

A Few Surprises Are Happening in Afghanistan!
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Although it seems like pushing a rock up a hill, our Afghan War may be coming to an end. We certainly want out of a war that seems to have no way of declaring victory\227but we have been in that position in every war we have fought after World War II, the last war we definitively won. War is changing, just as social mores are changing.

Although Afghanistan seems to be the end of the world where civilization scarcely reaches, there are a few hopeful signs of change.

\225 TV Crime Show. I have long been an advocate of radio and television as culture changes for the better. In my childhood, I remember the effect of soap operas and favorite radio programs: The Goldbergs, a nice working class New York Jewish family with a loving and warm matriarch\227Molly Goldberg. For many listening, this was their first sympathetic exposure to Jewish life as American life\227putting a dent in age-old anti-Semitism. Another program, Life with Luigi, that ran for a few years beginning 1948, was about a sweet Italian immigrant living in Chicago and learning in his citizenship class was America was all about. This certainly helped changed the notion of Italians from Mafiosi to Americans.

TV soap operas played in Africa and now in parts of the Muslim World have begun to changed attitudes toward women, and in Africa, has opened discussions about safe sex to prevent AIDS among people who never talk about sex.

Now in Kabul, Afghanistan, a new crime show modeled after the popular American \22324\224 is beginning to make inroads on attitudes toward and behavior of the police. In Afghanistan, the police have long been corrupt, brutal, and indeed not the friends of little children. But now, this crime show features Afghan police who are tracking terrorists (a real daily horror in Afghan life) and who are beginning to behave under rule of law. One policeman in a recent show roughed up detainees and was reprimanded by his chief. It is reported that actual policemen are now finding these cops a roll model. That\222s a start.

\225 Horrors against women. Who can forget the cover of Time Magazine showing a beautiful young Afghan girl whose husband and his family had cut off her nose and ears and left her to bleed to death because she had the audacity to run away from unremitting domestic abuse. She lived only because American soldiers found her and took her to a hospital in Kabul and then to a battered women\222s shelter (the very notion of which never existed in Afghanistan before we arrived). She is now in New York, her beauty restored, and her psychological trauma receiving treatment.

This story, however, is a fluke. Just one woman escaped; what about the millions more? But there is a new wrinkle here. The Chora District police chief didn\222t forget this crime. When the girl\222s father-in-law turned up at a nearby bazaar, the police gave chase and caught him. Up to now, police never intervened in any village abuse of women, primarily because Islamic Law, Sharia, provides for flogging and stoning for sexual offenses. But there is nothing in the Koran about cutting off of ears and noses. They can now go after them. It\222s a beginning.

\225 Shell-shocked Taliban Soldiers. Americans and NATO fighting the Taliban and Al-Qaeda often feel as they are fighting whack-a-mole. We have spent our fortune and our blood in this war\227with many suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. It never occurred to me before reading this (Dec. 13 Newsweek) that Taliban fighters, not to mention civilians, are also suffering PSD. I had assumed that they were cushioned from this by their religious fanaticism and fatalism\227but they are not. More and more Taliban fighters\227and the poor civilians who get caught in the middle\227are psychologically damaged\227and there is little treatment for them.

The drone attacks going after Taliban leadership seems to be working. This war may come to a better end than we had thought.

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Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and writer. You may contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink