THE HEAD-COVERING IN WESTERN EUROPE: DEBATES ON MUSLIM WOMEN'S INTEGRATION IN GERMANY AND FRANCE

Master's Thesis

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Abstract

The current thesis is based on the anti-veil and anti-headscarf laws in public spaces and schools in secular countries like France and Germany, in addition to the recent abolition of religious symbols in the workplace by the European Union. Following the anthropological work of John Bowen, also Joan Scott, Christian Joppke, and Doris Weichselbaumer, the essay explores the symbolic meanings of the headscarf debate and the reasons behind the discrimination against the gender and cultural identity of Muslim veiled women in Germany and France. Additionally, the thesis explores the negative effects that the above have on Muslim women's integration in Western Europe. Moreover, I discuss the ways Western societies achieve the dichotomization of society from Muslim women, with the use of media, and the production of cultural stereotypes. With various examples and cases of Muslim women that have experienced discrimination on the grounds of their appearance, the essay attempts to prove the imperialistic and patriarchal nature of the policies, which stigmatize Muslim veiled women as oppressed and terrorists. Lastly, it is emphasized that the problem is not the head-covering per se, but the policies of the Western European States and their attitude towards the head-covering, and so these are what need to be examined.

Keywords: Integration in Western Europe, Head-Covering Debate, Secularism, Clash of Civilizations, Gendered Islamophobia, Imperialism, Patriarchy.

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Introduction

I first encounter the difficulties of integration into a foreign country, in 2019, when I lived in Frankfurt, Germany, for a year. As a waitress at a restaurant in Frankfurt, I would always listen to clients complaining and making racist comments about my migration to Germany and my weak language skills, in addition to deliberately ignoring me whenever I would try to communicate with them in English, among other things. My bad experience as an excluded English-speaking migrant, who was working and associating with German people, made me realize very quickly, the way the German State operates and the integration policies it follows when it comes to migrants. On personal research that I was conducting, while staying in Germany, on official forms regarding my citizenship, I came across an article discussing the integration of cultural minorities in the state Hesse, which was the state I was living in. The article discussed the State's anti-veiling legislation for teachers and public servants. And so, I proceeded to look further into it, discovering that Germany is one of the seven European Countries that have anti-head covering laws since 2003, and with France being the first European State to ever ban the Islamic dress anywhere in public. The discriminatory nature of those policies and my personal experience, in one of the countries that have adopted them, triggered my interest to find out more details on the issue that violates various human rights.

My concern on the matter lies in the fact that Germany and France are both host Countries to millions of Muslim populations, (two of the largest in the European Union) the size of which is constantly increasing. The laws that are adopted from Germany and France, not only affect the integration of millions of Female Muslims, on multiple grounds, but also send the message to diverse populations, that they are not welcomed in Europe. Therefore, by analyzing ethnocentrism and the treatment of the post-colonial and post-WWII "other," within a Christian heritage society, while taking for example a group of people with intersecting social identities, the essay attempts to understand the symbolic meaning of the head-covering debate, and France's and Germany's discriminatory policies against Muslim veiled women.

In that regard, the current thesis, with an anthropological approach, analyzes the integration policies and the different barriers that German and France's secular policies have created for Muslim Veiled women to their education, employment, and social life. The essay focuses on the prejudiced attitudes, based on debates towards

Muslim veiled women, indicating that the treatment and West's mentality and history are the problems and not the Muslim headscarf. Moreover, the thesis discusses the ways that these European countries have managed to maintain a stigma over the particular minority and the capitalistic and patriarchal reasoning behind their behavior.

Today, there are only two countries that require by law, for women to wear Islamic attire, as a symbol of cultural expression and faith, Iran and Saudi Arabia, while in Afghanistan the hijab is forced by the Taliban regime. However, Western societies are still obsessed with a homogenous image of all Arab countries oppressing Muslim women into wearing the veil, and ignore the voices of the Muslim women that were born raised, and are living in Europe, that wear the hijab by choice for different reasons. Nowadays, female activists in the West view the Islamic Veil as a tool of resistance, while many Muslim feminists wear the hijab as a form of protest against the oppression and prejudice by European Republicanism (Wagner et al., 2012).

In the 2016 legislative reports on the burka ban, it was supported that, 1,900 Muslim women were wearing the full-face veil in France in 2011 when the legislation against it was first adopted. This number represents 0.04% of the French Muslim population and less than 0.03% of France in general. So based on all the above facts, the number of veiled women, in relation to the amount of focus drawn to them by Western Countries, and media, along with the history of those countries and the time of building stereotypes and policies, have raised several questions regarding the symbolic meaning of the anti-headscarf policies (Nilufar, 2017).

At first, the essay introduces the historical presence of Islam in Europe after WWII, along with the development of the different models of integration in Germany and France, like assimilation. The second chapter analyzes the concept of "the other" inside a multicultural nation, how this concept is produced? What does it mean? And how it affects the creation of policies against Muslim veiled women? In the same chapter, the Attitudes of Germany and France towards the head-covering are discussed together with the debates about the Anti-veiling laws. Next, the essay analyzes the impact of Western media on the construction of stereotypes and debates about Muslim veiled women, through linguistics and images. The chapter ends with a case of a young Muslim activist that was mocked by the French magazine Charlie Hebdo because she was wearing a hijab. The third chapter points out the multiple grounds of discrimination that Muslim veiled women are subjected to, followed by

the subchapter that explains the patriarchal control over women's bodies. The last subchapter discusses the gendered Islamophobia that Muslim women face in the streets. The fourth chapter analyzes the effects of the anti-veiling policies, and discrimination, on the integration of Muslim women. This part describes the barriers that Muslim veiled women face to education, employment, and social life. The last part of the essay is the conclusion, where the essay summaries and comments on the previous points that were made.

Methodology

The method used for the analysis of the thesis is the Bibliographical review. The bibliographical review that was conducted for the theoretical part of the thesis was derived from scholarly journal articles, European treaties, and anthropological books, along with anthropological and social researches. The bibliographical review that was used for the case studies and confessions of the thesis, were retrieved from online researches, and empirical data from academic texts. The essay also presents tables and pictures, retrieved from online sources to demonstrate data, pieces of information, and problematizations that are important for the analysis.

In order to answer the main questions of the research which are: What is the symbolic meaning of the headscarf debate, expressed through the history and political decisions of French and Germany? How can we understand the European headscarf ban from the perspective of anthropology? And what effect does the headscarf ban have on the integration of the diverse group into Western Societies? I have examined the work of social anthropologist John Richard Bowen in his book, "Why the French don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space". Additionally, Joan Wallach Scott's book, "Politics of the Veil", Christian Joppke's book, "Veil: Mirror of Identity", and Weichselbaumer Doris Working Paper, "Discrimination against Female Migrants Wearing Headscarves". Bowen (2007), Scott (2007), Joppke (2009) and, Weichselbaumer (2016), all analyze the ban of the Muslim headscarf in France and Germany in public spaces by examining the headscarf debate within these specific European societies, questioning the reasoning behind the legislation and examining the symbolism behind the veil. I chose to base my thesis on the above anthropological researches since they efficiently answer my research questions, by examining the history, politics, and culture of the countries concerned, and lastly, by sharing my problematization on the treatment of Muslim veiled women by European societies.

Bowen (2007) discusses the place of Islam in France from French colonialism until 2004 and the ban of the headscarf at schools. He argues that the particular debate has little to do with the Islamic attire as a dress code, while it is more of an indication of the Country's insecurities and fears regarding the Muslim presence within the French society. In his book, he focuses on the way France is obsessed with social cohesion, which is evident through France's philosophy and political decisions on integration and secularism. Lastly, Bowen points out that the reasons for wearing the Islamic

headscarf may vary and be different for every individual, however, the appearance of these women has frequently come to symbolize a form of resistance to Islamophobia and gender objectification through clothing. Bowen's methodology was conducted both through formal and informal interviews and by collecting empirical data (Bowen, 2007).

Scott (2007) analyzes the laws of secularism and the colonial history of France to prove the racist, sexist and ethnocentric nature of the headscarf ban. Scott, as a historian, focuses on the history and the French colonial rule in Algeria with the civilization missions of French colonialists there, which she believes configured the attitude of the French towards Muslims, leaving a colonial legacy in contemporary France. She also focuses on public schools and France's attempts to promote secular ideas to create "the perfect citizen". She expresses how the restrictions imposed on Muslim girls reflect the anxiety of France regarding communalism. Lastly, she explains how the sexuality and feminine differences within a patriarchal and capitalistic structure have become equivalent to freedom of body exposure (Scott, 2007).

Joppke (2009) in his work focuses on the treatment of the veil by, France, Germany, and Britain according to their models of integration. He examines the symbolic meaning these European societies give to the Islamic veil connecting it with fundamentalism, female oppression, submissiveness, and an overall rejection of the so-called "Western liberal way of life". On those grounds, Joppke focuses in his work to assess liberalism and Islam in Europe (Joppke, 2009).

Finally, Weichselbaumer (2016) examines in her research the discrimination that female Muslims face in Germany in their everyday lives. To prove the stigma that Muslim veiled women carry around, Weichselbaumer conducts an experiment on the German labor market where she confirms the unwillingness of German employers to hire qualified Muslim veiled women. In that regard Weichselbaumer phrases the following problematization: "A heated debate is being led in the West about the apparently inferior position of women in Muslim (migrant) culture. However, little discussion takes place about how Muslim women are actually treated by the Western majority population" (Weichselbaumer, 2016).

