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This is a contribution from *Journal of Language and Politics* 12:2  
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Rosenberger, S. and B. Sauer (eds.) (2012). *Politics, Religion and Gender Framing and Regulating the Veil*. London: Routledge.

ISBN: 978-0415561488 (hb), pp. 264, £85.00

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*Politics, Religion and Gender: Framing and Regulating the Veil* edited by Sieglinde Rosenberger and Birgit Sauer is a collection of ten papers that deal with regulations and debates on the veil in Europe. It focuses in particular on eight European countries, including France, Germany, Austria, Greece, Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK and Bulgaria. The documents examined cover the period from 1989 to 2007 and draw on findings of the VEIL project of the Sixth European research framework of the European Commission that took place from 2006 to 2009.

Methodologically, the book draws on ‘critical discursive institutionalism’ (Sauer 2010) which deconstructs the institutional context involved in policy making on the issue of the headscarf. This, as the editors point out, has entailed an analysis of ‘frames’ in the selected documents about the headscarf, taking ‘frames’ to mean “organized ideas” which provide some coherence to a designated set of elements (Ferree et al. 2002: 105). It has also entailed exploring factors such as citizenship and integration regimes, gender-equality and anti-discrimination regimes (p. 4). The documents selected aim to represent all actors involved in public headscarf debates, including religious groups, courts, employers, media/journalists, Muslim groups and women’s groups, intellectuals and legislative bodies (p. 4).

Thematically, the book is divided into two parts. The first part, chapters one to four, focuses on frames permeating policy debates about the veil; the second part, chapters five to ten, focuses on legal regulations and actors involved in veil regulations and policy debates.

Perhaps one important frame is that of ‘gender equality’. In chapter one, Andreassen and Lettinga remark that veiling is “persistently framed as being a threat to universal values and principles of gender equality, autonomy, emancipation, secularism and tolerance” (p. 17). Related to the above is ‘the victimization frame’ which represents veiled women as being ‘oppressed’ by their community, culture and religion and in need of ‘liberation’ (pp. 18–19).

While it is important to deconstruct the above frames (see below), one should mention that these frames cannot be explored in isolation from the wider socio-historical context of Muslims in Europe.

Since Islam is seen by some political actors, for instance the far-right, as ‘the Other’, the veil becomes “(a) physical marker between the two cultures which are

constructed as each other's opposite in a hierarchical manner, hence making it impossible to be an integrated part of both simultaneously" (p. 28). In this way, the above meanings attributed to the veil become a mechanism of exclusion, of drawing the boundaries through gendered narratives of who belongs to 'us' and who is 'the Other' (pp. 28–31).

This intricate relationship between the veil and narratives of national belonging is the focus of chapter three by Gresch, Rostock and Kiliç. Opposite to the frame of 'the headscarf as a sign of separation/non-integration' runs the frame of 'integration through rights and/or the recognition of difference' (p. 60). The latter is used by Muslim groups and parties in the Netherlands, for instance, calling for the "recognition of different strategies of emancipation with regard to the headscarf and/or all other female Islamic clothing" (p.61).

That the issue of the veil is multi-faceted is shown in chapter two which explores the issue from the perspective of secularism. One puzzling question that emerges is: if all the countries under question are 'secular', from a political perspective, why would Turkey and France, for instance, ban the headscarf in some domains whereas England would not?

In fact, one important contribution of the book is that it demonstrates how secularism is not a 'one meaning for all' term but has different configurations in each state. Avramopoulou et al. (chapter two) identify at least three configurations: 'neutral' state-church relations, for instance, Austria, the Netherlands and Germany; 'laic' states that strictly separate state and religion including France and Turkey; and 'church of state' model, including Greece, the UK and Denmark.

Not only do the meanings of secularism differ from one state to the other but also among the different political actors in the same state. For instance, in Austria, Christian churches advocate "the idea of freedom of religion as a national tradition while stressing tolerance as underlying secularism" (p. 40), whereas the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), a far-right group, sees the veil as a violation of "gender equality, depicted as a value of Christian modernity disdained by Islam" (ibid.).

In the second part of the book, policies and regulations of the veil are investigated from a comparative perspective. What the authors highlight as being critical is that rather than 'clustering' countries as either 'tolerant', 'prohibitive' or 'selective' (i.e. prohibiting full-face veil only and allowing headscarf), the issue of the veil is "much more complex than threefold typology can cover" (p. 3).

The book paints a complex picture: in some countries, prohibitive consequences are in action in particular domains and/or for particular actors (e.g. courts, school teachers, university lecturers, university students); in other countries, non-restrictive practices are at work for all domains (p. 3). In addition, 'non-regulation' is in place, as "an informal way of governing religious difference and diversity where conflicts over head and body covering are regulated from case to case" (p. 170).

One important question that Andreassen et al. have explored in chapter nine is: Why would 'non-regulation' lead to different consequences in different countries; prohibition in the UK and Denmark and non-prohibition in Austria and Greece (p. 176)?

