Christian (on the culturalization of liberalism, see Mouritsen 2008, 2009).

The *Burqa* case reinforces this conceptual network not only because it confirms the connections indicated above, but also because it provides an image of the "Other", of that who is not and cannot be or become a part of the political community. If one of secularism's purposes is political unity, this implies that, as a modality of political rule, it also creates and/or reproduces difference. That is, it promotes inclusion, as well as exclusion—of artifacts, behaviors, characteristics, and even

people. By stipulating otherness, discourses on full-face veils reinforce the image of Italian self and citizenship, as well as the culturalization of liberalism and secularism.

To be sure, the Crucifix and Charter cases also provide indications about otherness. First, the legal and institutional concepts identified above are not without caveats or limits, which allow the state to restrict individual and religious freedoms under some circumstances, for example, if religious obligations contrast with constitutional principles. Second, as discussed in the previous section, crucifix discourses delineate an ideal image of the Italian self and, on occasion, specify those who are considered others, such as students of other cultures and religions and fundamentalist religions. In this context, the cross and the values it allegedly conveys assume not only a unifying, but also a pedagogical function, that is, to inform and form the citizens of tomorrow, be them young students or adult foreigners. With its civic integration drive, the Charter, too, delineates secular, but culturally Christian selves and Muslim others, in addition to reproducing a new version of the myth of *incivilimento* or character regeneration. This indicates that when secularism is turned into an identity and a cultural trait, its conceptual framework may serve to establish and/or replicate unity, as well as difference, and to legitimately extend political rule of the state (into the religious realm, for example).

As seen, in discourses concerning full-face veils, the secular vocabulary loses space to terms from other discourses, notably security, feminism, human rights, and social integration. Nevertheless, it is still possible to identify several concepts from the secular network in the textual material, such as freedom, equality, respect, dignity, and coexistence. These concepts seem to work primarily as purposive and are not related exclusively to the secular nature of the Italian state. They also belong to other conceptual networks, indicating, again, that interdiscursivity informs the political discourse on, and the politics of discourse of, secularism. For instance, equality is crucial to feminism, freedom interacts in complex ways with the concept of security, and coexistence is certainly a part of the vocabulary of social integration. In effect, as seen, the conceptual link between security and freedom, according to which the latter is not absolute and depends on the former, serves to extend the secular power of the state in the full-face veil discourses. Specifically, in the name of security (national

security and public order, but also women's security), state actors arrogate to themselves the right to encroach upon individual rights and freedoms, including religious rights and freedoms.

In the *Burqa* case, however, most state actors do not relate security directly to religion or to secular discourses. When debating full-face veils, they claim to be talking about something else, something that is "not religious", something that does not deserve the rights attributed to religions. All the concepts used to refer to, describe, and justify what is "not religious" may be considered a part of the conceptual constellation of secularism, for they contribute to defining the religious. They are operational, insofar as they work on the boundaries between the secular and religious realms. Amongst these concepts, one finds "cultural", "traditional", "ethnic", "tribal", "fundamentalist", "extremist", "violent", "imposition", and "irrational". Curiously, while several of these concepts replicate modernization narratives and the secular critique of religion, they do so to define practices, beliefs, and groups that are *not* religious. Religious fundamentalism and extremism, for example, are often treated as non-religious (cultural, tribal, etc.) or as wrong in their religious interpretation.

However, since these practices, beliefs, and groups are not reasonable, modern, or civilized, they do not seem to be secular either. Therefore, rather than using secular discourses to alienate unacceptable religious beliefs or practices, state actors seem to diminish the distance between the secular and religious realms, bringing a certain conception of religion into the conceptual network of Italian secularism, and leaving the remainder in an uncertain, ambiguous situation—a situation that excludes what is left of religion from any liberal entitlements. As a result, "real", "moderate" religions become a part of the secular political community and, as such, are said to respect those values and principles that allegedly define the Italian secular state and national identity, such as individual freedom, human dignity, gender equality, among others.

Again, this conceptual articulation compromises religious autonomy, as well as women's rights and freedoms. Thus, in the *Burqa* case, it is not securitization that allows for illiberalism to surface in discourse—although it helps to justify the curtailment of freedoms—but rather the secular

revision of the concept of religion. This revision excludes from the religious realm those beliefs, practices, and groups deemed incompatible with the putative identity of the Italian state and people.

The notion of incompatibility, often associated to social integration, appears as an operational concept in secular discourses. Drawing on secular concepts and assumptions, it delimits diversity, but only Muslim diversity. As seen above and demonstrated by the Charter, the test of compatibility is meant primarily for Muslims, especially since gender equality, human dignity, civilization, among other concepts related to liberalism and secularism, are considered an intrinsic part of Italy, Europe, and the West. Again, these concepts convey an idealized image of Italy and its citizens, in addition to culturalizing liberalism and secularism. Further, that Muslims and, more broadly, Islam are portrayed as foreigners, immigrants, outsiders reinforces the secular power of the state; first, it allows Muslims to be considered not fully modern, liberal, and secular, and second, it allows parliamentarians to delimit what is acceptable/compatible and to define the conditions under which Islam may become a part of Italy—even though it has in fact been a part of the country for centuries. The proposal to preclude citizenship acquisition in the unified text of the draft law is perhaps the best illustration of how these conceptual nexuses create exclusive relational and identity meanings, and thereby, lead to parliamentarians to back secular discourses and proposals that are in fact illiberal.

The Charter brings together the Crucifix and *Burqa* cases and contributes to understanding how the conceptual constellations associated to each are complementary. The document certainly reproduces the conceptual network of an open, positive, and accommodating type of secularism. Notably, the section "Secularism and Religious Freedom" focuses on concepts such as freedom, equality, and non-discrimination, and recognizes the contribution of religions to the political community. It also addresses religious symbols, confirming that Italy respects the symbols of all religions, and specifying that no one "can" claim to be offended or distressed by such symbols.

While this stipulation could have paved the way for the acceptance of full-face veils, the subsequent paragraph reproduces parts of the approach of the pro-ban bloc. It argues that covering one's face is not permitted, for it prevents identification, as well as social interaction. The paragraph

also mentions in passing reasons related to fundamental rights and gender equality, stressing that clothing should be neither imposed nor detrimental to one's dignity. Interestingly, there is no remark on the religious character of full-face veils. Still, together with other paragraphs that address questionable practices typically associated to Islam, this (legally incorrect) paragraph helps to re-create and highlight Muslims' difference, otherness. Thereby, it reinforces the secular claim to power of state actors, who seek to ensure that Muslims are properly integrated in Italy's secular and liberal society. In conceptual terms, these practices relegate Islam to the margins of secularism's conceptual network: it seems to be even more different than other religions "different from" Catholicism. This positioning is in harsh contrast to that of Judaism and Christianity, as discussed below.

"Secularism and Religious Freedom" is not the sole section of the document to address the secular nature of the state. Like in discourses concerning the crucifix, the preamble of the Charter establishes conceptual relations between Judaism and Christianity, on the one hand, and liberal and secular principles, on the other hand. Specifically, a vague, yet intricate mix of secular and religious elements is said to have formed the cultural identity and tradition of Italy, and to have led to the development of the modern secular state in its current liberal and democratic form. In other words, Judeo-Christian precepts or inspirations are depicted as conditions of possibility for the emergence of the Italian state.

