

All Quiet on the Western Front – the Loss of Radical Islamic Feminism at the Hands of Euro-Islam

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Abstract: This paper contends that there has been a definitive and negative change in the trajectory of so-called Islamic feminism. This change has been effected in large part in the West, as part of the growing discourse of Euro-Islam, European Islam, indigenization of Islam, etc., a discourse that comes not from governments (though it is mirrored, applauded and rewarded by governments in the region) but from Muslim civil society, activists and intellectuals.

The characteristics of this change include: the move from expressing a universal but co-operative form of 'feminism' to a particularist one; the unusual aspect of that particularism as an expression of mutedness as opposed to empowerment, as a form of enclosure and ringfencing rather than an expression of solidarity or an attempt to work / speak / understand co-operatively; a positioning of this 'feminism' within an enlightenment rather than a critical and / or decolonial normative framework; an implicit rejection of liberation in favor of assimilation; expression as a peculiar interaction between Islam and the West; an aspiration for inclusion into an unsophisticated and idealized notion of the West and a perceived teleology of progress; a distinct lack of solidarity with other oppressed groups, whether gendered or ethnic or religious or class based; co-option and complicity with neo-colonial projects and policies.

The paper concludes with a re-evaluation of the Islamic feminist project in certain forms as one which has been hijacked and used to undermine the goal of women's liberation per se and Muslim women in particular by denying Muslim women and by implication all women of color or those who express themselves in political opposition to Western norms and / or domestic and foreign policies, the right to define their own terms for liberation.

Keywords: Islamic Feminism, Particularism, Women's Liberation, Muslim Women.

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Introduction

The trend for the indigenization of Islam to national and regional cultures is not new. Whilst cultural expressions of Islam have developed all across the world since the divine revelation marked out the period of the Prophetic era of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny), a common feature of these trends (both territorial and non-territorial) was the adherence to certain transnational tenets e.g. the concept of ummah² encompasses a sense of the unity and mutual co-responsibility of the world-wide Muslim community. Another commonly held and often politicized value was that of helping the oppressed. Qur'anic injunction deemed this so important as to be commanded, and to be commanded in support of anyone and against anyone so long as the criteria of oppressed and oppressor applies³. Transcending all forms of tribalism and subsequently nationalism, these and other distinct features of Islam have occurred and reoccurred, either as a corrective to deviance amongst culturalized forms of adherence, as a form of political or social mobilization either by Muslim governance or as a corrective against un-Islamic governance by Muslim populations (Sayyid, 1997). This introduction does not seek to sanitize Muslim history; however, it is set out here to mark out a perceived distinction between other forms of indigenization of religion in the Muslim world (largely but not solely in the pre-colonial period) and the current state of the Muslim world based on a post-World War II trajectory of normative political discourse. This distinction gives meaning to the author's contention that a new wave of indigenization movements, namely those in Europe and North America and the effects of their outreach to the South, has meant the destruction or loss of radical Islamic feminism(s).

This paper sets out how, irrespective of stance on the current usage of the term, the idea of women's empowerment and liberation through Islam, often referred to as Islamic feminism, has been a cornerstone of Islamic revival in the twentieth century, and part and parcel of Islamic liberation movements. This political revival has

2. Ummah is the term referring to the global community of Muslims as a single community of conscience (as opposed to an ethnos)

3. Qur'an 4:75 And what reason have you that you should not fight in the way of Allah and of the weak among the men and the women and the children, (of) those who say: Our Lord! cause us to go forth from this town, whose people are oppressors, and give us from Thee a guardian and give us from Thee a helper. (translation, Shakir)

been a serious challenge to neo-colonial projects masquerading as independence projects post-supposed decolonization. The alternatives offered by these movements included different variations of discourses on women's empowerment and gender liberation, but all were transformative and involved adherence to and interpretation of sacred text, based on the belief that in the case of the Qur'an, these were Divine Revelation from the ultimate Justice, or in the case of hadith⁴ and seerah⁵, words and examples of the exemplar and final messenger of the faith.

What is European Islam?