To understand the difficulties that Muslim veiled women face in their integration into Western societies, In the current thesis I begin by examining the appearance of Muslim migrants in Europe after WWII and the migration policies that Germany and

France followed to deal with immigrants. The post-war period, and the dissolution of colonies, created a new wave of migration in Western Europe, with different cultures and religions from the European-Christian one, which resulted in a clash of civilizations, which led to different integration models, that promoted secularism in schools and public spaces, targeting mainly Muslim women. To point out the factors leading to the policies of Germany and France against Muslim veiled women, I proceeded with a theoretical approach of the "other" and Edward Said's orientalism theory. The above led to the conclusion that the marginalization of a culturally different group within a Nation can be attributed to the establishment of the cultural identity of the Nation and the establishment of hierarchy. To emphasize the discriminatory nature of the policies of neutrality against Muslim veiled women, I presented in detail the anti-head covering laws and the statements in that regard of German and French political figures. I commented on the legislation with articles of the European Convention of Human Rights to indicate the violations of the basic rights of these women. Additionally, I quoted the anthropologist Mayanthi Fernando, on how the governments although obsessively promote neutrality, always intervene in matters of religion in favor of Christianity and against Islam. I continue the chapter by analyzing the colonial legacy of the headscarf debate to compare it with today's constructed reasons and debates for Anti-veiling laws and highlight the symbolism of the debate. I used the anthropological researches of Prakash Shah and Ralph Grillo, Bowen, Scott, Weichselbaumer, and Joppke, examples, and confessions from online sources, and the ethnographic research of Afshar Halem. Next, I discussed the use of Western media as a political tool of dichotomization and propaganda against Muslim veiled women and the headscarf. I focused on the usage of special vocabulary by the Western media, to stereotypically describe the headscarf as an instrument of cultural oppression of Muslim veiled women, ignoring cultural relativism and promoting a false identity. I concluded by attributing this treatment by France and Germany's media against Muslim veiled women, to the anxiety of those States to preserve their national identity and the need for social cohesion. I based the latter on the theoretical framework of Bonet and Négrier. As an example of Western media propaganda against Muslim veiled women, I used the discriminatory incident by the French magazine Charlie Hebdo, which I retrieved from online sources, and then critically analyzed its symbolic meaning. Moreover, I wanted to point out that Muslim veiled women face discrimination through the headscarf ban not only on the grounds of their

race and religion but also on the grounds of their gender. So, in the third chapter, I analyze the sexism that Muslim women encounter in the West, on top of Islamophobia, and the control over their bodies through the prohibition of their cultural attire, which is not revealing enough to benefit the patriarchy and capitalism of the "liberal West". At first, I discuss the theory of intersectionality as a theoretical framework by sociologist and gender scientists, Nira Yuval-Davis, and Nousiainen, and Kantola. And then I proceeded into analyzing the way Muslim women are being indicated on what to wear and how to act by European governments as a form of control and domination, as described by anthropologist Ramirez Ángeles. In the fourth and final chapter, I examined the last question of the research, concerning the effects of the headscarf debates and bans on Muslim veiled women in European societies. I focused on the barrier that the Law creates for Muslim women in Germany and France, to education, employment, and social life. To do so, apart from theory, I used confessions of people that had experienced discrimination, in France and Germany, which affected their integration. I retrieved those confessions from academic researches of Carmen Teeple Hopkins and Weichselbaumer, among others, and online sources. After that, I proceed into summarizing and concluding my essay, by gathering and emphasizing the main points that were previously made.

Picture 1: The Different Types of Veiling

Head coverings worn by Muslim women
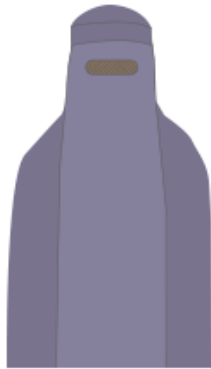
Burka

Full body, covers entire face, a mesh screen covers the eyes
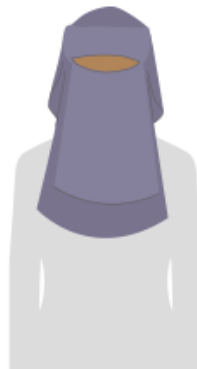
Niqab

Veil for the face, eyes remain visible

Hijab

Square scarf covers head and neck

Chador

Full-body cloak

Shayla

Long scarf, wrapped around the head

Al-Amira

Two-piece headscarf

Khimar

Cape-like, covering hair, neck and shoulders

BBC

Source: BBC News, 2018

Before I start my analysis, I would like to include the above picture that demonstrates some of the different types of veils worn by Muslim women around the world. Although the main focus of the thesis is to understand the behavior of France and Germany against Muslim veiled women, and not talk about the veil per se. I think it is important to mention the above picture, for a more clear understanding of the cultural

attire that will be discussed in the thesis. Generally, the veil was historically worn for a variety of reasons in the Islamic world, and until today millions of women wear it to express geographical identity, religion, modesty, a social or political status, to adjust to environmental conditions, for fashion, or to make a statement, etc (Bowen, 2007). It is believed that the Muslim women that wear the headscarf in Europe often try to embrace their diversity and difference. Very frequently Muslim women wish to create a sense of belonging through their ethnic identity in European societies (Moreau, 2021). However, every veiled woman has her own interpretation of the veil and personal reasons for wearing it (Bowen, 2007).

In the current thesis when talking about the full-face veil being banned in public places in France, I am referring to the burka and niqab, which are covering the whole face leaving a small opening for the eyes. The burka is usually worn in Countries of Central Asia, like Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, whereas the niqab is usually worn in the Gulf States (Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and UAE) (Lundt, 2019). Additionally, when discussing the Islamic headscarf in general I am referring to the hijab, which mostly covers the hair and sometimes the neck, in all its different forms around the Muslim world, either as a shayla (mostly worn in the Gulf States) or al-amira which is predominantly worn in Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia, etc). Lastly, we see the chador mostly in Iran and other places with mostly Shia populations and the khimar, which is similar to the al-amira, and it is mostly worn in Egypt. All of the above garments are considered religious symbols in France and Germany and are banned from particular spaces, as I will discuss in detail in my analysis (Jaffery, 2018).
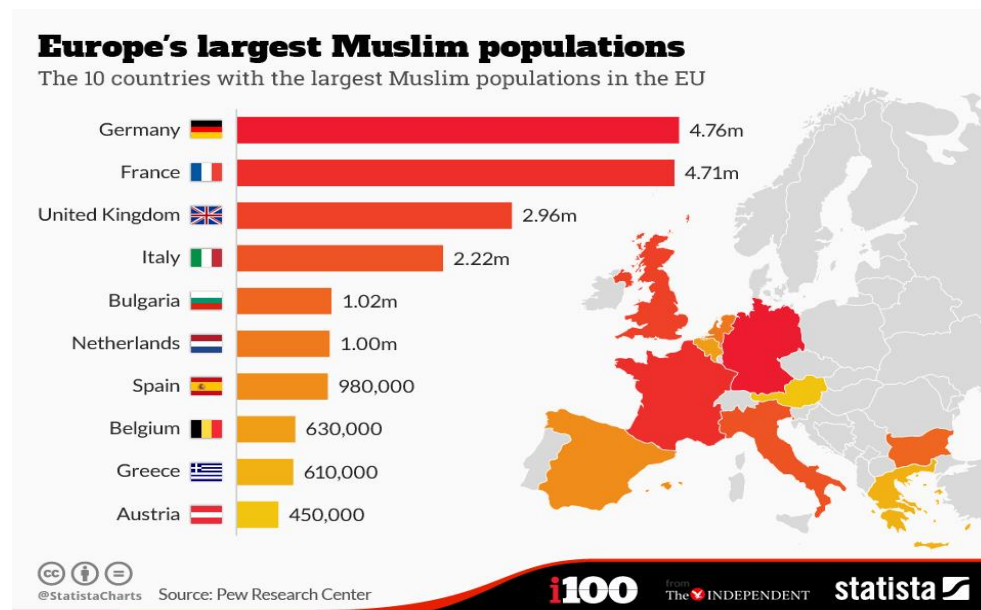
1. Muslims in Europe after WWII

The presence of Muslim populations in Western European societies gradually became more noticeable by the end of WWII due to the two main types of migration. The need for laborers in highly industrialized countries of Northern and Western Europe like Germany created the "guest-worker" scheme that was implemented until the mid-1970s. Many Muslim migrants were recruited for temporary labor under this system to support the economies of countries like France, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland. However soon the temporary status of the laborers became more permanent when the families of migrants were reunified or they started having children. Immigrants were distributed differently, depending on historical and political-economic factors. Germany mostly attracted Kurdish or Turkish populations while France absorbed mainly Moroccans and Algerians (Fisher, 2014).

The second type of migration that led to the formation of Muslim minorities in Western Europe was the migration of "colonial workers" to their former colonial powers after the 1950s. After the collapse of colonialism, countries like the Netherlands, Britain, and Portugal, received a high amount of immigrants from their former colonies. France in particular experienced a large wave of immigration by Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania, before but mostly after the independence of those countries (Rath, 2002).

So it appears that the large waves of migration in the 1950s-1970s consisting of refugees, guest workers, or colonial workers, created a new wave of migration in Western Europe, with a different culture and religion from the European-Christian one. This resulted in a clash of civilizations, which began to have an influential role in the integration policies of diverse migrants in the years to come since over time the number of Muslim migrants and refugees in Germany and France gradually increased. Millions of resettlements occurred in Western Europe from the mid-1970s – 1990s with the oil crisis, the mid 2008s with the global economic crisis, and 2010 with the Arab spring series that led to wars and civil rivalries with the creation of many asylum seekers and refugees from Syria, and more, until this day (Ohlig, 2008).