Here, the same critique to contemporary incarnations of the post-secular (see the first chapter of Part I) seems to apply to the Italian version of secularism. That is, regardless of the historical validity of the aforementioned claim, political actors have used it in exclusionary ways, with worrisome social implications. When majority religions and their resources are depicted as constituent parts of a state and its people, important social boundaries are redrawn, with inclusive and exclusionary consequences for religious actors. As seen, the notion of Judeo-Christian heritage is only intelligible in light of particular, narrow understandings of the Christian and Jewish traditions, understandings which characterize these religions as ultimately reasonable, rational, and civil.

For instance, in supporting the crucifix display, some state actors defend the exceptionality of Christianity in respect to other faiths, arguing that since charity and respect for the other are its most important precepts, Christians cannot take discriminatory stances. Correspondingly, the Charter's preamble attributes to, inter alia, the Judeo-Christian tradition the allegedly receptive attitude of Italy towards foreigners. These characterizations support the argument that Christianity and Judaism are inherently compatible with the secular nature of the state, in addition to suggesting that Italian secular and religious identities are intrinsically intertwined. Here, again, the religious seems to be brought into the secular conceptual network, particularly via the concepts of tradition, heritage, roots, culture.

Albeit seemingly inclusive, this conflation of secular and Judeo-Christian identities is problematic for three main reasons briefly discussed above. First, it tends to essentialize religious identities and to redefine narrowly the concept of religion. Second, it reinforces boundaries that exclude religious others. Finally, it contributes to the culturalization of liberalism and secularism.

The first reason has been discussed in relation to religious autonomy. The Charter, too, raises the issue, allowing for a more elaborate critique. In the document, Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Judaism, appear among the foundations of liberal and secular values and principles. Drawing on similar notions of public–private and individual–collective to those seen in crucifix discourses, the document also presents religion as a social phenomenon that participates in, and contributes to, the political community. Thus, it seems that religions, especially Judeo-Christian ones, are, below their comprehensive and encumbering structures, ultimately civil and reasonable. Nevertheless, these characterizations reproduce secular modes of thinking and help to define religion in narrow and often demanding ways, that is, in ways that may undermine the self-understandings of all religions, be them foreign or not. In this light, it may be argued that only a narrow conception of religion is brought into the conceptual network of Italian secularism. Still, it allows state actors to depict Italy as open and accommodating, and to define not only real, moderate religions, but also the notion of incompatibility.

Second, concerning the creation of additional boundaries, it may be argued that when the identity of Italy (and Europe) is affirmed in reference to religion, secular and cultural lines of

demarcation are superimposed, making it harder for "foreign" religions to integrate into a society that is secular-insofar-as-it-is-Christian. An explicative footnote of the Italian version of the Charter (Cardia 2007, 13) illustrates how state actors have strengthened these lines of demarcation in discourse:

> The secular nature of the state is the result of the evolution of the West towards modernity and has its roots in the same Christianity that from the beginning has distinguished the temporal sphere from the spiritual one ("render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's", Matthew, 22.21) ... The Islamic tradition, at least in countries where Islam is a clear majority, is perhaps the most distant compared to the evolution experienced by Western systems, but also other religious cultures can encounter difficulties in accepting the principles of secularism of religious freedom.[98]

In this passage, it is noteworthy that Christianity and Islam are not only simplified, but also turned into cultural identities. Indefinite references to the concepts of roots, tradition, and culture—none of which are religious concepts—contribute to presenting Christianity and Islam as more than different religions; they appear to be a constituent part of the cultural identity of peoples in different parts of the world. From this viewpoint, however, Islam is considered foreign not only for failing to live up to secular standards (as it may happen to other religions), but also for not being a part of the Italian and European cultural identity—rooted in Christianity. By creating boundaries that depict Islam as a cultural outsider, Italy's conception of *laicità* reinforces the alleged incompatibility between Islam and the West and may even strengthen "civilizational" arguments (Cesari 2013). As a result, the Italian version of secularism can only achieve a narrow conception of political unity, insofar as it depends on Muslim otherness. Additionally, since this religiously-defined cultural identity is characterized as liberal, civic, and secular, Italy's open and positive version of secularism

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[98] Original in Italian: "La laicità dello Stato è il frutto dell'evoluzione dell'Occidente verso la modernità ed ha le sue radici nello stesso cristianesimo che sin dall'inizio ha distinto la sfera temporale da quella spirituale ("rendete a Cesare quello che è di Cesare e a Dio quello che è di Dio", Matteo, 22,21) ... La tradizione islamica, almeno nei Paesi dove l'Islam è netta maggioranza, è forse la più distante rispetto all'evoluzione vissuta dagli ordinamenti occidentali, ma anche altre culture religiose possono incontrare difficoltà nell'accettare i principi di laicità di libertà religiosa."

may be said to partake in the culturalization of liberalism—the third reason mentioned above (Mouritsen 2008, 2009).

Throughout the Charter, the Italian identity seems to be rooted on particular readings of values and principles, such as equality, freedom, and human dignity, that typically belong to the conceptual networks of both liberalism and secularism. Drawing on authors that criticize civic integration programs, it is possible to elaborate on why this idealized representation of the Italian identity, also observed in the other two cases, is particularly troublesome. First, although the Charter claims that Italy is formed by different peoples, it takes a stylized snapshot of the society, which portrays it as a static and homogeneous entity (Miera 2012). Consequently, cultural differences are approached as potentially threatening, and narratives on victimized majorities may be articulated (Fekete 2011; Wieviorka 2014). Some texts in the Crucifix and *Burqa* cases illustrate both possibilities, with parliamentarians arguing that debates on, or the removal of, the crucifix "hurt" Italy, its culture, civilization, and identity, and that full-face veils are but a sign of the growth of extremism in the country. Second, this ideal representation of receiving societies and their underlying civic apparatus tends to fixate, solidify the content of inherently contested liberal and democratic values and principles. By treating these values and principles as though they had a single and widely accepted definition, the Charter, as well as discourses on the Crucifix and *Burqa* cases, tend to universalize norms that are in fact socially and politically embedded—and, thus, norms that are neither neutral nor procedural. Liberalism is effectively culturalized by such practices of essentialization and reification (Mouritsen 2008, 2009). In this case, however, it is the normative content of religion—instead of nationalism—that is said to be civic (Mouritsen and Olsen, 2013).

Together, the foregoing paragraphs suggest that the Italian version of secularism, with its open, positive, accommodating character, may function as much as an inclusive as an exclusive ideology. As seen, both inclusive and exclusive effects of this form of political thinking about diversity may be problematic, in that they enable discourses and practices that risk infringing valuable products of liberal societies, including religious autonomy, individual freedoms, and political unity.

In conceptual terms, illiberalism seems to become possible primarily because of shifts in the definition of religion, notably the partial incorporation of this concept into the secular network.