The movement for European Islam and also national Islam/s e.g. British Islam oftentimes has been led by or instigated by figures involved in such transformative and radical movements. Despite framing itself as a discourse of empowerment for diasporic communities in Western contexts to develop a positive identity beyond that of radicalized and essentialized victim (Ramadan, 1999), these movements have internalized certain concepts that run counter to the idea of transformation and liberation. This is nowhere more apparent than in the appropriation of the term Islamic feminism by these movements, explicitly situating these discourses in a different teleology than those of the liberation movements in the Muslim world. This is mirrored in other attempts to define Islamic liberation movements as akin to or adaptable to Western normative projects that supposedly underpin the realization of national democratic ideals post-Westphalia. Tamimi et al (1993) argue that such movements in Egypt, Afghanistan, Tunisia and Algeria represent such ideals, in direct opposition to the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the creation and success of Hizbullah. Ghanouchi (in Tamimi, 1993) argues that Islamists can work in existing structures, moving the Islamist framework away from transforming structures and towards full participation in, and therefore legitimization of existing structures. This represents a de facto acceptance of certain colonial narratives not least the limits and perpetual inviolability of so-called liberal nation state structures. Essentially it justifies the assertion that the End of History is the development of the liberal nation state as the last and most superior form of political organization (Fukuyama, 1992).

4. Hadith is the term referring to the (collected) sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

5. Seerah refers to the study of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The transnationality of ummah is here subsumed by nation. The underpinnings of the nation as a Westphalian concept is, then, accepted as superseding other forms of political territoriality. It also reflects an acceptance that the colonial reification (the splitting up of the Khilafa and other Muslim political super states into nation states) and colonial hierarchies and hegemonic power structures based on the Treaty of Westphalia's purpose are a marker of the European identity against an inferior and therefore conquerable 'other' (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011).

Other veins of the indigenization movement explicitly posit themselves as anti-political Islam and seek to oppose the traditions and expressions of Islam often associated with first generation communities of Muslim citizens. In the UK this is expressed as a rejection of South Asian mores (from which about 60% of the British Muslim community hails (Ameli and Merali, 2004a) and with it the political affiliations with Jamat-i-Islami movements. In continental Europe, the major communities this affects are those of Turkish and Moroccan heritage, though there are some possibly 50 other Muslim ethnicities represented in significant numbers across Europe and as many more of lesser representation. For the purposes of this paper, the discussion on European Islam will look at these communities which have significant presence in Western, Central and South Europe, and not look to Eastern Europe where there are many ethnically indigenous populations.

European Islam then seeks to distance itself from non-European forms of social mobilization and political aspiration and locates itself as indigenous. This is often expressed explicitly in the literature of certain organizations and projects e.g. The Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California states on the 'About' page of its website.

"Indigenization of Islam in the West

By aspiring to produce scholars who understand the specific needs of contemporary societies, we believe Zaytuna College has an important contribution to make in the indigenization of Islam in the West. An indigenized Islam is of particular significance at this time when there is so much suspicion directed toward Muslims as illegitimate "outsiders," while at the same time a demonstrated desire on the part of many in the West, especially in America, to create a more open, multicultural, and tolerant society."⁶

6. About <http://www.zaytunacollege.org/about/> accessed 19.12.11

Whilst the college is based in the USA, its teachers and mission has been applauded by Western governments, particularly in the UK. These figures have been actively promoted by the UK government as part of its various programs to control dissent amongst Muslim communities whom it perceives to be radical or extreme (Thomson, 2004).

We see then a transition from the 1990s when the terms European Islam and Euro Islam were coined in academia, to a move to the adoption of the terms by political figures, including erstwhile British premier Tony Blair (2005), German Chancellor Angela Merkel, incumbent British Prime Minister David Cameron (2011) and French President Nicolas Sarkozy. We also see how the exponents of these terms have also been lauded by governments as serving in some case unwittingly an agenda that seeks to control Muslim interpretation, thinking and political self-determination even as minorities expressing citizenship within a non-Muslim state.

Whilst this critique is often rejected on the basis that the government policies that ally themselves with a European Islam project do so only to prevent violent extremism, a closer inspection of the actual terms of Muslim citizenship as set out by these governments reveals another agenda. An example is the speech commonly known as the 'Rules of the Game have Changed' speech by Tony Blair in 2005. In his speech he rejects the following ideas as incompatible with living in the West and charges Muslims to reject them or be rejected:

"They demand the elimination of Israel; the withdrawal of all Westerners from Muslim countries, irrespective of the wishes of people and government; the establishment of effectively Taleban states and Sharia law in the Arab world en route to one caliphate of all Muslim nations."