An overview of the construction of Muslim populations in Europe until 2015, gives the following picture:

Table 1: Estimate of Muslim Populations in Europe

Europe's largest Muslim populations
The 10 countries with the largest Muslim populations in the EU

Country	Population
Germany	4.76m
France	4.71m
United Kingdom	2.96m
Italy	2.22m
Bulgaria	1.02m
Netherlands	1.00m
Spain	980,000
Belgium	630,000
Greece	610,000
Austria	450,000

@StatistaCharts Source: Pew Research Center

Source: McCarthy, 2015

1.1.   Models of Integration in Germany and France

The European Parliament defines integration as "a society's ability to integrate all its members into new arrangements of active citizenship that ensure the long-term well-being of all in a diverse society" (Doerschler & Jackson, 2011). Nevertheless, each country has its own interpretation of "integration" when it comes to migration, depending on the Country's history, social structure, and political philosophy (Fekete, 2008).

Germany

Germany is considered to be a pluralist country due to its divergent population. For some, however, it is a country with a "Leitkultur" (one leading, dominant culture over others). Germany's policies regarding migrants can be liberal today, although each Lander (State) follows different approaches especially when it comes to Muslim minorities. In particular, Germany was, and still is, a State with millions of both immigrants and emigrants. From 1960 to 1999 though, Germany was officially considered as a non-migration country (Migration and Integration Research Department, 2005). So, during that time migrants were not integrated as equals but as economically disadvantaged and marginalized minorities. Hostility used to be

expressed towards diversity, with the forcing of certain ethnic minorities to live in specific neighborhoods with inferior housing and infrastructure. Only there migrants could develop social, religious, and cultural associations or enterprises, like markets (Fekete, 2008). The matter of Citizenship until the 2000s was based on the ius sanguinis right (citizenship as the right of blood or descendants) instead of ius soli (The right of citizenship based on the place of birth). In 1995 the issue of double citizenship was still a controversial topic. And the remaining of the "German folk" idea, for a culturally homogenous society, and the supremacy of the German Nation by the Nazi regime in WWII, built an obvious barrier between migrants and the indigenous, dividing the German society for many years, even after the Second World War (Peter, 2010). An indication of the above statement could be the continuous obsession of the German State for cultural homogeneity, which today might also be expressed with the headscarf debate and the integration policies for certain cultural minorities.

In any case, up until the 2000s little effort was put towards the social inclusion of immigrants in Germany. However, once elected in 1998, the Federal Government reformed the Nationality Law, introducing elements of ius soli policy. Moreover, the new government initiated language tests for foreigners and naturalization proceedings, followed by the Green Card scheme to regulate illegal migration and to allow more high-qualified workers to immigrate to Germany (Migration and Integration Research Department, 2005). Germany became officially an immigration country providing, since 2005, language courses, civic education, and vocational training for migrants, while also putting in force The General Act of Equal Treatment in 2006. The act included EU Anti-Discrimination directives into German Law to prevent discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, gender, religion, belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation (Section 1 of this Act) (European Commision, 2019).

However, even when certain laws appeared to be inclusive and pro-integration, the reality for certain minorities, like Muslims whose migration was more recent, was still the same. In Germany's Constitution, freedom of religion, expression, and protection from discrimination hold an important role for the rights of the citizens, as long as it is under the principle of State Neutrality. State Neutrality separates the church from the State since Germany does not have an established church, even if Protestants, Catholics, and Jews constitute the majority of German citizens, and those churches have public corporation statuses, which also come with several benefits. When it

comes to the Islamic religion, the above do not apply, and so, there are several obstacles regarding neutrality and integration, due to policies and cultural barriers which are greater for Muslims and more obvious, than with other religions (Robbers, 2001).

Until 2010 the major political parties were hesitant to introduce the Islamic religion to schools, as opposed to other religions. In 2003, half of the 16 German states (Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse, Lower Saxony, the Saarland, Bremen, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Berlin) forbade the wearing of the headscarf for teachers in public schools, since teachers are civil servants and the wearing of a religious symbol is considered as a sign of proselytism and also violates State Neutrality (Peter, 2010). Additionally, in 2017, the southern state of Bavaria prohibited the burka and niqab, in schools, polling stations, universities, and government offices. The ban however on religious clothing does not apply to Christian symbols in 5 of those 8 States, and only prohibits Muslim attire, since the wearing of Christian symbols, like the cross or the yarmulke, are the symbols and signs of the Western Christian tradition. The states that only allow Christian attire at schools are, Baden-Württemberg, Saarland, Hesse, Bavaria, and North Rhine-Westphalia. So, it seems that the bans by the German states are less about neutrality and more about the assimilation of Muslims into the Christian way of life.

"The headscarf is regarded as a sign of holding on to the traditions of the society of origin and thus an expression of a lack of cultural integration" (Fekete, 2008).

The above still has many negative effects on the integration of Muslim veiled women, in particular, since they are often viewed as inferior citizens, and are being excluded while having to decide between the expression of their culture and equal treatment.

Lastly, a hostile environment by the natives of a country can easily describe the difficulties that migrants or their descendants face, trying to integrate. The discrimination against Muslims grew greatly after the 9/11 attacks in 2001 with prejudice coming from both the Government and German citizens. 57% of the non-Muslim German population considers Muslim people in Germany as a threat, while in 2006 over 20% did not want Muslims as neighbors (Weichselbaumer, 2016). In polls that are conducted annually by Institutions of Social Sciences, many German citizens are frequently asked their opinion on matters of migration and inclusion, and most of the answers that are usually expressed are: "The many foreigners living in Germany

make me feel increasingly like a stranger in my own country," "The foreigners living in Germany should adapt their way of life a bit more to that of Germans," "Foreigners living in Germany should be prohibited from any political activity" and "In times of shortage of labor, foreigners living in Germany should be sent back home" (Peter, 2010). Finally, in December 2016, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that "the wearing of full-faced veils should be prohibited in Germany "wherever it is legally possible" (BBC, 2018).

From my personal experience, being a light-skinned migrant in Germany and living in a multicultural society, I never experienced indiscrete looks in the streets as many Muslims and especially Muslim veiled women have, due to their physical difference. However, even as a European migrant from Greece, I had noticed people's behavior shift, once I would start talking to them in English and not in German (since at the time I was living in Germany, I was still learning the language). Many would ignore me, turn their heads to the other side, and strongly refuse to speak to me unless it would be in their language, (even when they would come as customers in the establishment I was working at and could easily communicate in English with me and be served). Moreover, very often, in a strict and disappointed manner, strangers would "lecture" me by saying, "This is Germany, you need to learn German and adapt to this life here", not knowing me, or the reason I was in Germany at the time. Additionally, people (clearly annoyed) would also ask me, "why did you come here?" or "why do you refuse to learn German?" assuming I was not trying, having a preexisted, generalized opinion on the refusal of migrants to integrate in Germany. They felt they had the responsibility of "helping me" by letting me know at every chance, about how things work in their country, and that "This is Germany" and you "need" to do things our way, assimilate, or else we cannot co-exist.

France

France like Germany had a long history of migration; however, France never denied being an immigration country, and yet it never became a migration society, choosing assimilation as an integration strategy (Safi, 2008).
The need for an integration policy in France appeared after the colonial migrants and the oil crisis in the 1980s. The first migration policy seemed to have multicultural traits with collectivities or ethnic minorities having the freedom to be different

(Scholten, 2011). On one hand, many policies would promote equality by establishing the right for an association, labor, or welfare, while on the other hand, the setting up of classes for immigrants in their own language and culture, was rather to facilitate the idea of their return, than their integration.
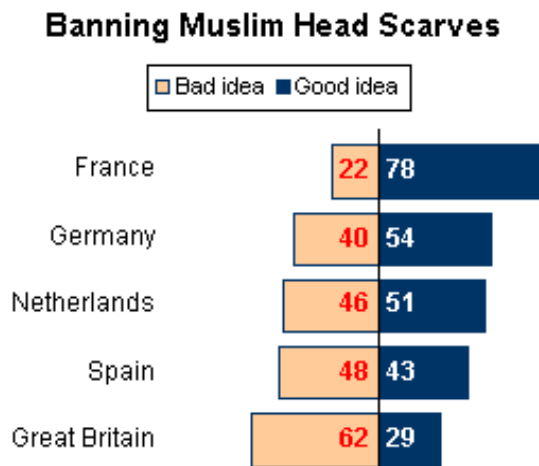
Either way, any room for diversity did not last long. During the second half of the 1980s; France initiated a new model of integration. Contrary to the German ius sanguinis right, the French republican model focused more on the creation of a strong central State rather than focusing on peoples' needs. Second ethnicity, culture, or religion did not matter as much, since the French model was now "color-blind", and being equal meant being indifferent, and fully adapted to the French culture (Scholten, 2011). This assimilation policy that targets migrants, to the day, was influenced by the principle of Laïcité, the separation of church from the State (Jones, 2012). That meant that "Culture, religion, and ethnicity belonged to the private sphere, whereas public areas were expected to be neutral". The deprivation of expression of diversity was described by many, like nationalism, and resulted by the end of the 1990s, in the development of the French anti-discrimination policy. Moreover, the European Union got involved and urged France to change its political direction on the matter. The riots of 2004, after the anti-veiling laws at schools, revealed the problems of the neutrality policy, which not only suppressed the cultural expression of minorities, but also did not manage to resolve serious social issues like poverty or spatial concentration, unemployment, and discrimination (Scholten, 2011).