Illustration 2 is an attempt to represent the conceptual network of *laicità* as it emerges from the discourses analyzed in this thesis. Notably, it shows that as articulated by state actions, Italian secularism leads to a revised ideal of secular political community that, as argued above, only includes civil, moderate religions and, moreover, seems to depend on Muslim otherness.
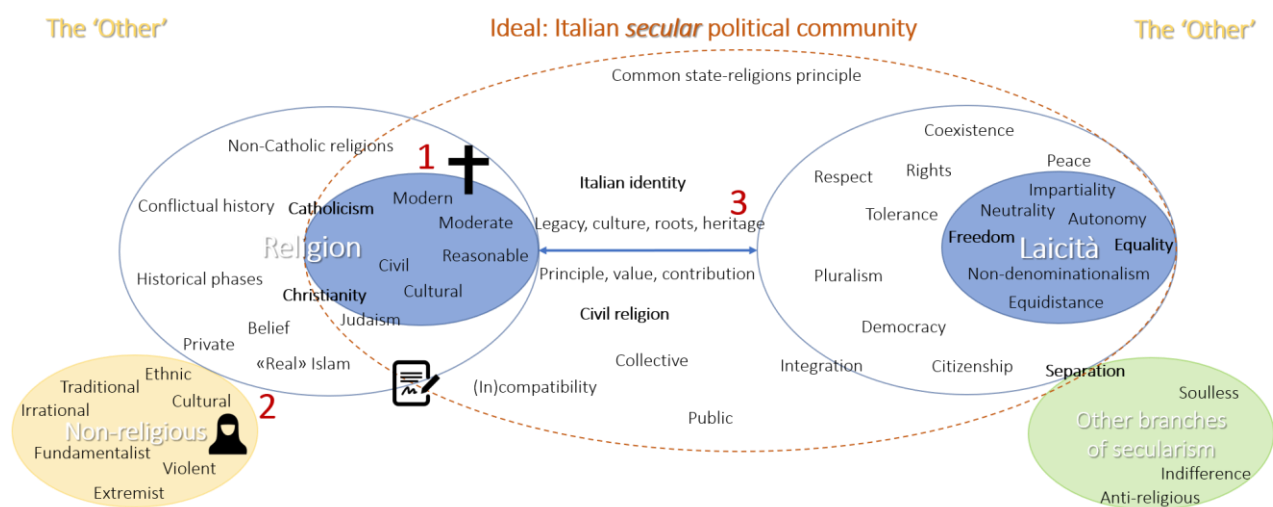
Illustration 2: The Conceptual Network of Italian *Laicità*

More specifically, it demonstrates that, in all three cases, state actors establish, through discourse, conceptual connections between Italian secularism and religion that go beyond traditional meanings conveyed by the secular–religious dyad. First, they use post-secular arguments about the religious origins of the secular state (and of liberalism, democracy, the modern state) to connect Christianity and, in some cases, Judaism, to core secular concepts, such as freedom, equality, tolerance, neutrality, and even separation. By doing so, state actors assume an intrinsic compatibility between these "domestic" religions and *laicità*, lessening, for example, the importance of the conflictual history between them. Second, and related to the first point, state actors secularize these religions through the concepts of roots, tradition, culture, heritage, and identity, thereby instituting these religions as parts of the national culture and identity or, even more instrumentally, as civil

religions that contribute to bringing together the Italian political community. However, as seen, these conceptual connections are limited to few religions and, further, to a narrow, secular understanding of them. Everything else about these religions is either disregarded, as in the case of history, or left outside of the conceptual network of Italian secularism. Moreover, this narrow understanding of religion is in contrast with those religious inspirations that—allegedly—do not belong to Italy, Europe, and the West, and that are not considered moderate or compatible enough to successfully integrate into a liberal and secular society. Interestingly, as seen in the *Burqa* case, some of these incompatible practices are not considered religious at all, and this categorization allows for them to be excluded from both the society and liberal entitlements.

The foregoing suggests, in accordance with the findings of the textual analysis, that the ideational meanings that make illiberal secularism possible are supported by relational and identity ones—a fact that confirms, moreover, that the politics of discourse and that of identity are closely related. The conceptual network of Italian secularism often gains meaning via a particular notion of Italian self, as well as of (Muslim) otherness. While the Italian self is often idealized—to the point that Italy appears to be secular because it is religious—Islam is often depicted as a potentially dangerous outsider, which must be integrated, or assimilated into an innately secular and liberal Italy.

Conclusion: Understanding Illiberal Secularism

In observing illiberal forms of governance across Western Europe, a region characterized by liberal and democratic governments, this thesis has sought to understand one specific manifestation of this tendency, illiberal secularism. More specifically, it has asked how secularism has been discursively (trans)formed in political contexts so as to allow for the emergence of illiberal forms of social and religious governance. To do so, it has analyzed the discursive enactment of ideological secularism by Italian state actors in three specific cases—the Crucifix and the *Burqa* controversies, and the Charter case. Part I of this thesis has clarified the many theoretical and methodological considerations that have underlined this analytical endeavor. Relying on these considerations, Part II has investigated the workings of Italian secularism over the past three decades, particularly its discursive realizations.

Part I is composed of three chapters. The first and second chapters are primarily theoretical: they have delved into contemporary debates over the secular vocabulary and social identification, with a view to devising a theoretical edifice to support the analysis of illiberal secularism. The third chapter, in turn, has proposed a combined methodology, based on CDA and conceptual analysis, to investigate the enactment of ideological secularism by state actors. In addition to shedding light on illiberal secularism and, more broadly, illiberalism, Part I of this thesis has attempted to contribute to the blooming literature on secularism and religious governance by proposing new ways of approaching and investigating these matters.

Drawing upon critical approaches that define secularism as a politically dynamic stance about social diversity, the first chapter of Part I has discerned three related, yet different conceptualizations of secularism, namely institutional, philosophy, and ideological secularism. In doing so, it has delimited the scope of inquiry of this thesis and proposed a way of distinguishing and re-assembling different definitions of secularism. The chapter, in fact, has proposed to look at and to investigate secularism as an ideology—i.e., to approach it as a form of political thinking about the government

of diversity, and thus, as a view of the political field and, simultaneously, a means through which this field is conceived. Specifically, it has argued that, as an ideological formation, secularism shapes thinking and action, and provides a conceptualization of, and an answer to, the problem of diversity. Thus, it functions as much as an ideal as a modality of political rule.

However, precisely because secularism is a prominent way of speaking about religion and politics, it may be considered a problematic category of analysis. The final sections of the first chapter have addressed this critique, arguing that approaching secularism as a political, rather than analytical category is of utmost importance to grasp the operation, (trans)formations, and implications of the secular ideology. Put differently, it is by studying what secularism does when placed on the center-stage of political contestation that this thesis has hoped to understand how illiberal secularism has been made thinkable and possible in conspicuously liberal and democratic societies.

To operationalize secularism as a political category, the first chapter has turned to discursive approaches, as well as to the notion of "essentially contested concept". Building on the idea that language is not a neutral means of conveying meaning, and that concepts are carriers of political thoughts and practices, it has been possible to conceive of secularism as a "cluster concept", not only because it is plural and contested, but also because each criterion used to define it generates a host of equally contested questions. Consequently, rather than trying to identify a single meaning, this thesis has proposed to examine secularism in discourse and within its specific grammar, tracking concepts and ideas that relate to, embody, and enact it, especially its illiberal manifestations.