Although replete with stereotypes, these claims translate as the attempt to stigmatize and delegitimize:

Muslim citizenship through political organization and dissent through Muslim grassroots support for the Palestinian struggle for liberation;

The removal of troops from Western countries based in Muslim lands;

Khilafah and also all types of pan-Islamic or indeed alternative forms of Muslim political organization

When tied to this agenda, the European Islamic project is compromised as deeply anti-liberatory and pseudo-assimilationist in the fact that it allows itself to be

used to stifle Muslim individual and communal aspirations to political self-organization at every level unless it conforms to liberal notions of the self, civil society and the state in a Kantian manner (Seligman, 1992,p. 44), to the extent of removing the ethics from the public realm that has come to be known as civil society. Not only are Muslims denied normative agency, the conceptualization of civil society as a result of this targeting of Muslims was disrupted. This disruption may initially apply to Muslims but affects the idea of civil society per se in the liberal nation state, eventually impacting everyone.

Another argument in defense of the works on European Islam, with some justification in the case of Ramadan in particular is that they seek good organizational and institutional practice within Muslim communities in Europe and this is no different to the indigenization processes that are replete in Muslim history. This argument suggests that Muslims must take the best of Western society as their own and discard a notion of cultural superiority. The rejection of *asabiya* (prejudice) is a basic tenet of Islam and in that sense, the rejection of cultural prejudices is admirable; however, the general trend to assert European institutions as better also has limitations that can be exploited.

Without rigorous critique of the assertions of superiority or an equivalent discussion about the good of other cultures including those from which minority communities hail, the idea of European organization and institution as both ahead in a singular teleological trajectory simply substitutes prejudice for internalized racism (Merali, 2012). It also places European Islam in a colonial discourse. Whilst it is feted as a warm inclusion to Western society in that it combines the best of both Islam and the West, in fact it simply replicates an orientalist discourse of Western superiority. Gema Martin Munoz argues that Spanish orientalism not only portrays Arabs and Muslims in demeaning ways, but that a second strand also glorifies the Golden Age of Spain under Muslim rule as unique because (in the discourse) it is a Spanish phenomenon set apart from the Arab and / or Muslim world, and it is this facet that makes it a special period of technological and scientific advancement and religious pluralism and tolerance.

This last point is key to the transformation of Islamic Feminism from a discourse of liberation to a discourse of assimilation.

Misnomers and Misdemeanours: What is Wrong with the Term Islamic Feminism?

Immanent in notions of European superiority is the idea of European women's position as superior to that of other cultures, including all religious cultures. Huntington cites gender relation as one of the peculiarly superior facets of Western civilization in his clash of civilizations theory (1996), popular and populist historian Niall Ferguson (2011), charged with bringing British values into British education to counter anti-imperialist narrative also cites this as does British prime minister David Cameron, who seeks to judge Muslim civil society organizations against the criteria of respect for women's rights, as if all other organizations implicitly do so, and that many Muslim organizations sinisterly do not (2011). All normative discourse is channeled through the lens of Enlightenment universalism.

The critique of this discourse as a tool of colonial hegemony is now entrenched in decolonial writing and expressed through decolonial liberation movements. Feminism stands charged as complicit with colonial hegemony in both its positivist and standpoint forms. Post-modern feminists charge standpoint feminism as privileging a specific cultural model of ideal womanhood from which the feminist standpoint is derived and are:

"fail[ing] to acknowledge their own situatedness and hence the ways they are implicated in and reproduce power relations—in this case, the presumptuous authority of white middle class heterosexual women to define "the standpoint of women"—to speak for all other women and define who they are. Feminist standpoint theorists, who claim an epistemic privilege on behalf of their standpoint, are thereby unmasked as asserting a race and class privilege over other women." (Anderson, 2011)

It is an explicit contention from both academics and policy makers. Various schools of Western feminist thought have become complicit in this discourse.

Greer (1999) decries the change in focus of feminists:

"In 1970 the movement was called 'Women's Liberation' or, contemptuously 'Women's lib'. When... 'Libbers' was dropped for 'Feminists' we were all relieved. What none of us noticed was that the ideal of liberation was fading out with the word. We were settling for equality. Liberation struggles are not about assimilation but about asserting difference, endowing that difference with dignity and prestige, and insisting on it as a condition of self-definition and self-determination..."

She continues:

"Women's liberation did not see the female's potential in terms of the male's actual; the visionary feminists of the late sixties and early seventies knew that women could never find freedom by agreeing to live the lives of unfree men... Liberationists sought the world over for clues to what women's lives could be like if they were free to define their own values, order their own priorities and decide their own fate."