The Muslim community experienced the first obstacles in their integration and expression of religion and culture in 1989, with the first attempt towards banning the hijab. The act was initiated by a junior high school principal that banned the wearing of the hijab in his school in Creil, France. In 1994 the Minister of Education Francois Bayrou issued a petition saying that religious symbols must be banned from schools. In 2003, the ban became legal. The law included apart from hijabs, turbans, large crosses, and yarmulke since the wearing of these symbols would allegedly be contrary to Secularism or could be considered as an act of proselytism which is also illegal. Even though the ban involved different religious symbols, its target was mainly Muslim communities, which as opposed to Jews, lived in subcultures. Also, as far as the ban on religious symbols is concerned, the yarmulke had been worn for many years at schools, and for the cross to be considered as proselytism had to be abnormally large, which was never an issue (Adrian, 2006). In 2010 the anti-veiling

law expanded and was applied in public spaces. France, with President Nicola Sarkozy, prohibited the wearing of burka and niqab in the streets as it is against secularism, and as he claimed, "Are not welcome in France". France's Interior Minister Claude Guéant said on the matter: "It defends two fundamental principles: the principle of secularism and the principle of equality between a man and a woman" (CBC News, 2011).

So, it is evident that the reason behind the bans was the Muslim migration and assimilation to the French way of life. The protests that followed after the legislations, and the debates that are taking place to this day, are about the negative results of the extreme color-blind policy that France follows against Muslims, and French's need to impose its history and values on an increasingly diverse state (Elaine, 2004).

Table 2: The Perception of the Headscarf

Banning Muslim Head Scarves

	Bad idea	Good idea
France	22	78
Germany	40	54
Netherlands	46	51
Spain	48	43
Great Britain	62	29

Source: Horowitz, 2006

2.   The Other inside a Multicultural Nation and Policies of Culture

One of the factors leading to the German and French anti-headscarf policies against Muslim women is the presence of another culture within these Western States. A theoretical approach to describe otherness, as it is used in many disciplines such as anthropology or sociology among others, is to think that our ideas of who and what someone else is or is not, within a geographical region, is based on the idea of who we are. And generally, there is a tendency to assume that the culturally "other" within a nation is fundamentally different from us, which often distances people from each other. This concept of difference tends to create dichotomy and enables hierarchical and stereotypical thinking between cultures (Wilkinson, 1996).

Muslim veiled women in Western Europe are usually viewed as "others" due to their physical, cultural, and especially religious differences since they live in Christian-heritage societies. As explained by Edward W. Said in his book "Orientalism", Orientalism is a concept that describes the West's stereotypical believes on Arab culture. According to Said, the construction of the "other", and thus the stereotypes regarding the South and East, was produced by colonial powers for hierarchical reasons (Said, 1979). The notion of the "Other" allegedly, disrupts the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of a Country creating anxiety to preserve the national identity.

More specifically, according to French journalist Alain Gresh, the creation and fight against the "other" in France is a reaction to globalization and increasing immigration. Gresh believes that it is hard nowadays to define, who French people are, and what it means to be French. He supports that the state's identity is vanishing within the European Union and multiculturalism. Therefore, it is important to establish a strong French identity, of French-looking and French-speaking people.

It seems that the specific reaction of the Western European society to immigration, and the diversity of culture, is a result of the clash of civilizations, where States like Germany and France want to maintain their power over Arab cultures and make "them" like Europeans (Bowen, 2007). This dichotomization of "us" from "them" enables the idea of the inferiority of the "other" culture inside a nation. For example, the popular among Western societies belief, that Muslim veiled women are oppressed by Muslim men, is allegedly expressed through the head covering. This belief of vulnerability and submissiveness of Muslim women within Western Europe because of Islam has produced the impression that the women of the West are superior and

need to "save" Muslim women by uncovering their heads and changing them, to fit the societal norms. European women are conceived as more educated, modern, and liberal or developed in comparison to the women of the East and South who allegedly are oppressed, uneducated, terrorists, old-fashioned, and overall inferior. So, in countries like Germany and France, the presence of Muslim women can often produce misinformed cultural comparisons that construct simplified images for Muslim women, even when they also live in Europe. So, Muslim women are often the victims of socially constructed identities, which are being validated through the anti-headscarf policies, and create many obstacles in many aspects of Muslim women's integration in Western societies (Bendixsen, 2013).

2.1.   The Policy of the Anti-Head Covering in France and Germany

In 2003 the federal Constitutional Court in Germany held that states could ban the head-covering locally. Half of the 16 States in Germany prohibited the wearing of the headscarf including Hesse, which banned the wearing of the headscarf for all civil servants, while in 2017 the southern state of Bavaria barred the full-face veil in universities, schools, polling stations, and government offices. In France, as already mentioned above, women are not allowed to wear full-face veils in the streets since it is viewed as a symbol of oppression and it is also against state neutrality. The prohibition indicates that no woman regardless of ethnicity is allowed to leave the house covering her face. In 2016 Islamic full-body Swimwear, the burkinis were also banned after cases where Muslim women were "dragged" out of swimming pools and fined for wearing them. However, the ban was lifted later by France's Top Administrative Court.

Overall, the fine for wearing a full-face veil is 150 euros, and data from 2015 demonstrated that over 1500 fines had been given to Muslim women (BBC, 2018). Furthermore, in March 2017, the EU Court of Justice allowed private sector businesses to decide whether employees could wear headscarves in the workplace. So it seems like the legislation disregards the fundamental rights of the employees, putting in priority the wishes of the customers, employers, and the principle of neutrality. With this judgment, the EU Court permits the employers of private

businesses to discriminate against women and different cultures (mainly the Muslim culture) (European Network Against Racism, 2017).

The banning of the Islamic headscarf is against many articles of the European Convention of Human Rights, like: Art 8: the Right to Respect someone's Private Life, Art 9: Freedom of Religion, Art 10: Freedom of Expression, and Art 14: Prohibition of Discrimination and Art 2 of the Protocol: Right to Education (Council of Europe, 1950). However, States claim that the ban is against face-covering in public in general, for security reasons, and to achieve secularism and that it is not just to target the specific religious symbol (McCrea, 2013). In October 2019, Mr. Macron, speaking at the Choose La Réunion summit in the French island department, said "I ask all of our citizens to respect all of the laws of the Republic, but I have nothing to say about their spiritual lives. That is secularism. We should not confuse the issues." He then clarified: "Whether someone wears a hijab in a public space is not my business. But wearing a hijab in public services, in schools, when we are educating our children, is my business. "In public services, we have a duty of neutrality…" (The Connexion, 2019). This interpretation of secularism, which indicates that all citizens must look the same, described by Mr. Macron, is very difficult to be achieved in contemporary, multicultural France. The exclusion of Muslim veiled women from public services and the presentation of the specific group as a "bad influence" to the children of France are not the characteristics of a neutral State, as Mr. Macron stated, but the characteristics of a biased one (Beswick, 2020). In that regard, the Anthropologist Mayanthi Fernando claims that it is the French Government's interventions that make Laïcité essentially contradictory. And so, Mayanthi Fernando raises questions like, "How can there be a separation of church and state, when the government is always intervening in religious affairs? And who is the government intervening against? What is the ideal, when laïcité has always disproportionately favored the Christian majority?" (Fernando, 2014.) Suggesting that today's laïcité policies of France are far from neutral, especially when it comes to specific diverse minorities that do not agree with West's culture and religion.

2.1.1. Constructed Reasons and Debates on the Anti-Veiling Policy

During the 20th-century European colonialists spread the idea of the oppression of the veil in their colonies, to achieve dominance. In Algeria, the French colonialists wished to unveil Muslim women as an act of civilization and make Muslim women more European-like. These civilization missions also involved land appropriations and ownership by the French, to easily objectify and control their subjects (Scott, 2007). For the European colonizers, the "covered woman" was conceived as a mysterious woman barring secrets, someone that could see without being seen, and only by unveiling her, she could become ''a possible object of possession'' (Fanon, 1965). In the same way, the French imperialists would feel frustrated for not having access to the harems, since they were men. So, the place of harems, since it was off-limits for them, became: "A place of sensuous indulgence and a cage in which women are confined by tyrannical men", much like the veil is conceived (Scott, 2007).

Today, the reality for Muslim women in Europe, with the anti-veiling laws, is not very different. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, non-Muslim citizens in Western Europe feel a certain opposition towards Muslim minorities in general, and the attitudes towards the Islamic veil alone, are even more negative. In Germany, approximately 60% of natives believe that women should not be wearing the Islamic headscarf while another 60% are pro-banning the head-covering from the streets (Weichselbaumer, 2016). It seems that the veil is a constant reminder of the presence of Muslim migrants and diversity in Western Europe. Therefore, Muslim women who are veiled, are often more hated than Muslims overall (Amiraux, 2007). In addition, Germany views the Islamic dress as a symbol of Muslim fundamentalism and it is very often, affiliated with terrorism and crime. Especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the rates of Islamophobia increased dramatically in the West. According to the French philosopher Andre Glucksmann: "Hijab is a terrorist operation… In France, the zealous pupils know that their hijab is covered in blood" (Smith et al., 2005).

It is also believed that veiling represents oppression and inequality between men and women, as a result again of Muslim fundamentalism, which is against the liberal identity of the state that supports the autonomy of its female citizens. It is widely assumed that Muslim men are directly or indirectly, forcing their wives and daughters to wear the Islamic dress. André Gerin, of France's Communist Party, (the one that

introduced to the National Assembly the bill to ban the burka) Stated: "this walking prison subjects women to an unbearable situation of reclusion, exclusion, and humiliation. Her very existence is denied" (O'Brien, 2016). However, many women that were born and raised in Europe admit that wearing the hijab is their conscious decision, and nobody is forcing them. In ethnographic research conducted in Germany by Afshar Haleh on "Muslim Women who cover in the West", a young woman who was interviewed stated, "I choose to wear the hijab, I'm not forced. My dad would ideally like me to wear Western clothes to avoid all the hassle, but I choose to wear the hijab" (Afshar, 2008). Even so, Western states choose to ignore the voices of Muslim women and build policies based on their own cultural assumptions, that Muslim women are submissive and in need of protection (Bowen, 2007).

