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THE MUSLIM PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC SELF-GOVERNMENT AND THE CURRENT CRISIS OF FRENCH "SELF-IDENTIFICATION"

Abstract. One of the most important aspects of world civilization is the spread of the Islamic religion. To date, most of the world's population is Muslim. And one of the actual problems is the clothes women wear: the hijab. In some states, wearing the hijab has been controversial for many years. There are opinions that it is convenient and chic, there are other opinions that subject the hijab to sharp criticism. In France, Muslim girls were forbidden to wear headscarves for fear that their appearance would cast doubt on France's cohesive, universal ideal. According to many experts, this represents a formidable threat to the classical French identity, anchored in the universalism of French culture and civilization.

In this connection, in this article the author analyzes the Muslim perception of public self-government through the prism of multiculturalism in modern France.

Key words: hijab, identity, muslim culture, France, multiculturalism, civilization, self-government, Islam, religion.

Introduction

Jasminum sambac, commonly termed Arabian jasmine, an evergreen vine with its distinctive pungent scent, is a native of the eastern Himalayas in Bhutan, but some of its cultivars were spread by man in the arid climates of the Middle East. In Arabic, it's called Full (للفف), and in Greek Fouli (Φούλι). So was born Fulla in Syria, in 2003, a Barbie-like fashion, Shariah-compliant doll, and they named her after the legendary flower that "grows in the Levant."¹ Unlike her US cousin, Fulla has traded Barbie's scanty dress for a more modest outfit that covers her legs and arms, complete with a hijab and even a prayer mat, and the dark-eyed doll has been taking the regional market by storm, outselling her western rival, in several countries across the Middle East, China, Brazil, North Africa, Egypt, and Indonesia (and also in the United States). Fulla "loves life and learning," the website explains. "She honors her parents and loves her family and friends. She takes care of her brother and sister, the twins Bader and Nour. She's patient with them no matter how hard it gets. She loves reading and learning, and drawing is her hobby (...) Fulla is the spirit of any girl who strives toward excellence, creativity, renewal, and peace." And lastly, it is Fulla's mission "to make the world a better place for everyone."²

The New York Times noted in 2005 that Mattel's iconic dolls had all but disappeared from the shelves of many toy stores in the Middle East, replaced by Fulla, a doll "with Muslim values" as her creator puts it. "Young girls here are obsessed with Fulla, and conservative parents who would not dream of buying Barbies for their daughters seem happy to pay for a modest doll who has her own tiny prayer rug, in pink felt."³

Fast-forward ten years, Haneefah Adam, an Instagram user located in Nigeria has created an account for Hijarbie to showcase a hijab and abayas-wearing Barbie. The "mini hijab fashion" collection outfits both the doll and her creator in clothing. She hand-stitches herself and Hijarbie has over 1.2 million followers. Other promoters of the modest lifestyle include popular Muslim fashion bloggers, such as Habiba Da Silva,⁴ Leena Asad,⁵ and Haute Hijab blogger, Melanie Elturk.⁶ "Brands are finally taking note of what I've been advocating since I founded the fashion brand Haute Hijab in 2010 - that Muslims (in this case Muslim women) are a thriving, fully-functioning and active segment of society who deserve to be acknowledged and heard," Elturk writes.

Main part

Modest wear and "hijab fashion" industry are no longer limited to a Middle Eastern market; they are fast growing to adjust to a Western wardrobe, a trend which is exploding with the massive development of social media to inspire millions of Muslim followers. Remarkably enough, this unstoppable evolution is proving that the trend is represented in infinite variations of the traditional head covering, as diverse as the multiple cultural parameters that shape Muslim communities around the world. As expected, the unforeseen popularity of the hijab brings into question its essential value, while it's becoming the focus of massive and creative attention in the fashion industry, and even as an art form.

In fact the trend is seemingly becoming a norm in the Western world, as Italian fashion house Dolce & Gabbana added flair to the trend with its winter 2016 collection of hijab and abayas catering to Muslim customers. Other western designers (such as H&M and DKNY, Uniqlo, Oscar de la Renta, Tommy Hilfiger, Mango and Monique Lhuillier) are following suit with garments engineered for modesty, targeting a market expected to be worth \$484 billion by 2019.