Liberation as part of the feminist discourse is key to the placing of Islamic Feminism in its current context. The lack of journey and discovery as Greer outlines are two more facets that a critique of both positivist and standpoint feminism includes. The former aspires to male norms, the latter privileges the understanding, experiences and beliefs of a white, Enlightened woman.

Often women who are described as or self-describe as Islamic feminists are also wary of the term. It has certain stigmas associated with complicity in a Western model of thinking that forms part of a colonial narrative. Secular narratives of cultural superiority including 'human rights', 'women's rights' and as a result 'feminism' stand charged with complicity with neo-colonial projects, just as Christian evangelism was complicit in the spread of empire. This stigma also defines self-description. This has a part to play in a further schism between academic practitioners as some refute the appellation Islamic and self-describe as Muslim feminists. This latter term then again brings ontological issues into play as to the genesis of feminism that affects Muslim adherents.

Greer's contention regarding assimilation vs. liberation is the crux of the schism in understandings of and the current placing of Islamic feminism as an academic pursuit and practical project in contemporary times. Mir-Hosseini (2010) states that Islamic feminism is the 'unwanted child of political Islam'. Whilst Mir-Hosseini's work is often critiqued as generalizing 'political Islam' and 'Islamic fundamentalism' as deeply patriarchal and often stereotypical depictions of an orientalist Muslims society, her statement gives a historical context to the rise of movements seeking gender justice. Mir-Hosseini concedes that there are a substantial amount of women engaged in gender advocacy and gender justice movements who cite Islamic texts, yet refuse to be labeled as Islamic feminists or even as women's rights activists. This last group of women is often not discussed in literature relating to Islamic feminism except at times as an example of the antithesis of Islamic

feminism or supporters of a perceived patriarchal Islamic view. Yet the existence of these women is a key facet to understanding the broader question of the location of Islamic feminism i.e. the anti-colonial movement of the last century in particular. The various Islamic expressions against colonialism represented in movements as diverse as that which resulted in the Islamic Revolution in Iran, to the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in its various national forms including Hamas (Jad, 2011) and even groups like HizbutTahrir have considerable female constituencies that actually support the aims of these movements. In the case of a movement like Hizbullah in Lebanon, many of these supporters defy the stereotypes of veiled, deeply religious and disempowered women that form the stock of orientalist stereotypes that are much discredited in various academic literatures.

In summary, whilst there are many and diverse movements for gender justice amongst women (and men) in the last hundred years, the term Islamic feminism is already limited in much academic literature in its application to only certain groups and certain ways of thinking. Those ways of thinking undermine the credentials of the academic regime in that they undermine a liberatory aspiration.

From Universal Islamic Feminism via the Particular to the Neo-Colonial

The claims of women calling for gender justice from Islamist oriented movements i.e. advocating a traditional or closely textual or re-envisioned or reformed politicized Islamic model e.g. in Hamas, the Islamic Republic, al-Adl wal-Ishane etc. have been noted to have increased women's participation in the public sphere in a way that positivist feminist movements have been unable to; however, their subjectivity clashes with that of the universal standpoint by way of their ethnic and / or religious subalternization from the standpoint norm. However, these movements cannot be easily encapsulated within a postmodern framework in that the source of postmodern critique is the denial of essentialism. Islam and the claims of Islamic women in this group, are both essentialist and universalist, seeing liberation for women through Islam. Whilst the pragmatic approach of solidarity between women's movements has an element of the co-operative strategies that many decolonial and post-modern movements urge using Rorty's theory of solidarity vs. objectivity is one that some of these movements have adopted, the Islamic narrative remains one that seeks Truth by the command of Truth i.e. Allah swt. This does not mean that Islamic movements

cannot work in solidarity or are being hypocritical, but the acknowledgement of their situatedness is not as straightforward as a more orthodox Rortian postmodern position, and marks a desire to work with other liberatory movements with respect rather than accept their ideas as a particularist.