Another popular belief around the Headscarf in France is that it stands for propaganda, especially when it is worn by people that possess influencing roles, like teachers. Consequently, it is banned from schools to avoid proselytism. In Germany, the Islamic headscarf at schools symbolizes more than religion too, and it allegedly carries a political meaning as opposed to Christian symbols at schools, which are considered politically neutral. According to Ulrich Maurer, from the Social Democratic Party of Germany, who voted in favor of the headscarf ban on the debate of the headscarf legislation in Baden-Württemberg in 2004: "Other than the headscarf, the Christian cross belongs to our Western culture, to our traditions and symbolizes here brotherly love, tolerance, and maintenance of fundamental human values." So it appears that the ban against religious symbols at schools is partial and only applies to Muslim women whose headscarves represent "non-German values". On the same debate, only the politicians from the Green Party expressed their disagreement with the above statement, pointing out its hypocritical nature, but their claims did not find any support. As a result, covered nuns can teach at schools in Baden-Württemberg, but Muslim veiled women cannot (Andreassen & Lettinga, 2011).

Additionally, many believe that the headscarf gets in the way of the integration of Muslim women and that they should "take it off or leave". According to that, the headscarf symbolizes denial and refusal to fit in with societal norms, and it is an embodiment of female migrant disobedience. Thus, wearing the headscarf in Western societies means being different which contradicts Germany's and France's assimilation policies.

What is more, a popular opinion is that the wearing of the headscarf in public could be dangerous, given that Europeans cannot see behind the veil the hidden woman, who is a part of a "suspicious" group (Shadid & Koningsveld, 2005). It is believed that the unveiling is a matter of security, in airports, banks, or simply the streets, where people have to show their faces for safety reasons (Shah & Grillo, 2012). Nonetheless, the latter does not affect non-Muslim citizens wearing scarves or hats in the winter, for fashion or the cold, nor it was a problem during the Covid-19 pandemic, where all people had to wear masks and cover their faces (Sarno et al., 2020).

Overall, the headscarf debate is a controversial topic that is debated a lot among Western feminists. Some support: "We live in a secular West. No headscarves in schools! The veil is to silence, to make invisible, and to subjugate women. It is the mark of oppression." "…these women need to be protected" (Smith et al., 2005). In Germany, some prominent Second Wave Feminists and secular Turkish-German feminists believe, that only with a strict separation of state and religion, and only when young Muslim women will be forced to unveil, they could finally be modern, free, and equal. Because that is when they will realize they were oppressed all this time, wearing the Islamic attire. Alice Schwarzer a German journalist for the feminist magazine *Emma,* has made several claims in favor of the headscarf ban. She argues that people supporting Muslim women's choice to wear the headscarf at schools are cultural relativists that allow vulnerable women to stay oppressed. In 2003 Schwarzer stated in the weekly *Der Spiegel,* that the presence of Islamic attire in Germany is a political promotion of Islam. Moreover, three years later in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* she compared the headscarf worn by Muslim women to the yellow star that Jews were forced to wore in the second world war by the Nazis. She did so to indicate that Muslim veiled women could be second-class citizens "who are forced to cover by Islamist Fundamentalists" (Andreassen & Lettinga, 2011).

However, another feministic approach on the matter supports that gender oppression and inequality can only be fought with the inclusion of Muslim veiled women into the labor market. Additionally, that it is wrong to blame individuals that wear the headscarf for fundamentalism, and instead Muslim women should be supported in their struggle against fundamentalism. Lastly, many Muslim and German feminists claim that there are different interpretations of the headscarf, it can have several meanings, and it cannot be reduced to a symbol of oppression. The latter view the

headscarf ban as a form of gender discrimination, since it disproportionally hurt the rights of Muslim women to have free will and a choice (Andreassen & Lettinga, 2011).

It is apparent that France and Germany share the same views on veiling in general and follow similar tactics of constructing the idea of oppression and forcing a so-called cultural liberation (Joppke, 2009). France, even from colonial times, needed to control and oppress its subjects, by "civilizing" them. And today it is the same subjects and the same Powers, using the same methods to achieve dominance and superiority, but this time within Europe. Moreover, in European societies, women in the Islamic veil are visibly religious and different, and so they are a constant reminder of multiculturalism. The controversial piece of clothing has created many moral debates dividing the German and France's public on the justification of the prohibition policy, and whether or not the wearing of the headscarf consists of a conscious choice of the women wearing it.

 In any way, it is evident that the exclusive nature of the policy represents many ideas and hegemonic fears of the Western European society that wishes to preserve one dominant culture and social cohesion. Combined with the need to control the more vulnerable groups, this imperialistic attitude creates false images and stereotypes about Muslim women, and it has rather alienating, than so-called "liberating" results (Gohir, 2015).

2.2.   The Impact of Western Media on the Head-Covering Debate

Nowadays, media has an active role in the creation of knowledge and information about other cultures. Thus media possess the power to construct ideas and stereotypes in peoples' minds, by choosing to show certain news and images regarding a group of people. An example is the perception of Muslim people in the West, after 9/11 through the media. Muslim people in Western news before 9/11 were mostly underrepresented, while after the tragic incident, the word "terrorist" was directly affiliated with the word "Muslim". "Violence" was a synonym of "Islam", and Muslim women were either terrorists as their "angry" men, helping them to hide explosives under their veil or a single undifferentiated group of submissive victims. It is evident that the idea of terrorism today, as it is (mis)used in the television,

newspapers, and the internet, is never associated with a white person, while, it always has to do with Muslim extremism (Shah, 2012). So, the beginning of the 21st century was also a difficult time for many Muslim people, since no matter where they would come from, or where in the West they lived, as long as they would resemble a Muslim person, they would be negatively looked at or treated. The media's obsession with Islamic Terrorism and the suspecting of Muslims for every crime has created a hostile environment for Muslims in Western European societies (Green, 2015). Muslim veiled women in particular in France and Germany, are often physically and verbally attacked in the streets. These women are being violently unveiled, by strangers, or are being beaten, for wearing the hijab, while being called, "unwelcomed", "parasites" and "terrorists". For example, a day after 9/11 a woman was asked why she didn't wear her hijab in public, as she always does, and she answered: "I am really scared of wearing it", which was the case for many other Muslim women in the West after 2001 (Omar, 2018). So, the impact of the negative image of all Muslim veiled women that the Western media has constructed, especially after 9/11, not only has physically dangerous effects on them, but it has also alienated Muslim veiled women from the rest of the society, due to the fear of terrorism.

The creation of the above stereotypes by the media, which serve national hegemonic interests, can be achieved with the construction of the "evil other" within a society (Corbin, 2017). As we have already mentioned, the construction of stereotypes about the culturally other was a method used by Europeans, throughout European history to oppress and control their subjects, as E. Said and J. Scott discuss in their works.

So, today Western media creates the "other" by using the internet, print, or broadcast media to deliver messages against Muslim veiled women and portray them in a way that will benefit the national identity of a state by comparison. To do so, mainstream German and French media often uses comparative vocabulary like "us", "we", and "them" or "they" to dichotomize society, and emphasize the superiority of the one culture (Western) over the other (Muslim culture). French magazines often refer to hijab-wearing women by using code words like, "threatened", "restricted", "victimized", and "marginalized" to draw a picture of a scared and naïve person that refuses to integrate into civilization. On the other hand, Muslim women that don't wear the Islamic headscarf, and their appearances agree with the European culture, are being praised with code words like "Brave", "hero", and "strong" since they "fought against the subjugation by their religion". What is more, to degrade the value and

meaning of the veil, Western mainstream media usually tries to generalize the different kinds of veiling or generalize Arab countries, indicating that all Arab countries force women to wear the headscarf and that all Arab women are the same. Also, very often both German and French media use metaphors when discussing the headscarf in debates, like, "black bed-sheet", "cloud of fabric", "envelop", or "wrap" leaving the audience to imagine oppressed, and miserable, covered women (Zahra & Khan, 2016).

2.2.1. The Charlie Hebdo Incident

One out of many incidents of Islamophobia involving the media, that occurred in France and describes the Western Medias' attitude towards the head-covering debate, concerns the Charlie Hebdo magazine. In 2018 in Paris, France, a 19-year-old student Maryam Pougetoux, leader of a student union of Paris' Sorbonne University, appeared on the News, wearing the hijab and talking about the ongoing student protests in France (Khalife, 2018). The incident received many negative comments online because of the hijabi girl, making France's Interior Minister, Gerard Collomb to get involved and speak on the matter on BBC. According to minister Collomb, the young lady's choice of attire was a "provocation" as he said, while negatively criticizing it, adding that "We cannot let this be a sign of identitarian will, something that shows that one is different from French society". Additionally, Marlene Schiappa, France's Equality Minister, described Pougetoux's appearance "As a form of promotion of political Islam". The matter got worse when the French magazine Charlie Hebdo, published a provocative cartoon, mocking the 19-year-old student. The famous magazine drew on its pages the young girl in a form of a monkey wearing the headscarf. The caption of the drawing was: "They chose me to head the UNEF" (Muslim Mirror Desk, 2018). It was not the first time that the specific magazine took an anti-Muslim stand, nor was it the first time that a French magazine publicly opposed and discriminated against Muslim veiled women. Maryam Pougetoux not expecting the publicity of the video because of her hijab, said: "I wasn't expecting it to become a government matter". "My veil has no political function. It is given a political meaning that I don't give it myself." "It is my faith," and she added. "I

shouldn't have to justify myself" (Khalife, 2018). Lastly, Pougetoux clarified: "I wore it by religious conviction. It does not prevent me from having a normal life and from having progressive values and dedicating my life to my political engagement" (Alami, 2018).