Increasingly celebrated or acknowledged within the Western world, is the veil, a symbol of resistance to secularization in some parts of the world--especially France, surreptitiously going through a process of secularization. That's why some have feared when Australian beauty blogger Chloe Morello, a self-described atheist, posted a celebratory makeup to wear with a hijab during the Eid al-Fitr holiday⁷ to an audience of 1.8 million subscribers on YouTube, drawing mixed reactions ranging from praise for her cultural inclusivity to accusations of disrespectful cultural appropriation.⁸

While modest options are appearing on the runway, France is struggling with a near 30-year conflict with Muslim head covers. In April 2016, right after Marks and Spencer's burkini - a full body swimsuit allowing women to "cover (the) whole body with the exception of the face, hands and feet without compromising on style" - hit the British market, French Women's rights Minister Laurence Rossignol caused a ruckus when she called the full body swimsuit "irresponsible" during an RMC radio program to discuss the Islamic fashion industry on which she was a guest.⁹ The outrage

reached new highs during the discussion when Rossignol compared Muslim women who wear veils to "American negroes" who supported slavery.¹⁰ A petition launched across social media calling on the minister to resign gathered more than 10,000 signatures in just a few hours.¹¹

Should Muslims have the freedom to choose what they wear? Should women of European origin object to Muslim woman's dress? That kind of question never seems to meet unanimous answers in secular France.

With the largest Muslim minority in Europe, France has some of the continent's most staunchly restrictive laws about expressions of faith in public. In December 2003, the year of Fulla's birth, a bill was signed into law ("the Veil Law") by President Jacques Chirac banning any visible, "ostentatious" sign of religious affiliation in public schools, in the name of secularism.¹² The law appeared as the final outcome of a long debate, triggered by an incident that had taken place in 1989--the so-called *Affaire des Foulards*.

The *Affaire des Foulards* when a public school in Creil, a few miles north of Paris, banned three Muslim girls from entering the school wearing headscarves in a secular institution.¹³ The decision was based on secularism in public schools, a tradition challenged for the first time in the history of the separation of Church and State, which started in 1905. Arguments regarding discrimination against Muslims and the refusal of France to recognize the religious and ethnic diversity of its immigrants were pushed to the forefront of national consciousness, sparking the first of many debates regarding the essence of French culture, and were brought to the forefront of international attention. Indeed, the immigrant question seems to be a means of gauging the changes in France's identity due to its political and cultural implications, as well as the possibility of reconciling the ethnic and cultural diversity within France in relation to its growing population of North African immigrants.

When the Muslim girls were expelled from school after refusing to remove their head garments, a rancorous debate exploded around the conflicting issues of religious freedom, female discrimination and separation of church and state.¹⁴ Minister of Education, Lionel Jospin, decided that, although the school should try to persuade the girls to remove their headscarves, they should not be denied access to the classroom. At this time, the French Conseil d'etat declared that decisions would be made on each individual case by each school, a decision likened to the "Munich of the school of the Republic" and criticized as failing to support such essential tenets of the French republic as secularism and universalism.¹⁵ Later, in 1994, the French government ruled that any "ostensible" signs of religion in public schools were in direct conflict with the principle of secular education.

The presence of immigrants and of their children born in France after World War II has challenged the eighteenth-century ideal of universalism, often perceived today as a form of European ethnocentrism, and traditionally depicted as the so-called *exception française*. The idea of a uniquely French culture is met by criticism from international as well as domestic voices, as it clearly appears as a form of domination rather than liberation.¹⁶ As Paul Ricur noted in a discussion on education and secularism, France is "dealing with Islam as it erupts within the French political arena, with a new religion that has not participated in (its) history, which was not one of the religious sources at the origin of (its) constitution."¹⁷ The original model was grounded on a

centralized and assimilationist Republic, whose aim was "to transform peasants into Frenchmen by destroying their local cultures,"¹⁸ relying essentially on *laïcité* (secularism) and the idea of a unitary and indivisible republic, promoted by the 1905 Jules Ferry law on the separation of church and state.

Post-colonial multiculturalism challenges the traditionalist view on French identity rooted in the ethnocentric legacy of the French Revolution, founded on the Virtues of civil equality and universalism - "The presence of a new immigrant mass and of their children born in France, especially coming from the former French colonies of Muslim North Africa are playing the motor role in the current questionings over the French 'identity,'"¹⁹ Diana Pinto noted in 1988. The model inherited from the Revolution is now suffocating the diversity of France, instead of creating a "plurality of ways of being French, to avoid the dangers brought by intolerance diversity,"²⁰ Jeremy Jennings notes, in an attempt to formulate a concept of citizenship encompassing multiculturalism.