The trajectory of some of the writers termed Islamic feminists in Iran exemplifies this tension but also the journey of Islamic feminism as a concept owned by such movements allied to a decolonial, anti-imperialist, Islamic / is a project to its entire opposite. Rahnavard (1987) decries women for having given up the hijab and capitulating to capitalist patriarchy dressed up as women's rights, in her polemic calling on women in Iran to liberate themselves from Western cultural domination. A rejection of these cultural values to Rahnavard at that time was a way of throwing off the political shackles of oppression and spoke to the essential nature of woman demeaned by Taghut systems. Taghut being a Quranic term for systemic oppression or the oppressor system in a hegemonic not particular or situational sense. According to Mir-Hosseini (2011), in her interviews with Rahnavard and others in the 1990s, they had accepted the term Islamic feminist: 'which they found an apt description – even if some of them did not yet accept the feminist premise of gender equality.' In Mir-Hosseini's description then, Rahnavard and others have fallen into a particularist trajectory vis-à-vis their claims in that by rejecting Mir-Hosseini's idea of a 'feminist premise of gender equality' they were perceived as operating within some form of feminist discourse.

The development of a specific academic regime that advocated for Muslim women to be able to call for gender equality along this trajectory was again propounded and critiqued by other mainstream or traditional feminists as particularist. Particularist feminisms claim that there is no universal experience of women and that colour, race, cultural and religious heritage affect women's experiences and also therefore can define or be meaningful in these particular women's liberatory movements. As such there is no universal experience or methodology, however there is solidarity between particularist feminisms and their struggle for autonomy and liberation in a post-colonial framework. The key idea of solidarity with other oppressed groups advocating particularist ideas of women's liberation is not one that Islamic feminism in general holds too. This again marks it out from anti-imperial discourses and posits it as a discourse co-opted by male, white power.

In short, Islamic feminism was subsumed by a counter-revolutionary narrative. It had assimilated. The example of Islamic feminism in a counter-revolutionary Iranian context is germane to the idea of Islamic feminism as it operates within a minority European context. The conflation of demands by government and some writers between empowering women and rejecting certain transnational affiliations is distinct. The rejection of any critique of Israel is central to the demands of government in its dealings in the UK and Germany with Muslim civil society organization. This transition away from solidarity also reinforces mainstream cultural discourses that demean and subalternize Muslims and Muslim women in particular. Likewise, women's organization purporting to bring feminism or women's rights awareness to Muslims and those stating their own Islamic credentials in civil society on behalf of women frequently position themselves against so-called fundamentalists and radicals within the Muslim community, piggy backing onto a government agenda that targets foreign policy dissent. An example of how Muslim women's expression can be usurped in this way is, a direct UK government initiative – a report called 'She who Disputes'. This exemplifies the interplay of the ideas of Muslim women's expression and therefore agency through a government sponsored project. As such its academic underpinnings and assumptions are critical in assessing how the language of feminism and Islamic feminism work to further mutedness. Whilst putting across a wide range of views that spanned the breadth of the UK, the report's conclusion used terminology that set back the report's credentials as a liberator text. Lamenting the prejudices of wider society, the report states:

"Islamophobia makes a wide gap between the Muslim communities' perception of who they are and the ways in which they are viewed by the host society."

The depiction of Muslim women as guests in a 'host society' marks the academic lens through which this report was written, as one which, while claiming to give a voice to marginalized members of society, actually relegates their agency to that of a non-citizen or worse still, a guest. In short, this report gives voice to women only to marginalize them further.

Conclusion

Islamic Feminism as Mutedness not Expression

The questions posed around the idea(s) of Islamic feminism are reinforced

further by a preoccupation with the idea that unless the advocacy of gender justice is done in such a way as to reinterpret classical texts to suit a modern realm, these are invalid / non-academic exercises that do not constitute a suitable subject for study and are not acceptable as normative projects for rights. Frequent critiques of Islamic feminism constitute charges such as those made by Moghaddam (2002):

"Can there be such a thing as a feminism that is framed in Islamic terms? Is Islam compatible with feminism? Is it correct to describe as feminist or even as Islamic feminist those activists and scholars, including veiled women, who carry out their work toward women's advancement and gender equality within an Islamic discursive framework?"

According to Moghaddam who situates herself as a mainstream western feminist, and also various Islamic feminist writers and groups, those who work within the framework of Islamic states or political Islamic projects are complicit in unspecified and generalized patriarchy that exhibits all the hallmarks of "Orientalist" stereotyping.