Thereafter, by looking at the uses to which the concept is put in political theory and practice, the first chapter has started to shed light on the constellation of concepts that give meaning to secularism, mainly in the Western world. In doing so, it has also proposed a three-fold classification of the concepts that orbit secularism, distinguishing between foundational, purposive and operational concepts. Albeit artificial, this classification has allowed for the identification of secular concepts that function primarily as ideals, as well as of those that carry out the secular project in practice.

The final section of the chapter has attempted to clarify what is meant by illiberalism. Relying on the notion of internal critique, the section has sought to discern the normative standards that liberalism uses to define certain beliefs, practices, and discourses as illiberal. By referring to these normative standards, which criticize religion for being absolutist and infringing individual liberty and autonomy, for example, it has been possible, throughout this thesis, to identify illiberal tendencies within contemporary discourses, policies, and other practices of secular states.

The second chapter of Part I has complemented the first one by explaining the social processes underlying ideological secularism, notably identification. Moreover, it has defined a host of theoretical and analytical instruments, which have been used throughout this thesis, such as social and symbolic boundaries and categorization practices. Starting from a general introduction to social constructivism, the chapter has presented reality, as well as identities, categories, and institutions as social products, and thus, as culturally and historically specific social formations. Further, it has clarified that processes of social construction are inherently political. In this light, secularism, too, must be seen as a social product, and one that is closely related to the process of identification.

Identification is central for the construction of knowledge and meaning: it is in defining sameness and difference that social agents give sense to the world (Jenkins 2008). Like identification, secularism is engaged in a search for meaning and unity, and works at the boundaries that define prevailing meanings, domains, and categories of understanding. This correspondence between secularism and identification means that the later process may serve as an entry point to the study of ideological formations supporting illiberal forms of social and religious governance. In articulating secular discourses, states contribute to defining knowledge and beliefs, as well as to categorizing, and eventually excluding, individuals and groups.

In fact, this second chapter has also presented the state is a powerful identifier. By enacting its categorizing powers through discourse, the secular state may influence meanings in all levels of social organization, ranging from the broader ideational level to the individual, subjective one. Since discursive and symbolic resources are important means of exerting such influence, the chapter has

highlighted that language and discourse are an essential part of the power exercised by states and their institutions (Bloor and Bloor 2007; Wimmer 2013). Therefore, it has reiterated the importance of language and discourse, including concepts, to contemporary modes of secular governance.

The last chapter of Part I has elaborated on the centrality of language and discourse in politics and, accordingly, proposed to investigate the discursive enactment of ideological secularism using the analytical frameworks derived from conceptual grammar and CDA. In addition to recognizing language as an important means to convey social influence and power, these approaches investigate similar subjects, i.e., politics in and over language, in the CDA case, and political discourse and the politics of discourse, in the conceptual grammar one. In introducing their theoretical foundations and methodological apparatuses, the chapter has argued that these two approaches may be seen as complementary: while conceptual networks may reveal more directly and systematically how ideational meanings have come together to enable the emergence of illiberal secularism, they do not say much about, first, ideational transformations in a sociohistorical and institutional perspective, and second, ideological effects on lower levels of social organization, notably relational and individual levels. After having introduced CDA's premises and main concepts, the chapter has sought to specify corresponding analytical steps, which have contributed to defining the structure of Part II of this thesis. It has also presented and justified the case selection, that is, the Italian governance of social and religious diversity and three specific cases, the Crucifix, *Burqa* and Charter cases.

Part II of this thesis has investigated the Italian conception of secularism, or *laicità*, including its sociohistorical and institutional dimensions, and the discursive enactment of this ideological formation by state actors in the three cases mentioned above. Specifically, considering the sociohistorical and situational contexts in which political contests over the governance of social and religious diversity have been imbricated, this second part of the thesis has sought to analyze the political discourse on, and the politics of discourse of secularism, with a view to identifying how ideational, relational, and identity dimensions of meaning have been transformed so as to allow for the emergence of illiberal secularism.

Part II has been divided in three chapters, each of which corresponds roughly to one of CDA's analytical phases—i.e., explanation, interpretation, and description. Accordingly, the first chapter has examined the larger societal context in which the notion of Italian political community and contests over the governance of diversity have been imbricated, with the intention not only of contextualizing the case study, but also of identifying broader ideational meanings that have informed the definitions of state, religion, nation, and otherness in the country. Indeed, recounting historical episodes that have been—and remain—relevant to the articulation of "self" and "other" in Italy, the first section of the chapter has sought to identify productive and interpretative resources, such as mainstream knowledge and assumptions, to which contemporary discourse participants refer to render texts and utterances intelligible. Therefore, while historical remarks on state-building and church–state relations have certainly helped to contextualize the discursive events studied in this thesis, they have been only partly recounted—only insofar as they provide resources for contemporary modes of thinking about, and acting upon, what is Italy and Italian and, by implication, what is not.

By doing so, the chapter has identified important historical themes and tropes that are still mobilized by political actors in disputes over the definition of the political community and the governance of diversity. As the third chapter of Part II has shown, versions of the myth of character regeneration, the Catholic myth of the nation, and the backward metaphor—among others—still have purchase in contemporary political contests. Similarly, the second part of the chapter, which has recounted the Italian "politics of identity" over the past three decades, has contributed not only to presenting the sociopolitical circumstances in which the three case studies have developed, but also to emphasizing new, additional themes, concerns, and narratives within processes of identity renegotiation in Italy. As seen, the emergence of new political forces, globalization, immigration, social diversification, and religious pluralization are amongst the broader transformations that have led to the re-discovery of the national question in Italy, as well as to intellectual discussions over the country's civil religion. Again, without grasping these and other societal developments, such as

cultural Catholicism and the Islamization of immigration, it would have been impossible to draw explanatory connections between single texts and broader ideational meanings.

Similar claims apply to the second chapter of Part II. It, too, has provided indications as to how Italian actors process discourses in practice. Focusing on the situational context in which ideological disputes have occurred, the chapter has presented the institutional apparatus of the Italian state, notably the legal and institutional frameworks devised since the late 1980s to manage social diversification and religious pluralization in the country. However, this second chapter has undertaken both descriptive and analytical tasks: it has not only introduced, but also analyzed categories the Italian state has contributed to producing, such as religions "different from" Catholicism, and practices it has helped to enable, such as discrimination.

Drawing on the social constructivist claim that states contribute to conceptualizing diversity, the chapter has demonstrated that the categories, policies, and even statistics created by the Italian state to grasp and handle migratory phenomena have influenced not only how these phenomena have been perceived, for example, on public and political debates, but also the Italian politics of identity. For instance, the categories of "Italians abroad" and *extracomunitari* have become an important part of self–other definitions in the country. Further, the law and order and, more recently, security approaches of the state towards immigration have contributed to constructing immigrants as a social threat and immigration as a security problem, especially in light of religiously-inspired terrorism.

Similarly, the chapter has shown that, over time, the state has helped to define the Italian political community in both opposition and correspondence to religion and Catholicism. Specifically, in attempting to understand and handle first, Catholicism, and later, religious diversity, the Italian state has created legal and political categories, such as "non-Catholic religions" and the notion of Catholic "historical heritage", that have become a part of the country's self–other definitions. In this respect, it is noteworthy that the Italian state has represented religious diversity, first, as a result of immigration and, thus, as external to Catholic Italy, and second, as a potentially problematic and

disruptive social reality. Thereby, it has contributed to the negative "othering" of religious diversity, not least by accentuating, problematizing, and exceptionalizing immigrant religiosity.