The *Affaire des Foulards* exemplifies how the new wave of immigrants was challenging the validity of the French concept of universalism, triggering a debate on the problem of immigrant assimilation into French culture, faced with the ethnic and cultural diversity brought by its growing population of citizens of North African descent. Until that time, the French had paid little attention to France's Arab population, which in 1974, at the end of the economic boom, had risen to 1.2 million. While immigration, largely illegal, had provided the cheap labor necessary for postwar industrial reconstruction, it had become a "social problem." Arguments regarding discrimination against Muslims and the refusal of France to recognize the religious and ethnic diversity of its immigrants were suddenly pushed to the forefront of national consciousness, sparking the first of many debates regarding the essence of French identity.

Could the original concept of universalism, inherited from the French Revolution, still respond to the post-war multicultural nature of the French population, while it had until then been largely based on the idea of a homogeneous society and "blindness" to national identity?²¹ The great equalizer that *laïcité* is supposed to represent paradoxically appears as a new form of institutionalized discrimination, creating exclusion in a society that claims to be inclusive through the symbolic elimination of signs unable to meet norms initially believed to be universal and through the incapacity or unwillingness to include minorities, unless they erase their native ways of life.

In the age of globalization, the French narrative of universalism has become an unreachable fantasy of homogeneity, creating an internal contradiction between integration and repression, as it only offers assimilation to immigrants and refugees, scape-goating the absolute others whose behavior and culture cannot match the model.

Traditionally, the French public school system prides itself on being a secular institution. It functions as a primary place of socialization, an arena to assimilate immigrants by demanding sameness through the promotion of French culture, refusing to allow individuals to freely display their religious beliefs and practices in all realms of public and private life. Assimilation has always been integral to preserving French culture. In response to the *Affaire des Foulards*, French Health Minister Claude Evin was quoted saying in a radio broadcast that "wearing veils is a reduction of freedom," and it was the government's responsibility to give this freedom to Muslim girls "who do not find it in their own family."²² Evin voiced a common French belief that the government must protect the right of Muslims who wish to live a secular life and do not want to be viewed as being different.

The notion of the French "universal," or abstract individual, originates in the distinctly French, idealized democracy, where regardless of ancestry, if an individual pledges to perpetuate a consciousness of the collective, French identity can be realized. The collectiveness of all French citizens constitutes the Rousseauian concept of "general will."²³ France depends on the "general will" of the people to fuel French culture as each individual plays their unique role with the common interest in mind to uphold the traditional Republican ideals in a collective capacity and to protect the integrity of French culture in the face of aggressive globalization and immigration.

Conclusion

Post-modern France is struggling to become a solid core of culture, a centralized country with a homogenized language and way of life. This process has been a long and arduous one, beginning with the French Revolution. There was a large diversity of languages and customs within the borders of France itself, and the architects of the Third Republic sought to assimilate these cultures by constructing an education system that taught the values of the French Republic, namely uniformity and standardization. With the advent of widespread European colonization during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, this ideology was extended to the external policies of France.

The success of the Algerian war for independence forced the French to realize that they had failed in assimilating both the colonies and the peripheral regions within France. In addition, the colonial conflicts questioned France's cultural and political values. In an increasingly globalized economy and culture, the ultimate question remains as to how effectively the French can respond to the changes taking place within its borders and still maintain its original concept of republicanism, one which is largely based on the idea of a monoculture society. This concept has been rigorously tested in recent years, with the presence of immigrants, especially those from former Muslim North African colonies like Algeria.

In the Affair of the Headscarves, France did not allow Muslim girls to wear headscarves for fear that their particularism would separate them, questioning France's cohesive, universal ideal, purposely drawing attention to them as being individuals deserving respect.

Despite the fear for a pluralistic society, an emerging French conceptualization of these problems places the old classical, centralized monarchical/ Jacobin interpretation in a defensive position. This implicit "pluralist" reference represents a formidable threat to the classical French identity anchored upon the universalism of French culture and civilization, forcing France to reconsider its cultural/social makeup and to reconstruct its republican ideals.

As distinct parts of France diverse cultural makeup are becoming more and more conspicuous and distinct, as the voices for equality and attention of these distinct and varying ethnic backgrounds are getting louder, the existence of a multicultural society can no longer be ignored. For clearly, a rationalist universalism, rooted in the philosophy of the eighteenth-century enlightenment, now looks more and more like a form of European ethnocentrism, and, thus, like a form of domination rather than liberation.