This is despite such movements being explicitly described by their followers as movements for liberation, often termed movements for the liberation of women through Islam. By enforcing certain definitions of who can be a feminist through the idea of reinterpretation in a modern context and in equivalence with existing norms of women's equality from the West, Islamic women's groups and advocates find themselves muted – unable to discuss liberation on their own terms, and instead, forced to speak in a metanarrative that is defined by power and the hegemonic norms of Western civil society. This is a dual realization of muted group theory exemplified in the first instance of women being precluded from speaking on their own terms and having them communicate with power in the language of male power (Kramerae, 1981), but also the ethnic and religious group, who are dominated by majority power (Ameli et al, 2006b). Ameli et al (2006b) argue that the Muslim minorities suffer this in Western European context by not being able to express their aspirations for law or political organization in self-defined Islamic terms. Taking these theories further in the context of Islamic feminism, women of Islamic expression are being forced to talk in terms of 'feminist' discourse if their claims for gender justice are to be accepted as such. This gatekeeping of the terms of gender justice by the term and its adherents of 'feminism' has created a sphere

where women (and men) are forced to use a term they do not accept as relevant. Mutedness is therefore implicit in the usage of the term Islamic feminism – rather than including Muslim women’s voices however disparate, who use Islamic terms for emancipation, the term is reduced to describing those women engaged in or purporting to be engaged in the reinterpretation of texts in a particular way.

This does not have only academic or theoretical impact but also has practical and policy impact in the real world. An example of this is the tension in women’s movements including Islamic women’s movements in Morocco, the NGOs’ sector, the government and overseas aid. Rapp (2008) considers that:

“Islamism and women’s political participation are both relatively new developments in Moroccan history. Both trends arose after independence in 1956 and have served to reinforce one another in certain situations and repel one another in others. The rise of political Islam and women’s growing demands to be more engaged in political life have occurred almost simultaneously in Morocco as the political playing field became more diverse and discourses on minority rights became increasingly common.”

As with Mir-Hosseni, Rapp posits that there is a tension between these two concurrent strands. Rapp however, quoting Utas et al (1983) highlights that there is a widespread but incorrect opinion in the West that women are not active in Moroccan public life. Based on her own fieldwork, Rapp argues that not only is women’s participation high, the bulk of increased women’s participation has come through the two main Islamic political parties, Al-Adl wa Al-Ishane (the Justice and Charity Movement) and the Party for Justice and Development (PJD), both of which, unlike other parties, do not operate a quota system. Nadia Yassin, the daughter of the leader of Al-Adl wa Al-Ishane is a prominent figure within the Islamic women’s movement and has called for women’s political participation as part of the core of Islamic values. Yet her status, despite her writings and activism as an Islamic feminist is contested, particularly by so-called secular feminists. This contestation is a microcosm of a wider contestation between Islam and the state, that has polarised Islamic political movements and secular movements in contestation over the political landscape. Charged with ‘hiding their real agenda’ on any number of issues including that of women’s rights (Rapp, 2008), so-called Islamists are denied legitimacy as a progressive force thus denying those women involved a voice at the

'progressive' table. This is compounded by international and national development work. Sibai (2009) highlights the cycle of negativity borne out of political manoeuvring in Morocco amongst the opposition:

"The battles in the political discourse and social action in Morocco in opposition to Islamists and progressive left, the latter appropriating the discourse of fear about Islam in order to neutralize his Islamist rivals, influence perceptions and discourses of Spanish technicians and reinforce the preconceptions with which the latter are close to the Moroccan reality. This may result in a non-cooperation with associations of Islamic courts.

Spanish technicians just as Moroccans play the same speech on the Islamists and construct analogies to those just mentioned, assimilating the Spanish left the Moroccan, so identified with her and put Islam as the "Other" in not shared values, or perceptions, or models of development, building on the whole there is a dialectic that draws a demonized image of the Islamists."

Sibai contends that these views are key to the resourcing of civil society initiatives by international aid agencies related to governments (particularly Spain) in Morocco. By placing development funding at the disposal of those working on assimilative reinterpretation or Western feminist models, Western governments work against liberatory and participatory projects.

The transfer and cycle of negativity to / from the mainstream Spanish political and social sphere can be found in the regurgitation for the need to assimilate Islamic feminism within a critique of political Islam through the Euro-Islam project. European Islam and the Westphalian Liberal Nation State projects have become synonymous and feed off each other. European Islam as a counterweight to 'political Islam' has come to subsume ideas such as Islamic feminism, and by hijacking these terms it has removed their liberatory content and aspiration for assimilation to predefined and established Western hegemonic norms. In this world, Muslim women, whether working in the platform of Islamic feminism or not, are still relegated to that of a guest and not an equal, despite all claims of equality.

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