

Identity and Pluralism in Merkel's Call to Ban the Veil

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The author asks how a nation should “balance a liberal respect for pluralism and the autonomy of its citizens while at the same time preserve a national identity.” How are these two sides represented in this particular case? Do you think that banning the veil strikes the proper balance between these two competing aims? Is one of these values more important than the other? Which of these values is “formal” and which is “substantive”?

Why do we believe it is important to respect individual autonomy and pluralism? How do we defend these commitments?

What does “secularism” mean? Why do we think it is important? Do you think it is okay that “Despite being the country with the largest Muslim minority in Western Europe, in order to be a proper citizen of France, expressing this religion in particular ways in particular places is legally prohibited”? Why or why not?

The author marks a distinction between the government saying a practice is wrong and saying that the practice is not appropriate for the public sphere. What's the difference? Which of these responses is Germany using in banning the veil?