Bibliography

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4. Leena Asad, a half Palestinian, half American girl from Texas who loves "creating stylish looks that make hijab modern, approachable, and chic" (<http://www.withloveleena.com/>).
5. Melanie Elturk, 'Haute Hijab', <http://www.hautehijab.com/>.
6. Eid al-Fitr, religious holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, a single day during which Muslims are not permitted to fast.
7. 'I would never wear ahijab. That's like wearing a kippah as decoration,' or "You can't try on a religion. It's either your lifestyle or it's not. Any other form of wearing it is disrespectful to other cultures and religions," comments to the video read.
8. Speaking to RMC radio, Rossignol said: 'What's at stake is social control over women's bodies. When brands invest in this Islamic garment market, they are shirking their responsibilities and are promoting women's bodies being locked up.'
9. Ironically enough Rossignol is one of the founders of an anti-discrimination coalition, SOS Racisme.
10. Rossignol later said the use of the word Negro had been made in error, but stopped short of retracting the remark.
11. "Loi no 2004-228 du 15 mars 2004 encadrant, en application du principe de la séparation des églises et de l'État, le port de signes ou de tenues manifestant une appartenance religieuse dans les écoles, collèges et lycées publics," ("Law #2004-228 of March 15, 2004, concerning, as an application of the principle of the separation of church and state, the wearing of symbols or garb which show religious affiliation in public primary and secondary schools.") The "veil law" forbids the wearing of any religious articles, including the Islamic veil, the Jewish kippa, and large Christian crosses.
12. Several headscarf scandals re-appeared later when other Muslim students at other schools were banned just as the Creil girls in 1989.
13. The incident triggered an inflammatory article by the *Courrier Picard*, which was picked up by national press and anti racist organizations.
14. The traditionalist view on French identity is rooted in the legacy of the French Revolution, consisting of the virtues of civil equality and universalism. In this view, one enters the culture as an individual citizen stripped down of any particular affiliation, thereby abandoning own background and culture.
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20. Whereas the United States emphasize differences in demographics, re-affirmed in hyphenated-identities.
21. "Muslim Schoolgirl Scarves Banned; France in a Furor," *Los Angeles Times*, November 07, 1989.
22. "The law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to contribute personally, or through their representatives, to its formation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in its eyes, are equally admissible to all public dignities, positions, and employments, according to their capacities, and without any other distinction than that of their virtues and their talents." Article Six of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (*Déclaration des droits de l'Homme et du citoyen*), as written by Rousseau in 1789.

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Кризис социального самоуправления в мусульманском представлении и в современной французской самосознание

Аннотация. Одним из важных аспектов мировой цивилизации является распространение исламской религии. На сегодняшний день основная часть населения мира исповедует ислам. И одним из актуальных проблем является культура ношения одежды женщин. В некоторых государствах на протяжении многих лет ведутся споры по поводу ношения хиджаба. Есть мнения о том, что это удобно и шикарно, есть и другие мнения, где такая одежда подвержена резкой критике.

Во Франции мусульманским девушкам запрещали носить платки опасаясь, что их внешность поставит под сомнение сплоченный, универсальный идеал Франции. По мнению многих экспертов это представляет собой грозную угрозу классической французской идентичности, закрепленной на универсализме французской культуры и цивилизации.

В связи с этим, в данной статье автором анализируется мусульманское восприятие общественного самоуправления через призму мультикультуры в современной Франции.

Ключевые слова: хиджаб, идентичность, мусульманская культура, Франция, мультикультура, цивилизация, самоуправление, ислам, религия

Тсан Лоли (Франция, Париж)

Ижтимоий ўз-ўзини бошқаришнинг мусулмон тасавури ва замонавий француз ўзлигини англашдаги инқироз

Дунё тамаддунининг асосий жиҳатларидан бири ислом динининг тарқалишидир. Ҳозирги кунда дунё аҳолисининг аксарияти ислом динига эътиқод этади. Ва бунда асосий муаммолардан бири аёлларнинг кийиниш маданиятидир. Баъзи давлатларда "хиджоб" кийиш бўйича баҳслар давом этмоқда. Бу кийимни қулай ва чиройли деган фикрлар бор, айни пайтда бошқа фикрларда бундай кийим қаттиқ танқид этилади.

Францияда мусулмон қизларга рўмол ўраш тақиқланган, чунки бундай ташқи қиёфа Франциядаги ҳамжиҳатлик ва универсаллик гоёларига таҳдид сифатида қаралган. Аксарият экспертларнинг фикрича бу француз маданияти ва тамаддуни билан мустаҳкамлаган мумтоз француз ўзлигига катта таҳдиддир. Демак, ушбу мақолада муаллиф томонидан замонавий Франция мультимаданияти орқали мусулмон тасавуридаги ўзлигини англаш таҳлил этилади.

Таянч сўзлар: хиджоб, ўзига хослик, мусулмон маданияти, Франция маданияти, мультимаданият, цивилизация, ўзликни англаш, ислом дини.