The publicity of the incident because of the appearance of a hijabi girl, even though the News segment was about education, and the way Maryam Pougetoux was presented in French media, show the values and priorities of French society. Maryam Pougetoux was judged for the way she looked and not for what she had to say on a serious matter. This indicates that France's concerns on the hijab do not lie in "the oppression of Muslim Women" or their lack of education and modernity, as France claims through the head-covering debate. It seems that the French society primarily values homogeneity, (achieved through assimilation) with the supremacy of its culture, over other cultures, and that is what it projects through its media. The presence of a Muslim woman as a leading figure, like in this case with Maryam Pougetoux, could be considered as threatening to the integration policy of France. The image of Maryam Pougetoux does not agree with the cultural image that the West has constructed for Muslim veiled women, which weakens the purpose of the debate. Additionally, the excessive reaction of political members, and the media, shows the fear of the West for the "end of national culture" and the prevalence of multiculturalism within its States, which is also what the anti-head-covering policies symbolize (Bonet, 2011).

Lastly, the American historian Joan Scott commented on the incident by saying that France has not overcome its colonial past yet, since, until this day, many believe it is their mission to civilize other cultures. She then made the following observation: "The conflation of the woman wearing a headscarf with a political threat to the nation is quite extraordinary," she stated. "It's almost like these women are defined as witches. They're barring some evil threat to the integrity of the nation. They can't be seen by anything but an aggressive threat. If that is not a form of racism or Islamophobia, I don't know what is" (Alami, 2018).

Picture 2: The Drawing by Magazine Charlie Hebdo

Source: Muslim Mirror Desk, 2018

3. Multiple Grounds of Discrimination

Muslim veiled women are a group that faces discrimination on multiple grounds. So, in this chapter, I try to examine the sexist on top of the Islamophobic nature of the headscarf debate in Germany and France.

Traditionally, anti-discrimination policies and equality treaties are focusing on battling discrimination against a specific group and characteristics. It is race or ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, etc. In Europe, many Countries have single dimension equality acts that are addressed to the individual's single identity like, the International Lesbian and Gay Association-Europe (ILGA Europe) or the European Network against Racism (ENAR). This focus on just one category of inequality is called "unitary". However, recent researches claim that people can belong in several groups and have many identities, and so they can be discriminated against on more than one ground (Nousiainen & Kantola, 2009). For example, Muslim veiled women are often discriminated against, on the grounds of their race and religion, as we have already discussed, but also on the grounds of their attire and gender. The "unitary" approach of Muslim veiled women in Europe can be harmful to them, since it oversimplifies the problem, and denies the multiple identities of Muslim women. The discrimination against Muslim veiled women consists of a different category with a different experience from that of the discrimination against women, the discrimination against Muslims, the discrimination against Muslim symbols, or the discrimination against Moroccans for instance (Weichselbaumer, 2019). This approach is called intersectionality and it was popularized by Kimberle´ Crenshaw in 1991. The approach supports, that Muslim women hold a specific identity that consists of many characteristics that interact. In addition to that, they are located in the intersections of racism and sexism, among others, and their experiences can be reduced to neither (Yuval-Davis, 2007). For instance, the Islamophobic image and stereotypes of Muslim Veiled women are different from those of Muslim men. Where Muslim men are depicted as terrorists and uncivilized, Muslim women are depicted as submissive and ignorant victims on top of being terrorists. Additionally, the secular legislation in German and France affects Muslim men and women differently having a greater impact on women, which are the ones that have to unveil. Yuval-Davis (1993) in that regard, supports that Muslim veiled women possess dualistic citizenship, meaning that, even if women are included in the social, political, and legal policies of

a state, there are always specific laws for them, making them a special kind of citizens (Yuval-Davis, 1993). For instance, the burkini ban was the legislation in 2016, that prohibited access to beaches only for Muslim women in France, due to their appearance, but not Muslim men, even though it is the women that are portrayed as oppressed by Muslim men. So even when women are the victims in a constructed scenario and Muslim men are the ones that are mostly blamed for it, the solution to the problem is still through the control over women's bodies, and the restrictions and exclusion imposed on them. And so, although the beach is for all, Muslim veiled women, in particular, were the only ones that were not allowed to use it (Thylin, 2016).

Therefore, many scholars had been using the term gendered Islamophobia to describe this form of discrimination against Muslim veiled women, which is specific to them (Ramírez, 2015).

## 3.1.   The Control over Muslim Women's Bodies

Another aspect of discrimination against the head-covering of Muslim women, apart from Islamophobia, as we have already discussed, which prevents veiled women from integrating in Germany and France, is the need of the European societies to control female bodies through clothing. In research conducted by Marc Helbling, he states that the attitudes of non-Muslims in Western Europe are far more negative towards the female Islamic attire than Muslims in general (Helbling, 2014). A feministic approach on the matter discusses that the hatred towards the piece of clothing derives from the patriarchal need of Western men to control women's bodies, behavior, and sexuality. The Islamic veil prevents Western men from viewing and having access to the bodies of Muslim women, and thus from having control over it (Bullock, 2010). Men are being seen without seeing; women are walking down the streets, covered, and without having the insecurity of socially made-up beauty standards in mind. In a way, the above automatically disrupt the constructed capitalistic and patriarchal notions of gender hierarchies within Western societies. Evidently, this is another reason for the West to create anti-headscarf legislations within States, and have debates on the issue (Bowen, 2007). Foucault in that regard, in his book *Discipline and Punishment,* states: "… the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a

productive body and a subjected body" (Foucault, 1997). Foucault in that way explains the way the body is involved in the political field, and the use it can have for power structure by a State.

Additionally, according to Seyla Benhabib "Women and their bodies are the symbolic and cultural place where human societies write their moral system" (Mancini, 2012). The usage of the female body as a symbolic place to express culture, as described by Seyla Benhabib, can be found in both the East and the West. In Afghanistan, the Taliban are forcing women to wear the veil and carry their culture with modesty, while in Europe, Muslim women are forced to unveil or undress, since they are considered oppressed, which allegedly does not fit with the so-called liberal European culture. In both cases, however, the wishes of the women involved are being ignored, and the control over their own bodies is removed from them, by sexist regimes, indicating them how to dress (Joppke, 2009). For Europe to abolish a "symbol of oppression" within its territory, does not mean that it will abolish oppression, if there is one, to begin with. The only thing achieved by this strategy is the production of a new form of cultural oppression for Muslim veiled women, who are being subjected to sexualization and objectification by the West. And this form of oppression is not very different from the one Western Europe is allegedly trying to abolish (Niamh, 2011).

According to anthropologist Ramirez Angeles, the policy of both veiling and unveiling can involve the domination of women. She expresses how these kinds of regulations, in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries are inscribing laws to the female body and are a way to imply that women are socially inferior. Ramirez adds that in Europe the headscarf ban is a way to impose assimilation and to make Muslim women members of society only by removing their headscarves. In that way, women are defined by their dress codes and are divided into good women (those who wear clothes that agree with the European culture) and bad women (those who refuse to wear the "right" clothes) (Ramírez, 2015).

Picture 2: The Different Perceptions of Male Dominance
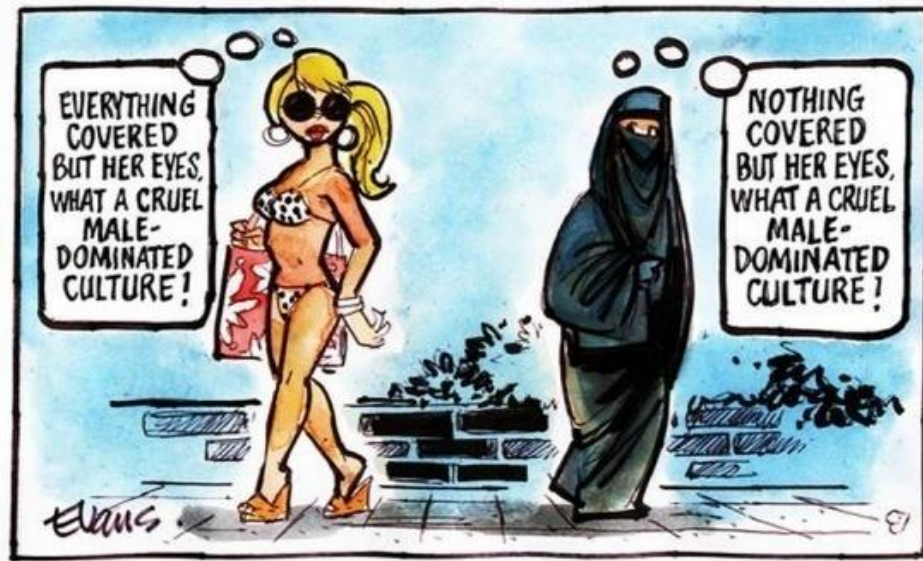
Source: Kalantry, 2019

The above illustration depicts the clash between Western and Islamic views on feminism and empowerment. It shows the different perceptions of patriarchal dominance between two different cultures with different dress codes. Women in the West feel empowered wearing fewer clothes and showing their bodies and they can not understand Muslim women's interpretation of empowerment and vice versa. However, the symbolic meanings of the bikini and burka are different in France and Afghanistan, at the same time they are often being (mis)used to categorize, dehumanize, and profit from women, by pairing certain virtues with clothing styles (oppressed, attractive, liberated, respectable, etc) (Ramírez, 2015). Moreover, the picture implies that debates about cultural oppression are relevant, and are usually constructed in a way, by Nations (like Germany or France) to establish their superiority over other Nations. In this way female bodies are objectified and are being used as tools for political propaganda by States, to dichotomize nations, and for each nation to promote their own interests. Under those circumstances, both "covered" and "uncovered" women are under male dominance.