Together, these two contextual chapters have set the stage for the description phase, that is, for the textual and interactional analyses. They have also contributed to the final conceptual analysis. These analytical steps are covered in the third chapter of Part II. This final chapter has investigated the Crucifix, *Burqa*, and Charter cases, trying to understand how the discursive re-articulation of Italian secularism has allowed for the emergence of illiberal discourses and proposals on the governance of social and religious diversity. To this end, the chapter has conducted textual, interactional, and conceptual analyses of the discourses of Italian state actors. The first section of the chapter, however, has only introduced the cases. By looking into the social and political fields in which they have surfaced, it has also sought to demonstrate that, albeit different, the three cases are closely connected: all three speak to wider debates on the national question, on social diversification and religious pluralization, on civil religion, among other sociopolitical issues.

Thereafter, the second section has tried to reconstruct parts of the discursive landscape to which the textual material belongs. Speeches, draft laws, court sentences, among other governmental texts, have been immersed in wider discussions occurring in the public sphere, and have often responded to, and/or echoed these discussions. By describing discursive positions, as well as reiterated discourse themes, types, and genres, this section has conducted an initial content analysis of the debates on the crucifix and the *burqa*. This analysis has shown that, whether opposers and defenders of symbols, most social actors have brought together different discourses and genres to put forward their arguments, resorting often to intertextuality and interdiscursivity to do so. Moreover, it has clarified that public debates on religious symbols have served to rehearse and to re-connect important contemporary themes and issues, such as the national question, security, and immigration—many of which have to do with identification and secularism.

The general topics used by both "pro" and "con" blocs, such as those concerning the religious character of symbols, secularism, and post-secularism in Italy, have helped to corroborate the

theoretical assumption that secularism, as an ideology and cluster concept, works as a stake in, and a means through which to engage in politics. Specifically, the section has shown that the political discourse of secularism may be—and has been—put to different uses throughout the controversies. For example, atheist associations have mobilized and relied on ideological secularism as much as certain religious groups but have emphasized different ideas and concepts to oppose the crucifix—whereas the former have focused on state neutrality, the latter have talked about pluralism and democracy. Of course, that social actors not only rely on, but may also alter ideological meaning through discourse has been an assumption of this thesis all along. Still, it has been essential to the discourse and conceptual analyses carried out in the last sections of this third chapter.

The final sections of the chapter have analyzed the textual material using frameworks derived from the CDA and the conceptual approaches. The textual and interactional analysis has recollected and expanded the research questions posed in the third chapter of Part I, which concerned discursive changes to ideological secularism, considering the ideational, relational, and identity dimensions of meaning. In ideational terms, the section has investigated, first, how state actors have defined and substantiated social problems, second, their proposed solutions to the problems identified, and third, their take on the processes of social diversification and religious pluralization. In relational terms, the section has sought, first, to untangle the self–other relationships and the inclusion–exclusion strategies that have supported secular discourses, and second, to understand their ideational, social, and identity consequences.

In respect to the latter, i.e., the identity dimension of meaning, the section has shown that both ideational knowledge and relational ideas have impinged on identification, and thus, on this subjective, individual dimension. For instance, it was shown that, in defining certain feelings and practices as unreasonable or inconceivable, state actors have used secular criteria to try and control the subjective responses of individuals to symbols. In other words, they have sought to govern the subjectivity of citizens and of prospective citizens. However, to understand in more detail whether and how these secular incursions have had consequences to religious individuals and groups, this

thesis would have had to investigate these actors and groups. While such an analysis would have enriched the findings presented here, it was beyond the scope of this thesis, which focused on the state and its secular attempts to govern social and religious diversity. Despite these limitations, the textual and interactional analysis has demonstrated that the ideational, relational, and identity dimensions of meaning are closely connected and that, as such, changes in one of them are likely to be associated to, or even dependent on, changes in the other two.

Bearing these connections in mind, the analysis has disclosed the argumentative structure and assumptions of discourses that are themselves illiberal, or that support measures with potentially illiberal consequences, especially those in defense of the crucifix and of the *burqa* ban. This exercise has shown that, in all three cases considered, state actors have attempted to justify their engagement with social problems by referring to the domestic and international environments and, more specifically, to allegedly uncontrollable and potentially dangerous social transformations, notably immigration, terrorism, and religious fundamentalism. Although it is often unclear how these phenomena are related to religious symbols or the Charter, they seem to create a troublesome future context, in which the Italian state and its identity are exposed to risks and harms. In the Crucifix case, the very removal of the symbol is depicted as one such harm—a wound in Italy's body and soul. In the *Burqa* case, more than terrorism, it seems to be the expansion of extremism, and of Islam in some texts, that appears to endanger Italy and its identity. While the Charter does not present these transformations, notably immigration, in a negative light, it does depict social integration as a necessity considering the many problems culturally and religiously diverse societies encounter.

These formulations suggest that state actors have aimed to address issues related to the problem of diversity and the process of identification. In fact, although approaches to diversity are ambiguous in all three cases, social pluralization and religious diversification often appear as potentially dangerous sources of conflicts. Further, discourses often approach diversity as an urgent, existential problem, a characterization that has allowed for the emergence of securitized discourses. As seen, by using the register of security discourses and conflating it with that of human rights

discourses, state actors have been able to propose measures that would have violated fundamental rights and generated discrimination, especially in the *Burqa* case. Securitization has certainly played an important part in the emergence of contemporary forms of illiberal governance in Western Europe. However, it has not been the main mechanism used by state actors in the three cases analyzed, especially when one considers the curtailment of religious rights.

Rather, the textual and interactional analysis has revealed that, since state actors address identification and the problem of diversity, they have been able to use many of the assumptions, meanings, and concepts of ideological secularism to put forward illiberal secular discourses and proposals. This is not to say that intertextuality has not played a role in this process. Still, in all three cases, the need to reassert the identity of the state has allowed state actors not only to revise secularism as an ideal, but also to use it (as a modality of political rule) to expand state power, to reconsider liberal entitlements, and to redefine the boundaries of the political community. To be sure, as described in the second chapter of Part II and demonstrated in the conceptual analysis, the Italian open, positive, and accommodating conception of secularism speaks of a liberal, civil, and democratic community, cognizant of its cultural and religious heritage and open to the contributions of religions. However, through the secularization of Christianity and the culturalization of liberalism, the discourses analyzed extrapolate from this ideal to an image of Italy as a culturally liberal society, the secular character of which is dependent on its religiosity and represented by its symbols.

The conceptual analysis has corroborated this revised ideal of political community by unveiling conceptual relations between Catholicism, Christianity, and even Judaism, on the one hand, and Italian secularism's core concepts, including freedom, tolerance, and equality, on the other hand. Together, both analyses have demonstrated that this ideal secular depiction impacts ideational, as well as relational dimensions of meaning. For example, it reinforces the idea that Catholicism is Italy's civil religion (and the Catholic myth of the nation) and resets social and symbolic boundaries.