As the authors point out, the difference in the outcomes of the individual cases of conflict or 'non-regulation' is part and parcel of the political and historical contexts of each country. For instance, in Greece, prohibition has not ensued in cases of conflict, since the right of wearing the veil is seen by some Christian voices as "safeguarding the authoritative primacy of Christianity as national religion" (p. 179), within a frame that sees secularism (in its strict form), as a "threat to the national self-identification" (p. 49). However, in the UK, the values of "freedom of religious expression and anti-discrimination reach their limits in debates on full face covering which appears to conflict with the cherished values inherent in the self-perception of Britishness" (p. 181).

In chapter seven, the discussion takes into account one important player in debates about Islam, i.e. the far-right groups. Hadj-Abdou et al. point out an interesting paradox: the existence of 'accommodating policies' towards the veil in some countries in Europe and the rise of radical populist parties. One interesting example they cite is how the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) has mobilized against issues related to Islam/Muslims since 1999; yet refrained from protesting against a decree, allowing the wearing of headscarf in public schools.

To the far-right, the veil itself does not seem to be an 'object' of policy but rather "symbolic politics aimed at triggering exclusive notions of national belonging or at pushing through stricter regulations in the policy fields of integration and immigration control" (p. 140).

Yet one question is perhaps essential to answer: Is the veil a sign of 'oppression' and by *de facto*, contrasts with 'emancipation' and 'autonomy'? In fact, the answer to this question is critically engaged with in various parts of the book, for instance, the counter-frames given in chapter three (pp. 67–69), that the veil could mean 'right to self-determination of women' and 'freedom of choice'.

Related to the above is the account given by Leila Hadj-Abdou and Linda Woodhead in chapter ten on 'the active participation of Muslim women' in the veil debates. They particularly focus on two countries that are 'tolerant' towards the veil, namely Austria and the United Kingdom. Commenting on the context of UK, the authors remark that "the claims made by Muslim women in the debates tend to be rather modest. We have not come across many actors in the UK calling for a legal protection of Muslim dress, despite the fact that such protection is accorded in the UK for some other forms of religious dress (particularly Sikh and Jewish)" (p. 199).

It is worth noting that the veil in recent years has triggered many debates in some Muslim circles, particularly in new media. As the authors rightly remark, “not all Muslim women agree that veiling is required or even desirable, and there is a lively debate over this issue in Muslim circles”. Yet contrary to what the authors have hinted that this debate may diffract Muslim women’s mobilization, I do believe that the debates that have arisen recently, as to whether the veil is a religious ‘obligation’ can be well seen within the frame of ‘self-determination’ and ‘autonomy’, i.e. of Muslim women’s ‘individual’ free will in choosing or not choosing to veil.

To conclude, one overarching argument of the book is that any examination of the issue of the veil will perhaps need to cut across and critique interrelated domains, including policies used, secularism and narratives of national belonging. As mentioned previously, the issue of the veil is complex that any classification of countries as ‘prohibitive’ or ‘tolerant’ will be simplistic.

From one perspective, therefore, the book is an argument against ‘stereotyping’ the West (Europe) in ‘monolithic terms’ as being against the Muslim veil. As pointed out above, while there are many domains where prohibition takes place, there are other domains where tolerance towards the veil is in place. In this vein, one can point to the paradoxical (and puzzling) example of schools in some federal states in Germany (e.g. Baden-Württemberg; Bavaria & Hesse) in which Muslim headscarf is regarded as an ‘infringement’ on ‘state-neutrality’, whereas a nun’s habit and Jewish yarmulkes do not (see p. 100).

Another important point the book has touched upon is the historical relation of the country under investigation to Islam. As Berghahn remarks in chapter five, Austria’s tolerance towards the headscarf is partly predicated on the 1912 ‘Muslim Law’ that recognizes “the Muslim minority in the occupied territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina (in the context of Habsburg Empire)” (p. 101). The latter point, that Islam has historically existed in Europe, seems to be a ‘missing assumption’ within the context of some discourses that presuppose Islam as an ‘alien’ that does not belong here (and presumably has never belonged). One can refer here to research by Gilliat-Ray (2010: 3–27) on the roots of Islam in Britain that go back to the sixteenth century and even to preceding eras.

As the book deconstructs some stereotypical arguments around the veil, it feeds into a growing vein of research on Critical Discourse Analysis that sets to examine the relation between language, power and ideology (e.g. see relevant research by Wodak et al. 2013 on examination of right-wing rhetoric).

One has to note here that while ‘frames’ are used in the book as the main tool of analysis, it perhaps remains unclear whether ‘frames’ are equivalent to ‘topoi’ in argumentation theory (e.g. Wodak & Meyer 2009), and if both terms – conceptually

speaking- fit together. (Notice, for instance the use of ‘topos’ as a term on page 91). In addition, from a discursive point of view, exploring other linguistic tools, besides frames, could have given more insight as to how some inequalities are produced, reproduced and legitimized. Or perhaps, this lends itself to another project.

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