3.2. Women in the Streets

Another argument that Western Europe supports regarding the headscarf debate, is the absence of transparency and visibility of the woman underneath the garment.

According to this issue, Muslim women cannot be seen thus there is no communication or any other form of contact with them in the streets. Socialization, and interaction through facial expressions in the streets, are some other characteristics of the Western European culture that Muslim women refuse to adapt to (by wearing the burka, or niqab, in particular), and this is allegedly another indication of a refusal to integrate into the European Society. According to the French Justice Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie: "The Republic is lived with the face uncovered" and having the same view, the French philosopher Elizabeth Badinter, claimed that: "Wearing the face-veil represents a refusal to engage with other people, or more precisely a rejection of reciprocity. A woman wearing a veil assumes the right to look at me but rejects my right to look at her" (Shah & Grillo, 2012).

We could say that Muslim women, before the banning of the veil, were in a position where, could see without being seen, which gave them some power over the Europeans, who under those circumstances could not be superior. "What could not be seen and grasped as a spectacle could not be controlled" and thus could not be exploited (Bullock, 2010).

Today, the visibility of the female body in the West is something conceived as liberating and feministic. The Western media and the Western beauty industry support this view, while strongly implying that a body that is not exposed enough, is oppressed, and that autonomy and freedom are linked with clothing and hairstyling (Bowen, 2007).

 In the burka ban report, the French Parliament claimed that "the veil is an assault on women's dignity and the affirmation of femininity", implying that femininity is a notion associated with fabrics and the exposure of the female body. Additionally with the above claim, the parliament links dignity to the European way of life and styling, declaring once again that it is the right way to live, and that it should be followed (Mancini, 2012). So, it seems that the French society strongly implies that in order for a woman to be feminine and a dignifying member of European society she needs to dress more revealingly and interact with others in the streets. However, in this way France objectifies and sexualizes Muslim women, suggesting that they should become a visually satisfying spectacle for men. Seemingly, women are to smile, and dress for men, to please them aesthetically, or else they will be alienated and misunderstood (Ruby, 2004). According to feminist theorist Catharine Mackinnon, female sexualization in public is a patriarchal reaction to the gradually increased entry of

women in the public and work market. Consequently, the sexist behavior towards the veil through the headscarf ban could be a patriarchal response to those women who refuse to become victims of the Western beauty and fashion industry, while resisting their objectification (Mancini, 2012).

There are many ways, nowadays, in which female bodies are dehumanized and constantly loaded with socially constructed "needs" like shaving, wearing heals, etc, which are made to financially exploit women and control their behavior. So by some, the hijab in Europe is viewed as an empowering tool to resist today's capitalistic gain from the unrealistic beauty standards of the West, which are harmful to women and are another form of gender oppression (Bullock, 2010).

4. The Effects of Anti-Veiling Laws & Discrimination on the Integration of Muslim Women

As it was already discussed, the symbolic meaning of the headscarf debate can be found in both the history and policies of Germany and France when it comes to Muslim minorities, pointing at an ethnocentric attitude. Muslim veiled women, in particular, are facing discrimination, through the anti-headscarf legislation, on multiple grounds and in many ways, which have created barriers to many aspects of their integration in Germany and France (Shaista, 2015). In the West, Muslim veiled women are facing discrimination and difficulties in their education, employment, and social life. They often have to decide between the expression of their cultural identity, and assimilation to the white, Christian-European culture, and lifestyle, so they could go to school, find a job, or even walk down the street (Alidadi, 2017).

4.1. The Barriers to Education

For the daughters of Muslim migrants or the daughters of their descendants, the difficulties of their integration into the French society start as early as high school. Specifically, ever since the legislation of 2004, that prohibits the headscarf at schools even for young students; Muslim girls are facing barriers to their education.

During the first period of the implementation of the legislation in France, the girls who insisted on wearing the headscarf, at first were removed from the class and sent to the principal to discuss other options of clothing for them. If these girls did not agree to an alternative, they would get expelled (a practice that continues until today). Muslim girls can decide whether to continue their education or drop out of school if they are above the age of 16. Additionally, girls can choose between changing into a private school and distance learning, or leave the country. So it seems like the French State asks hijabi girls to decide between education and their religion, assimilation, and isolation, and lastly, their parents' culture, and the French culture since they cannot have both. Muslim girls in that way are pushed to leave school, while non-Muslim students are being urged to continue their academic careers. The whole process of expulsion alone is taking an important amount of time from the young girls' education, so even if they finally chose to continue their studies, without wearing the

Islamic headscarf, they would be far more behind from the rest of their classmates (Fouka & Abdelgadir, 2019).

The application of the legislation in schools is often described as humiliating for Muslim girls, as they are being singled out from the rest of the students and are being treated differently by both the students and the teachers. Additionally, the ban has long-term consequences on Muslim girls, since it reduces their participation in school, due to unwillingness to attend, which later reduces their chances to participate in the labor force, as they cannot compete with non-Muslim citizens in the West that have graduated from universities. The latter has driven many Muslim veiled women to occupy lower-wage jobs or stay unemployed and become dependent on social welfare and sometimes their husbands. Lastly, the headscarf ban has caused an identity conflict for girls very early in their lives, which young Muslims often resolve by moving back to their ethnic and religious communities, and refusing to assimilate into the French society, especially when it comes to Muslim families that are traditionally wearing the headscarf (Fouka & Abdelgadir, 2019).

On the other hand, the states of Germany that have banned the Islamic head-covering from schools, have limited the banning only to public school teachers, in several states, and not to students. One of the first cases of the headscarf debate in Germany that involved a Muslim teacher was the case of Fereshta Ludin in 1997. Fereshta Ludin is an Afghan-born German citizen who had completed her studies and preparations to become a teacher and start her carrier by getting a position at a school. However, at the time, Republicans that were at the Baden-Württemberg parliament were claiming that "youth are to be raised in the fear of God [. . .] Children will be raised on the basis of Christian and Western educational and cultural values", Indicating that any other religion will not be welcomed. After that, Ludin worked as a teacher for two years and then was prohibited to work in public schools, unless she would take off her headscarf. In 2003, Fereshta Ludin took her case in front of the Constitutional Court to file a suit against the ban of the headscarf at schools in Baden-Württemberg, which sparked debates around the head-covering of teachers in Germany. Ludin claimed that the headscarf was her personal decision due to her religion and that it had no political meaning or intent for proselytism. Fereshta Ludin won the case, with the Constitutional Court also ruling that the 16 German states could ban the Islamic attire independently at schools for teachers (Weber, 2012).

However, even though the ban on head-covering in Germany affects immediately, public workers, Muslim students are still affected by the discriminatory attitudes towards head-covering. Students are constantly asked by the authorities about their home environment or whether the hijab is their choice and how sure they are about it. In a report of 2006 that was conducted by the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), Muslim migrants living in Germany were interviewed, and among other issues, they were asked to describe their educational experiences in Germany. One student said:

"The first thing about the culture of my forefathers that was mentioned in school, when I went to a German school, and we were talking about the Ottoman Empire, the way it was explained was that the Ottomans marched to Vienna. Then the teacher took a deep breath and said, 'Thank God we beat them because otherwise, you guys would have big problems.' He looked to all the boys and said 'You all would have been circumcised. Next, he looked to all the girls and said, 'You all would have to wear headscarves.' Then, finally, they looked at me altogether and said, 'It's very good that your boys lost the war, otherwise then we would have had a problem.' When I went home I had a guilty feeling about what a bad culture I come from and I always had this feeling that I'd have to excuse myself because my parents come from Turkey" (EUMC, 2006). The teacher treated the young boys, as If they were the soldiers fighting for the Ottoman Empire, which indicates that not only does she thinks of these students as non-German citizens, and isolates them from the rest, by using the phrases "we beat them" and "you boys lost the war", but also she has generalized ideas, and makes assumptions about the Muslim culture. Lastly, she described the fact of being a Muslim man or a Muslim woman wearing the headscarf, as the worst thing that could have happened, making the student whose parents came from Turkey feel guilty and ashamed.

4.2.   The Barriers to Employment

In Germany and France, State neutrality has created several barriers for women wearing any form of Islamic attire. As we have already mentioned, the ban of the headscarf at schools has made it difficult for girls to focus on their education, and this influences their future careers, and their ability to compete with non-Muslim citizens

in the European labor market. In some German states, public servants are prohibited from wearing any form of religious symbols, and it has been noticed that the private sector is also influenced by that, so employers are often reluctant to hire a hijabi woman. Meanwhile, in France, if you are a woman wearing the full-face veil, you are excluded, by the law, from any kind of activity outside the house. In addition to the above legislation, in 2017 the European Court of Justice declared that any private business of the European Union is free to ask its employees to take off their religious symbols when at work (BBC, 2018).

This series of policies, that target the Muslim minority, and especially women, creates an unwelcome environment that drives veiled women to unemployment. French Muslim women have some of the highest rates of unemployment in the country, due to discrimination, while the anti-headscarf policies worsen their socio-economic marginalization too (Hopkins, 2015). The European system creates a difficult reality for Muslim head-covered women since they have to work harder for education and employment and surpass discrimination. At the same time, however, it is the same system that accuses Muslim veiled women of being oppressed, staying-at-home mothers, dependent on their husbands, or being uneducated and refusing to integrate into the progressive West. These create a vicious cycle that often keeps Muslim women from succeeding and distancing themselves from those stereotypes that states like Germany and France attach to them.

On many occasions, there have been reports on instances, where temporary employment agencies have confessed that when companies are asking for workers, they specifically request that they would not be Muslims. In Germany, there have been examples where workers would be fired on "suspicion of being a security risk". In both France and Germany, veiled women are hesitant to send their resumes to jobs, because they know they will be discriminated against, and not hired, because of their photos attached to the resume, or because of the in-person interview (Weichselbaumer, 2016).