These consequences speak of secularism as a mode of political rule. The ideal described above is only tenable in light of certain secular–religious articulations and self–other representations,

through which state actors govern social and religious diversity, delineate their political field of authority, and allocate rights and freedoms. By secularizing parts of Catholicism and Christianity, by defining them as cultural religions, and by creating the notion of real, moderate religion (or Islam), state actors have breached secular–religious boundaries and contributed to resetting them. More specifically, they seem to have brought the religious field under the purview of the secular state, using historical, cultural, sociological, and even theological arguments to do so legitimately. Thereby, they have expanded the political authority of secularism and enabled the discursive articulation of a narrow, sometimes instrumental conception of religion—one that is often depicted as liberal, civil, secular, and thus, compatible with the Italian political community.

The conceptual analysis has reinforced these arguments. Although it has identified the conceptual networks that give life to an open and accommodating *laicità*, the section has also disclosed conceptual connections that have allowed for the secular appropriation of religious terms, resources, and entities. Based on these networks, state actors, it seems, can legitimately determine the meaning and scope of elements pertaining to the religious realm. Further, they can not only define "real", "reasonable" religious feelings, practices, interpretations, and groups, but also create tests of compatibility (as the Charter appears to be at times) to ensure that religions are "moderate" enough, an adjective the meaning of which is never completely clear. In any event, drawing on this definition of religion, Italian state actors could, for instance, allocate the right to eventually negotiate an *intesa* (agreement) with the state to those Muslim associations that ratified the Charter.

As the two analytical sections have indicated, state actors have also been able to determine what is not religious. They do so abundantly in discourses about full-face veils. In doing so, these actors disenfranchise individuals and religious actors. In other words, they take away certain liberal rights and entitlements, notably individual freedom and religious autonomy. Interestingly, the analyses have shown that they do so rightfully—or apparently so—by resettling boundaries and using their categorizing powers. For example, full-face veils appear in many texts as both non-religious and

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non-secular, seeing that they are said to belong to extremist, fundamentalist, uncivil, and backward cultures, traditions, and countries. As such, there cannot be any liberal right to use them.

As the reference to other cultures, traditions, and countries suggests, self–other representations and relational meanings have supported the workings of Italian secularism. Throughout discourses, these representations are not stable and fluctuate according to the case and argument at hand. Still, the CDA and conceptual analyses have shed light, first, on an ideal conceptualization of Italy, which is fairly consistent across the three cases considered, and second, on a multifaceted representation of the "Other". Primarily self-ascribed, the identity of the Italian self is Italian, European, Western, liberal, secular, and Christian. Meanwhile, the identity of the "Other" is largely imposed and brings together many referents, including immigrants, women, religious actors, Muslims, terrorists, fundamentalists, Islamic countries, and even secularists and leftists. However inconsistent and questionable, this construction of otherness often amounts to an-"Other" that is uncivilized and/or that endangers the Italian self and, thereby, lends support to the argumentative edifice presented above. Specifically, it helps to legitimize discourses and legislation that are prohibitionist and socially exclusive, while foreclosing any possibility of religious and/or cultural accommodation.

To be sure, Italian depictions of otherness often include Islam and Muslims, considered outsiders, foreigners, immigrants, even though this is not necessarily the case. Throughout discourses, Muslim otherness does not seem to be purely religious. It is more fundamental: it is cultural and inscribed onto the Christian history and liberal character of Italy, Europe, and the Western world. Notably, since the latter are said to be secular insofar as they are culturally Christians, Islam and Muslims must always be subjects of secular governance. In other words, this standpoint superimposes exclusionary lines of demarcation, depicting Islam as a foreign religion and culture, the beliefs and practices of which must be evaluated in light of nationally-defined liberal and secular values and principles, and thereafter, integrated into the political community. Although this implies dialogue and accommodation strategies between the state and Muslim actors, it also means that all beliefs,

practices, and even actors that do not pass such dubious tests of compatibility, such as full-face veils, may be excluded from the Italian political community.

All in all, the final, analytical chapter of the thesis has demonstrated that illiberal secularism has become possible in discourse via transformations in all three dimensions of meaning, especially ideational and relational dimensions that make up the concept of religion. While interdiscursivity contributes to legitimizing discourses and proposals that violate liberal rights and promote exclusion, it is by revising the concept of religion and expanding the secular, and thus, political authority into the religious realm that state actors have been able to sustain illiberal secularism.

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Annex 1: Textual Corpus Analyzed: The Charter Case and The Crucifix and Burqa Controversies

Charter Case

Charter of Values of Citizenship and Integration (*Carta dei valori della cittadinanza e dell'integrazione*), adopted by the Ministry of the Interior on April 23, 2007.

Crucifix Case

List of Draft Legislation, Court Sentences, and Governmental Acts (by date)

Act	Title, Author, and Presentation Date	Legislature and Government	Political Group
C.2749	"Norme per disciplinare l'esposizione del Crocifisso in tutti i pubblici uffici e le pubbliche amministrazioni della Repubblica", presented by Bricolo et al on May 15, 2002.	XIV legislature (May 30, 2001 to April 27, 2006) Berlusconi-II government	LN, Center right, Marg-Ulivo
n.3-01362	Interrogation to, and immediate reply by, the Ministry of Education, University and Research on the "Display of the Crucifix in Hospitals and Schools", presented by Volontè on September 18, 2002.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	UDC
S.1717	"Disciplina per l'esposizione del Crocifisso nelle scuole e in tutti gli edifici pubblici", presented by Sodano et al on September 19, 2002.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	UDC and Center right
n.3-00622, 623, and 627	Triple interrogation to the Ministry of Education, University and Research concerning the crucifix display, presented respectively by Monticone, Compagna et al, and Tessitore et al on September 19 and 24, 2002.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	UDC and DS-U
C.3182	"Norme per disciplinare l'esposizione del Crocifisso nei pubblici uffici e nelle pubbliche amministrazioni della Repubblica", presented by Alboni et al on September 24, 2002.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	AN
Session n.127	Reply to triple interrogation n.3-00622, 623, and 627 by the State undersecretary for Education, University and Research, Valentina Aprea, on September 26, 2002.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	
n.2666 and n.2667	Explanatory bylaw and corresponding note by the Ministry of Education, University and Research concerning the display of the crucifix in schools, presented on October 3, 2002.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	

