

The \223War Against Women\224 Rages On
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Modern social values for women had a brief, uneven life in the Middle East, and are now in meltdown as Islamist parliaments take power.

Countries that have revolted against dictatorships (with a modicum of modern law) are now seeing the results of their \223democratic\224 elections. When largely ignorant populations vote, they vote for what they know: in this case, Islam. Traditional Islam would not be the problem, but its radical versions are. The first issue to come under Islamists is the status of women. With the revival of cutting off hands of thieves and stoning adulteresses (already happening in rural areas), we see that the Muslim world\222s brief experiment in modernization has failed.

\225 Iran. When the Ayatollah Khomeini brought the Islamic Revolution to Iran in 1979, one of the first things he did was to lower the marriage age of girls to 9 from the Shah\222s minimum of 18. Khomeini had married his wife when she was 12, following the lead of the Prophet Mohammad, who married a 9-year-old. This was the standard that he wanted for Iran. The reason for child marriages is to make certain your daughters do not see their first menstruation under your roof (at which point they might have intercourse and pregnancy to humiliate the family).

\225 Morocco. Morocco, an absolute monarchy not known for its human rights or modernization impulses, has recently elected a majority Islamist parliament. They lowered the marriage age for girls, to the despair of the thin elite of educated Moroccans women.

\225 Egypt. Egypt, once the hope for advancing the Arab world into modernity, has a parliament wanting to lower the age for marriage back to medieval standards. Educated Egyptian women are outraged over lowering the marriage age, which will cut off women from education and meaningful work. They remind their elected officials that they represent half the population. Unfortunately, the majority of Egyptian women are not aligned with the educated ones fighting for their rights, nor do men want this.

\225 Turkey. In a women\222s shelter in Turkey (a novelty in the Muslim world), a woman who has been on the run for 15 years from a violent husband, has found no protection from Turkish police, who urge her to return to her husband. Police also suggested to her husband that he break her legs so that she can no longer run away. \223Our state is the No. 1 enemy of women,\224 she said. \223I was 14 when my husband started to abuse me, and now am 37, and I am still living in fear for my life despite all my cries for help.\224 (New York Times, April 26, 2012).

Women\222s rights groups say that violence against women has reached alarming proportions in Turkey, with women\222s rights undermined by the Islamist-inspired government. How the Economist can call the Erdogan government \223mildly Islamist\224 is increasingly ridiculous. One women\222s group has sarcastically suggested that the state should protect women by arming them and providing state-financed shooting lessons. Not a bad idea.

For those who think that Turkish abuse against women is an over-blown issue, in 2011 alone, 160 women were murdered by family members, lovers or spouses, a 200-percent increase from 2010. A total of 179 women are known to have been raped and another 70 allegedly committed suicide, although three of those \223suicides\224 were really murders. In a country of 79 million people, there are only 63 women\222s shelters. The Islamist party does not like such shelters because \223they enable women to leave the family home.\224 Home sweet home.

\225 Pakistan. When an American CIA agent killed two Pakistanis on motorcycles who were targeting his car, somebody (State Department?) funneled several million dollars \223blood money\224 to both widows. One of the widows wanted to remarry, and her mother backed her. Her father was outraged at the loss of money (for him) that this would mean. He shot his wife and then his daughter. Pakistan is not a good place for women.

\225 U.S. We have homegrown cavemen too, who would like chastity belts brought back. But

we laugh and don't vote for them.

677 words

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