The United States & The Middle East the fight for democracy and women’s rights but who exactly was fighting for it? **(Description)**

 The war against the Taliban lasted for nineteen years and ten months stretching from (2001-2021) naming it the longest war the United States has ever experienced. Since the tragic acts of 9/11 the United States has held troops in Afghanistan for almost twenty years aiding in the fight against the Taliban, upholding the fight for democracy and the rights of women and children in the Middle East. The war ended this August 30, 2021, when President Joe Biden recalled all American troops saying it was “Time to Come Home.” This led to a full Taliban takeover regaining control, and now that the fight for democracy has been lost where does that leave the women of the Middle East?

 The United Nations came out with a press release this past March stating - GENEVA (8 March 2021) – “Women and girls continue to be treated as second class citizens in Iran, a UN expert says in a report to the Human Rights Council, citing domestic violence, thousands of marriages of girls aged between 10 and 14 each year and continuing entrenched discrimination in law and practice.” With the Taliban regaining power in August the situation for both women and children has become increasingly worse. “Prior to the 2001 U.S. invasion, women had virtually had no rights under the fundamentalist Taliban's oppressive rule.” “Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid promised during a news conference last week that the militant group is "committed to the rights of women under the system of sharia (Islamic) law." Although the Taliban promised to uphold the rights women have fought to gain over the last twenty years in Islam, what evidence do we have that the Taliban is trustworthy and able to keep their word? Especially considering that these specific rights of women go against so many aspects of the Muslim religion, something the Taliban upholds to the highest degree.

**Recommendations**

The Intercultural Praxis Model was created by Dr. Kathryn Sorrells to help use and devise communication strategies to navigate intercultural spaces. There are six different aspects in which the Intercultural Praxis Model allows us to navigate complex and challenging intercultural situations, Inquiry, Framing, Positioning, Dialogue, Reflection, and Action. The two ways that I have chosen for this model to help improve the intercultural conflict that I have chosen are Action and Positioning.

The Intercultural Communication Globalization and Social Justice textbook written by Kathryn Sorrells herself defines Action as “Linking intercultural understanding with responsible action to make a difference, challenging stereotypes, prejudice, and systemic inequities, using positionality, power, and privilege to generate alternative solutions, and compassionate actions that create a more socially just, equitable and peaceful world.” The book also defines Positioning as “Socially constructed categories of difference position us in terms of power, considering how we are positioned in relation to others, our positioning impacts how we make sense of and act in the world, and considering who can speak and who is silenced; whose knowledge is privileged.”

To fully understand the intercultural conflict of women’s rights in Islam we first have to look at the positioning of these women. “The issue of women’s rights in Islam has been a contentious area of discussions and intense debates both in the Muslim world and in the West. The two dominant mainstream narratives have victimized Muslim women, though in different ways. On one hand, many Muslims, and Muslim governments appropriate Islamic text to justify discrimination against women and to impose social and legal restrictions on women’s rights and freedoms. On the other hand, Western Islamophobic neo-orientalists use these popular yet traditional misogynistic readings of Islam to support their xenophobic claims against Islam and Muslims.” In our western way of thinking women being treated as second class citizens and not being granted their basic human rights is so horrible and the women of the Muslim and Islam communities need our help. Although this is also what I believe, I do not have a full understanding of the Muslim religion and when we take a look at the cultural positionality of us Americans in relation to the women of Islam, we can also better understand the entire conflict itself.

There has been a clear dilemma Muslim woman have been facing for years, some women recognize the mistreatment and desperately want the help of the United States and on the other hand due to positioning there are also many Islamic women who choose to be faithful to their religious beliefs and do not wish for change because it is their cultural and religious beliefs and all they have ever known. “Muslim women who want to be good Muslims and want to also have their rights experience conflict and frustration under these popular interpretations. At the same time, they struggle to respond to Western attacks on Islam. These women (and men) react defensively that “Islam honors and protects women and grants them full rights” but without having access to solid religious foundations and scholarship. Meanwhile, any attempts to discuss women’s rights and freedoms in the Middle East are labeled imperialist colonialist western hegemonic enterprises that corrupt the piety of Islamic moral fabrics and traditions.” “Evidently, the issue of women in Islam is complex and multifaceted. What remains constant, though, is that Muslim women emerge as the victims in all these accounts.” Although the positioning of women in Islam is split it is clear that the women in favor of change are the side that is silenced because of the positionality of power by the Taliban and their beliefs. This being one of the reasons why the United States takes action to help those women and children who want and need it.

The United States over the course of almost twenty years in Afghanistan helped the fight for democracy and women’s rights dramatically, using their intercultural understanding and course of action to help create a more socially just and peaceful world for Islam. But was the positionality and power of the Taliban over religious Muslim beliefs too much that the action became not worth it? Are there not enough women who are fighting for the change also? Or was America just fighting so long for Islam to gain their western government ideas and rights but the entire positioning of the people not allowing them to fight for themselves? When we look at the difference in intercultural standpoints is what America wanted for Islam truly what Islam wanted for themselves?

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