C.4426	"Disposizioni concernenti l' obbligo di esposizione dell' immagine del crocifisso nelle aule scolastiche", presented by Perlini on October 28, 2003.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	FI
C.4427	"Disposizioni in materia di esposizione del crocifisso nelle aule scolastiche", presented by De Simone on October 28, 2003.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	RC Left
n.8-00061	Resolution "Display of the Crucifix in Classrooms" of the Commission on Culture, Science and Education of the Chamber of Deputies, presented by Adornato and others, and approved on November 6, 2003.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	FI, AN and UDC
S.2643	"Abrogazione delle disposizioni riguardanti l'obbligo di esposizione del crocifisso nelle aule scolastiche", presented by Cortiana on December 10, 2003.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	Verdi-U Left
S.2564	"Modifica dell'articolo 8 della Costituzione", presented by Nania et al on October 30, 2003.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	AN
S.2653	"Modifica dell'articolo 2 della Costituzione", presented by Izzo and Peterlini on December 15, 2003.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	FI
Ruling n.1110	Ruling n.1110/2005 from the Regional Administrative Court (TAR) of Veneto on the *Lautsi* case, from March 17, 2005.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	
Ruling n.556	Council of State, Ruling n.556/2006 on "Crucifix Display in Classrooms", from February 15, 2006.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	
S.174	"Modifica dell'articolo 2 della Costituzione in materia di riconoscimento dei valori cristiani come princìpi ispiratori della società", presented by Izzo et al on May 4, 2006.	XV legislature (April 28, 2006 to April 28, 2008) Prodi-II government	FI
C.995	"Disposizioni per disciplinare l'esposizione del Crocifisso in tutti i pubblici uffici e le pubbliche amministrazioni della Repubblica", presented by Bricolo on May 31, 2006.	XV legislature Prodi-II government	LN
C.2729	"Modifica degli articoli 7, 8 e 19 della Costituzione, per il rafforzamento della laicità della Repubblica", presented by Turco, Beltrami, and D'Elia on June 5, 2007.	XV legislature Prodi-II government	RNP
C.241	"Modifica degli articoli 7, 8 e 19 della Costituzione, per il rafforzamento della laicità della Repubblica", presented by Turco et al on April 29, 2008.	XVI legislature (April 29, 2008 to March 14, 2013)	PD

Act	Title, Author, and Presentation Date	Legislature and Government	Political Group
		Berlusconi-IV government	
S.320	"Modifica dell'articolo 2 della Costituzione in materia di riconoscimento dei valori cristiani come princìpi ispiratori della società", presented by Izzo on May 5, 2008.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL
C.1483	"Modifica all'articolo 7 della Costituzione, concernente l'inserimento del riconoscimento delle radici culturali giudaico-cristiane", presented by Biancofiori et al on July 15, 2008.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL and LN
C.1809	"Disposizioni per la valorizzazione dell'identità culturale cristiana nella scuola italiana", presented by Garagnani et al on October 17, 2008.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL, UDC and LN
C.2374	"Modifica all'articolo 8 della Costituzione, concernente il riconoscimento della tradizione giudaico-cristiana quale fondamento civile e spirituale della Repubblica", presented by Cota et al on April 9, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	LN
C.2457	"Modifica all'articolo 1 della Costituzione, concernente il riconoscimento delle radici cristiane della civiltà italiana", presented by Mussolini et al on May 20, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL
S.1856	"Disciplina per l'esposizione del Crocifisso nelle scuole e in tutti gli uffici della pubblica amministrazione", presented by Thaler Ausserhoffer et al on November 4, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL and UDC
C.2905	"Disposizioni concernenti l'esposizione del Crocifisso e del ritratto del Presidente della Repubblica, quali simboli della tradizione e dell'unità della Patria, nelle scuole e negli uffici pubblici", presented by Scandroglio et al on November 10, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL and UDC
S.1900	"Disposizioni in materia di esposizione del Crocifisso nei pubblici uffici e nelle pubbliche amministrazioni della Repubblica", presented by Caselli et al, on November 18, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL
Appeal n. 30814/06	Memory filed by the Italian Government for the appeal hearing before the Great Chamber of the ECtHR, on June 30, 2010.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	

The *Burqa* Case

List of Draft Legislation, Court Sentences, and Governmental Acts (by date)

Act	Title, Author, and Presentation Date	Legislature and Government	Political Group

C.2192	"Divieto di indossare il velo negli istituti scolastici a garanzia del rispetto del principio di ugualianza", presented by Garnero Santanché et al on January 30, 2007.	XV legislature (April 28, 2006 to April 28, 2008) Prodi-II government	AN, LN, FI, UDC, and IdV
S.1387	"Divieto di indossare il velo negli istituti scolastici a garanzia del rispetto del principio di ugualianza", presented by Allegrini et al on March 8, 2007.	XV legislature Prodi-II government	AN
C.627	"Modifica dell'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n.152, in materia di utilizzo di mezzi, anche aventi connotazione religiosa, atti a rendere irriconoscibile la persona", presented by Binetti et al on April 30, 2008.	XVI legislature (April 29, 2008 to March 14, 2013) Berlusconi-IV government	PD and UDC
S.289	"Modifica alla legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, in materia di tutela dell'ordine pubblico", presented by Baio et al on April 30, 2008.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PD
Ruling n.3076	Council of State, Ruling n.3076/2008 on "the appeal brought by the town of Azzano Decimo", from June 18, 2008.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	
S.1205	"Divieto di indossare il velo negli istituti scolastici a garanzia del rispetto del principio di ugualianza", presented by Bianchi on November 13, 2008.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PD
C.2422	"Modifica all'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, concernente il divieto di indossare gli indumenti denominati *burqa* e *niqab*", presented by Sbai and Contento on May 6, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL
S.1650	"Nuove norme in materia di travisamento in luogo pubblico", presented by Malan on June 30, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL
C.2769	"Modifica dell'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, in materia di tutela dell'ordine pubblico e di identificabilità delle persone", presented by Cota et al on October 2, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	LN
	"Indagine conoscitiva I nell'ambito dell'esame delle proposte di leggi C.2422 Sbai rencante 'Modifica all'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, concernente il divieto di indossare gli indumenti denominati *burqa* e *niqab*' e C.2769 Cota e altri recante 'Modifica dell'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, in materia di tutela dell'ordine pubblico e di identificabilità delle persone'".	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	

	Commission I for Constitutional Affairs, Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister, and Affairs of the Interior Ministry of the Chamber of Deputies, on November 10, 2009.		
	"Indagine conoscitiva II nell'ambito dell'esame delle proposte di leggi C.2422 Sbai rencante 'Modifica all'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, concernente il divieto di indossare gli indumenti denominati *burqa* e *niqab*' e C.2769 Cota e altri recante 'Modifica dell'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, in materia di tutela dell'ordine pubblico e di identificabilità delle persone'". Commission I for Constitutional Affairs, Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister, and Affairs of the Interior Ministry of the Chamber of Deputies, on December 1, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	
C.3018	"Modifica all'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, concernente il divieto di indossare gli indumenti denominati *burqa* e *niqab*", presented by Mantini and Tassoni on December 3, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	UDC
C.3020	"Modifica dell'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, in materia di tutela dell'ordine pubblico e di uso di indumenti indossati per ragioni di natura religiosa, etnica o culturale", presented by Amici et al on December 4, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PD
C.3183	"Modifica dell'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, concernente il divieto dell'uso di indumenti o altri oggetti che impediscano l'identificazione nei luoghi pubblici o aperti al pubblico", presented by Lanzillotta on February 8, 2010.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	Misto
C.3205	"Modifica dell'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, in materia di tutela dell'ordine pubblico e di uso di indumenti indossati per ragioni di natura religiosa o etnico-culturale", presented by Vassallo et al on February 11, 2010.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PD
C.3368	"Modifica dell'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, concernente il divieto dell'uso di indumenti o altri oggetti che impediscano l'identificazione nei luoghi pubblici o aperti al pubblico", presented by Vaccaro et al on April 7, 2010.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PD and PdL
C.3715	"Disposizioni concernenti il divieto dell'uso di indumenti che impediscano l'identificazione nei luoghi pubblici", presented by Reguzzoni et al on September 17, 2010.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	LN
C.3719	"Modifica all'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, concernente il divieto di indossare indumenti che rendono difficoltoso il riconoscimento della persona, in luogo pubblico o aperto al pubblico", presented by Garagnani on September 21, 2010.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL
S.2342	"Modifica dell'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, in materia di utilizzo di indumenti a copertura del volto", presented by Vicari et al on September 23, 2010.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL
S.2343	"Modifica all'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, concernente il divieto di indossare gli indumenti denominati *niqab* e *burqa*", presented by Spadoni Urbani on Setember 23, 2010.	XVI legislature	PdL

