



EUROPE TODAY

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The Veil



The Headscarf Debate

What is the issue?

- Religious freedom
 - Liberalism
 - Headscarf debate as a 'mirror of identity'
 - Gender equality
- ⇒ Is this a European identity issue?
- ⇒ OR: A discrimination issue?

How do countries act?

- France: 2004 law against 'ostensible' religious symbols in public schools, **teachers and pupils**.
- Germany: 2004/5: No headscarf allowed for **teachers** in schools.
- GB: No ban - issue is a matter of civil society, not state, therefore needs to be resolved locally.

France

- Policy guided by French republicanism and the principle of laicity
- Pierre Bourdieu (French sociologist)
: “the patent questions of whether ‘Islamic’ headscarves should be accepted in schools masks the latent question of whether immigrants of North African origin should be accepted in France’ (27).

2010: France bans full veil in public (nijab)



Sandrine Moullerres was fined by the Nantes police in April 2010 for driving with a nijab. (150 Euro)
A man who forces a woman to wear the nijab is fined 30.000 Euro and gets a jail sentence.

French Senate vote passed 246-1

Germany

- Statist liberalism: Headscarf banned for teachers in 8 German states as a political symbol.
- Fereshta Ludin and following cases:
- Yet: There are nuns in full gear teaching in German schools. Bavaria holds on to having a Christian cross in each classroom (vs. ECJ law/Italy 2009).



Germany

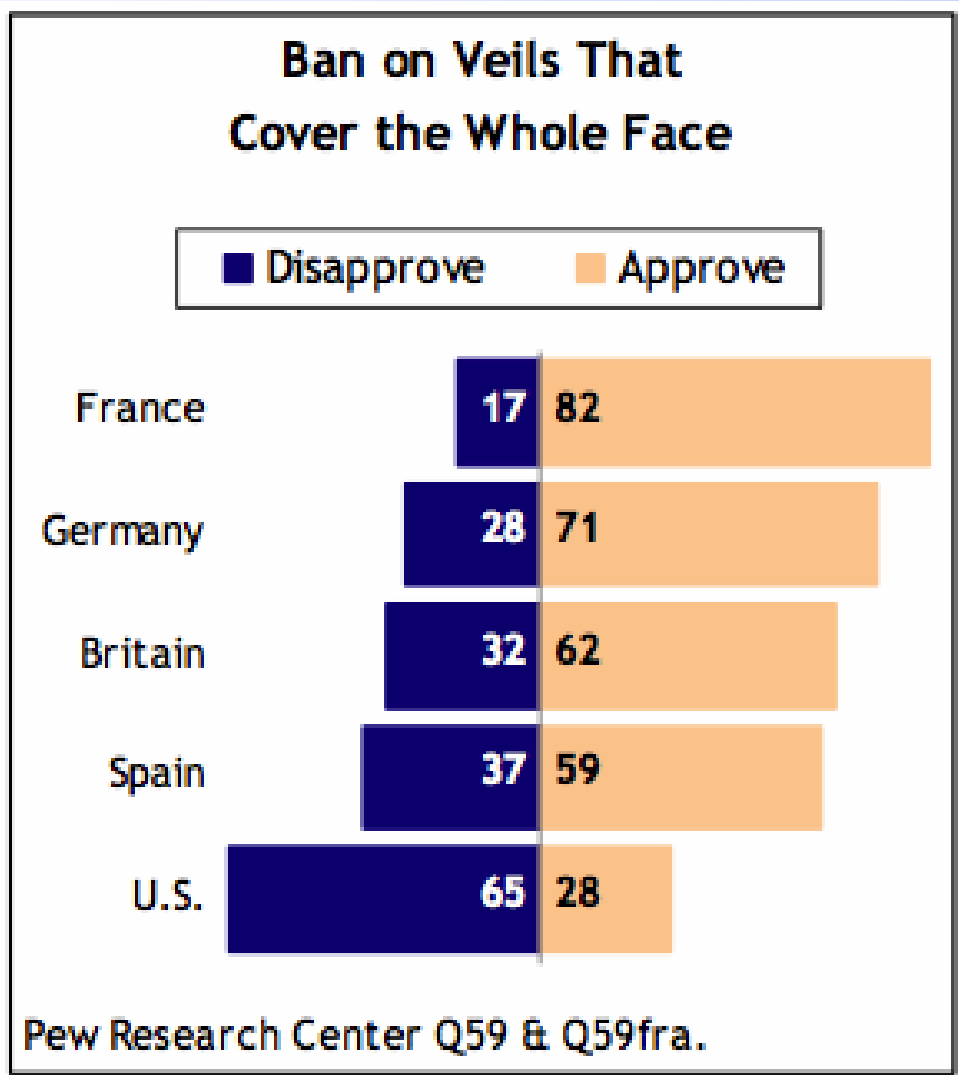
- Only Berlin banned ALL religious symbols, i.e. Christian crosses, Jewish kippahs.
- Issue: Teachers are civil servants; schools are to remain neutral in religious matters.
- But: Religious instruction in schools financed via a church tax.
- Women have to choose between employment as a civil servant and religious beliefs.

Britain

- Multicultural identity in British liberalism: Not interfering with private lives. And putting civil society above the state/
- Economic discrimination persists
- Shabine Begum case: Headscarf ok, jilhab not. Human Rights court demands 'public order constraint'.
- Aishah Azi case 2005: Face veil 'reduces effectiveness' of teaching.

Poll from Pew 2010

% of Muslim population



France 7%

Germany 3.4%

UK 2.7%

Spain 1%

U.S. 0.6%

Back to Europe at large...

- What does the 'veil' debate tell us about European identity?
 1. it constructs an 'Other' within
 2. it tries to frame its norms in terms of laicity and gender equality
 3. It galvanizes attention around cultural symbols rather than socio-economic exclusion.

Joppke argues

- that the veil politicizes Islam
- that there is no such thing as an individualized Islam of choice (110)
- that liberal societies have to deal with the toleration of the intolerant and that therefore
- the French and British policies are the best, representing consensus (F) and laissez-faire (UK).
- Vs. German law: illiberal in singling out Islam.