The above could be confirmed by an experiment that was conducted in Germany by Doris Weichselbaumer from the University of Linz, in Austria. In the experiment, the researcher wanted to prove the discrimination and alienation against the women that are wearing the headscarf In Germany. So, she proceeded into sending 1500 identical resumes in Germany, but half of them she sent by the Turkish name, Meryem Ozturk, and half by the German name, Sandra Bauer. The two CVs had the same educational

backgrounds, same experiences, personal statuses, and recommendation letters. However, in 18.8 % of cases, Sandra Bauer was invited for a job interview, whereas Meryem was just invited in 13.5% of cases, and the percentages for Maryem dropped to 4.2 % when the researcher attached a photo to Maryem's CV, where she was wearing the hijab (Weichselbaumer, 2016).

Under those circumstances, Muslim veiled women cannot find a job and even if they managed to do so, it is usually somewhere where they do not get in contact with other people. The marginalization of these women, this time through the Labor Market, has made them inactive and feeling that they don't belong, or that they are not valued members of society. Additionally, they face financial issues, since there is only one provider in the house, making it very hard to escape the lower castes of society or to not depend on social welfare (Alidadi, 2017).

In the report of 2006 by the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), interviewees from different Member States agreed that in the European Union, Muslim veiled women are the ones that are being discriminated against the most, out of all minorities. In the EUMC report a female interviewee described her working experience in Germany, by confessing:

"You don't find many women wearing a scarf in jobs that involve interaction with the public. You don't find that in Germany, it doesn't work here. That is unheard of. There are very, very few Muslim women teachers who wear scarves. Nowadays Muslim women are not easily employed because people think that they might one day turn up and start wearing a scarf. So even if they are not wearing a scarf, they face discrimination because they might come to work one day wearing a scarf." Another woman said that when she wanted to get a part-time job in Germany as a cleaner, the employer told her that her headscarf was against their policy and so she needed to remove it, so she could work for him to which she declined (EUMC, 2006). Before the decision of 2017 of the EU Court of Justice to allow employers of private sectors to prohibit their employees to wear religious symbols, Muslim women in France and Germany mostly occupied positions of the private sector commodified care work. Hanane for example, a Muslim woman living in France, was unable to find a job due to her veil. She then began looking for a job over the internet in 2004-2005 where she managed to get one as a housekeeper. After a while, she interviewed for another job as a high school monitor, where she took off her veil before the interview and was hired. After two days of working in the high school, her employer commented on her

clothing asking her to wear shorter skirts or pants. Hanane then quit the job due to the demands about her clothes (Hopkins, 2015).

4.3.   The Barriers to Social Life

It is expressed that Muslim Women feel the most vulnerable in the streets, especially after an Islamic terrorist attack in Europe, since in the minds of the public Muslims are all the same, therefore they are all responsible. The comments in the streets have usually the form of a joke in a very loud and rude manner so that the women that are passing can hear them. Additionally, the comments have a sexist or racist character like "go back to your country" or "when are you leaving?", "There is no place for veil in France" etc. Many Muslim women have also experienced physical assault in the streets due to their garments and men trying (and sometimes succeeding) to hit and undress them. In France Kenza Drider a 32-year-old mother of three, shared her experience with sexist Islamophobic aggression, saying:

I still go out in my car, on foot, to the shops, to collect my kids. I get insulted 3–4 times a day […] most say "Go home"; some say, "We'll kill you". One said we'll do to you what we did to the Jews. In the worst attack before the [anti-face veil] law came in, a man tried to run me down in his car" (Hopkins, 2015). From 2008 before the ban to 2012 after it, interpersonal Islamophobic violence increased by 139% (Hopkins, 2015). This shows how the anti-veiling laws have put in immediate danger Muslim women by officially validating in this way, preexisting hatred towards them.

Muslim women that wear the headscarf are also targeted in the streets by state officials, policemen, or security in malls and airports due to their visibility and the stigma around it. This general climate of suspicion and fear of Muslim people has created difficulties for Muslim veiled women to execute even the simplest everyday tasks, like going to the supermarket or on a trip, without being looked at and criticized. What is more, in the case of an assault or harassment, Muslim women are often hesitant to report it to the police, since they feel that their complaints are unlikely to lead to actions (Shah, 2012). The above can have a great physical and psychological impact on peoples' lives, and that's why Muslim women often choose to either stay at home, or surround themselves with other Muslims, in Muslim-owned stores, in mosques, and generally in places where they would feel more comfortable

and safe. Regardless, it is very often in Germany and France for minorities to be placed directly in specific neighborhoods based on race, excluded from the rest of society. In Germany, a Muslim man told the story, of him looking for an apartment, to the EUMC, he said, "When you take your wife, who has a headscarf, and want to rent a flat, you can forget about renting it if you go with a headscarf. You must just go alone or send someone else!" And another man, having the same experience in Germany said, "I was looking for a flat and I went there with my wife and the first question I was asked was 'Is your wife wearing the headscarf all the time?' I said 'Yes, what's the problem?' 'Well, maybe you should write a letter [on] whether you are integrated here or not.' I wrote this letter. I didn't get the flat, it was obvious why" (EUMC, 2006).

Another barrier that Muslim women have to confront due to the discrimination against the head-covering is their exclusion from extracurricular activities, like sports. Muslim women are often excluded from a sport due to their attire. In France in 2016 Muslim women could not attend swimming pools or beaches wearing burkinis due to the burkini ban which not only excluded many women from enjoying the sea or the pool but also excluded many female Muslim athletes from practicing water sports at the time. The burkini, like all other Islamic dresses, was considered a religious symbol and was also viewed as oppressive by France, since it covered the majority of the body, and thus it was banned (Thylin, 2016).

Lastly, the political participation of Muslim women in Germany and France exists. Women of Muslim origin represent Muslim women in politics however, in both countries the female representatives are secular and do not practice their religion in public or wear Islamic attire, due to the State Neutrality law (Vanzan, 2016).

So, veiled women face various barriers even when it comes to simply take a walk. The various prejudices, mostly deriving from Western media and anti-veiling laws, which aim to control women, have created an unsafe, unfair, and untrustworthy environment for Muslim veiled women, which are unable to express themselves and contribute to society, politics, science, and the economy. In this way, Muslim women are constantly viewed as secondary citizens that do not give back to their communities and only receive social welfare, while doing nothing but "exploiting the State" and its so-called hospitality.

Conclusion

Today, France and Germany are two of the secular countries in Western Europe with the most Muslim women citizens, and an overall increasingly diverse population. However, due to the integration policies followed by France and Germany, Muslim women are not allowed to wear the Islamic headscarf in specific areas and therefore freely express their religion and culture. The legislation followed by the Western Countries on the matter of Islamic attire has created many barriers to the integration of Muslim veiled women, to education, employment, and social life. The feeling of exclusion and non-acceptance of Muslim women are the outcomes of the discriminatory policies that France and Germany have adopted against those women, which are making them choose between their culture and integration.

The existence of the head-covering debate lies in the neutral and progressive image that the European Union wants to obtain, which is in contrast with the violation of multiple human rights that come with the unveiling of Muslim women. The laws around the anti-veiling point to a "white savior complex", where a so-called "open-mined" nation tries to save a "submissive group", of an underdeveloped culture, that allegedly misuses and oppresses its women. Nevertheless, according to the points that were made in this essay, based on the researches of John Bowen, Joan Scott, Christian Joppke, and Doris Weichselbaumer, the Western European attitude towards the head-covering of Muslim women derives from the stereotypical and post-colonial, post-WWII views of the cultural "other" inside the French and German multicultural societies. Muslim veiled women are visibly different from the rest of the Western European citizens, and so their diversity disrupts the homogeneity of the French and German social and cultural identity, which these European countries try to obtain. The assimilation, and therefore the complete adaption of Muslim veiled women to the European society, enables the hierarchical Western system, and its continuous imperialistic approach of the South and East. Consequently, the above creates a form of cultural oppression instead of destroying it.

The second layer of discrimination that is mentioned in the current thesis, against the head-covering, concerns the gendered Islamophobia with the patriarchal and capitalistic control over Muslim women's bodies through clothing. The refusal of Muslim veiled women to integrate to the constructed beauty standards of the West, and adjust to the identity of the French or German woman, for some, consists of an

empowering instrument of feminism that is against the interests of Western Beauty industries. According to this, Muslim veiled women cannot be subjected to criticism on their bodies by men, which could take away their male dominance over them. However, Western feminism and societies' views on the headscarf are being influenced by Western media's propaganda, and debates that attribute a different cultural meaning to the word "empowerment". Therefore, the specific vocabulary and images of terrorism and the headscarf tyranny, projected by the Media, have constructed a wall between the West and Muslim veiled women, who are not being heard while forced to adapt to a Western lifestyle.

So, the banning and discrimination against the Islamic headscarf, do not aim to liberate Muslim women, or fight terrorism and establish equality, since the policies have dichotomizing and xenophobic outcomes. Nor do they aim to Secularism, since other forms of religions are openly practiced. The symbolic meanings behind the headscarf debate are the establishment of European cultural cohesion, and the reminding of the White, Male, Christian, supremacy over South-Eastern cultures, and more specifically, over the diverse, Muslim Veiled Women.

Under those circumstances, Muslim women face a difficult time integrating into Western societies and the European form of life, simply because they are Muslim women of color with a different culture, and a wish to practice it among Europeans. Therefore the headscarf is not the problem, but the attitudes of the Countries, that want to maintain their "National culture", towards it. As a result, Muslim women are not treated as equals within Western European societies.

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