		Berlusconi-IV government	
C.3760	"Modifica dell'articolo 5 della legge 22 maggio 1975, n. 152, concernente il divieto di indossare indumenti che rendono difficoltoso il riconoscimento della persona, e introduzione dell'articolo 612-ter del codice penale, in materia di costrizione all'occultamento del volto", presented by Bertolini on October 11, 2010.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PdL
Session n.540	Chamber of Deputies, Debate on the unified text of the draft laws: Binetti ed al; Sbai e Contento; Cota ed altri; Mantini e Tassone; Amici ed al; Lanzillotta; Vassallo ed al; Vaccaro ed al; Reguzzoni ed al; Garagnani; Bertolini: "Disposizioni concernenti il divieto di indossare indumenti o utilizzare altri mezzi che impediscono il riconoscimento personale, l'introduzione del reato di costrizione all'occultamento del volto e modifiche alla legge 5 febbraio 1992, n. 91, in materia di cittadinanza (A.C. 627-2422-2769-3018-3020-3183-3205-3368-3715-3719-3760-A)", on October 24, 2011.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	

Political Parties and Groupings

AN: Alleanza Nazionale

CCD-CDU: Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e dei Democratici di Centro

DS-U: Democratici di Sinistra - l'Ulivo

FI: Forza Italia

IdV: Italia dei Valori

Marg-U: Margherita-Ulivo

LN: Lega Nord

PD: Partito Democratico

PdL: Popolo delle Libertà

RC: Rifondazione Comunista

RNP: Rosa nel Pugno

UDC: Unione Democristiana e di Centro (previously CCD-CDU)

Verdi-U: Verdi-l'Ulivo (previously "Verdi - l'Unione")

Annex 2: CDA's Potentially Relevant Linguistic Aspects

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)
Table based on Fairclough (1992; 1995)

(1) Description (textual analysis)

3 Interactional Conventions are features related to text's organizational traits:

In a Dialogue:
1 Turn-talk systems may have *relational* values.
2 Control over Interactions show power in discourse (ideational, relational, & identity values):
- Interruption;
- Enforce explicitness;
- Control the topic;
- Formulation.

2 Grammatical traits are formal features with several values:

Ideational
- the ways in which grammatical forms code happenings or relationships in the world, those involved in such processes and their spatial and temporal circumstances.
1 Types of processes & participants;
2 Agency;
3 Nominalization
4 Active/passive sentences
5 Positive/ negative sentences.

Identity:
- ways in which grammatical features express expressive values of participants.
1 (Expressive) modality;
2 Verbal tense;
3 Adverbs.

Relational
- ways in which grammatical features express relational values.
1 Modes of sentences;
2 (Relational) modality; and
3 Pronouns.

1 Words are formal features with several values:

Ideational
- representations of the world are coded in vocabulary.

Text	Text ↔ Disc. type
1 Vocabulary items; 2 Co-occur and collocation; 3 Ideological contestation of words.	1 Classificatory schemes; 2 Meaning relations: - synonymy - hyponymy - antonymy.

Relational
- words depend on, and help to create social relationships between participants
Eg.: Formality, slang and euphemism.

Metaphors:
- alternative metaphors may be used = different ideological attachments.

Identity:
- vocabulary features imply an evaluation of the world.
Eg.: Usage of diverse classificatory schemes.

Connective:
- values formal features have in connecting together parts of a text.
1 Logical connectors;
2 Coordination or subordination of clauses;
3 Grammatical devices used for referring in a reduced form to material previously introduced (eg.: pronouns and definite article).

4 Large Scale Structures of texts are conventional frames with diverse values:

- Texts may have structures that consist of predictable elements, which are disposed in a predictable order, and this sort of global structuring might help to reproduce ideological claims.

Examples:
- Newspaper articles;
- Telephone calls;
- Police interviews.

Annex 3: List of Draft Legislation on Religious Freedom from 1990 to 2013

Act	Title, Author, and Presentation Date	Legislature and Government	Political Group
	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", approved by the Council of Ministers on the 13th of September, 1990. It has not been presented in Parliament.	X legislature (July 2, 1987 to April 22, 1992) Andreotti-IV government	Center
C.3947	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by the President of the Council of Ministers, Prodi, on the 3rd of July, 1997.	XIII legislature (May 9,1996 to May 29, 2001) Prodi-I government	Center-left
C.3947/A	Revised text "Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by the Permanent Committee I (on Constitutional Affairs), on the 28th of February, 2001.	XIII legislature Amato-II government	Center-left
C.1576	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by Valdo Spini et al, on the 14th of September, 2001.	XIV legislature (May 30, 2001 to April 27, 2006) Berlusconi-II government	DS-U
C.1902	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa", presented by Giuseppe Molinari, on the 7th of November, 2001.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	Marg-U
C.2531	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by the President of the Council of Ministers, Berlusconi, on the 13th of April, 2015.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	FI
C.2531-1576-1902/A	Revised text "Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by the Permanent Committee I (on Constitutional Affairs), on the 9th of April, 2003. *Version of the text discussed in the Parliament assembly	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	
C.2531-1576-1902/AR	Revised text "Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", approved by the Permanent Committee I (on Constitutional Affairs), on the 13th of April, 2005.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-II government	
C.6096	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa", presented by Aldo Perrotta, on the 22nd of September, 2005.	XIV legislature Berlusconi-III government	FI

C.134	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by Valdo Spini et al, on the 28th of April, 2006.	XV legislature (April 28, 2006 to April 28, 2008) Prodi-II government	Ulivo
C.36	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by Marco Boato, on the 28th of April, 2006.	XV legislature Prodi-II government	Misto-Verdi
S.945	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by Lucio Malan, on the 12th of September, 2006.	XV legislature Prodi-II government	FI
S.1160	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by Magda Neri et al, on the 14th of November, 2006.	XV legislature Prodi-II government	Aut
C.448	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa", presented by Roberto Zaccaria et al, on the 29th of April, 2008.	XVI legislature (April 29, 2008 to March 14, 2013) Berlusconi-IV government	PD
S.618	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by Magda Neri, on the 20th of May, 2008.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PD
C.2186	"Disposizioni per l'attuazione del diritto di libertà religiosa in materia di edifici di culto", presented by Roberto Zaccaria et al, on the 10th of February, 2009.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PD
C.3613	"Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi", presented by Ivano Miglioli, on the 7th of July, 2010.	XVI legislature Berlusconi-IV government	PD

Political Parties and Groupings

Aut: Per le Autonomie

DS-U: Democratici di Sinistra - l'Ulivo

FI: Forza Italia

Marg-U: Margherita-Ulivo

PD: Partito Democratico

PdL: Popolo delle Libertà

RNP: Rosa nel Pugno

Verdi-U: Verdi-l'Ulivo (previously "Verdi - l'Unione")