

c. Fundamentalist Outlooks



In Afghanistan, recent imposition of strict Sharia ruling bars most women from working outside the home or going to school. Taliban clerics and militia seek to reestablish medieval guidelines within this war-torn country. Perceived discrimination against women is the result.

On 7 Oct 1996, the United Nations formally objected to this extreme treatment, warning that foreign aid programs may be disrupted unless change incurs.

d. Progressive Views

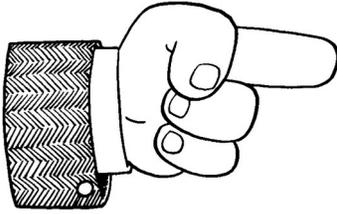
One of this century's first progressive women was Egypt's Huda Sarawi (hoo-DAH sah-RAH-wee). In 1923, she threw her veil into the Mediterranean, becoming one of the first women to become unveiled.



In response, her husband quickly divorced her. In time, she founded the Egyptian Feminist Union, which promoted nationalism, education for women, and an outlawing of the veil.

Today, a broad based woman's group, the "Sisters in Islam," advocates laws against domestic violence. They promote Qur'an interpretation by women textual critics.

Across North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, advocates of Muslim women's rights seek equality in education, property rights, and business opportunity.



"They also want reform in Muslim family laws that often leaves them at the mercy of men who can divorce them without warning, take away their children, deny them the right to travel and bequeath them as chattel to the next male relative."

(See Barbara Crossette, "Women's Rights Gaining Attention Within Islam," New York Times, 12 May 1996, p. A3.)

6. Christian Influence Christian agencies active in East Asia did much to open future possibilities for women--especially in the arena of education. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Christian missionaries established schools for girls in China, Korea and Japan.

Many of these same missionaries became advocates--whether overtly in voicing concern to local governments, or more quietly through personal influence--of causes dealing with female infanticide, foot binding, prostitution, abuse and abandonment.

Presently, nongovernment organizations (NGO) with Christian ties--World Vision, Catholic World Relief, World Council of Churches, various mission organizations--seek to positively address and treat concerns of women/girls in the region.

On the other hand, church influence in a country like the Philippines can lead to practices which negatively impact women. Church opposition to divorce is strong. Annulment, though fairly easy, comes at a legal cost which is too expensive for many women.



"The practice of 'unofficial divorce' (permanent separation) is common among lower income families; in these cases the wife is usually left with the children, and the husband provides little or no financial support." (U.S. Department of State, Philippines Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996, released 30 Jan 1997.)

III. Issues

1. Prostitution Arguably, the most significant gender issue affecting deployed U.S. Armed Forces personnel is that of prostitution.



Whether walking the streets; in "vills" (areas dedicated to capture G.I. dollars) or brothels; provided on joint officer/NCO exchanges or employed as "domestic servants," women who provide sexual favors for cash are present throughout East Asian areas frequented by members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

This section gives an overview, selected reasons for the condition, and aspects of the impact upon Armed Forces personnel.

a. Overview The following report from the U.S. Department of State, Thailand Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996, paints a picture of prostitution in that country. Though not indicative of conditions in all East Asian countries--the report shows the prevalence of the prostitution practice.

"Prostitution, although illegal, flourishes and is deeply ingrained. Estimates of the numbers of women and children engaged in prostitution vary widely because of temporary sex workers and the migratory nature of

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prostitution. Reliable NGO's estimate the number of adult female prostitutes at around 250,000.

Prostitution exposes women to a number of human rights abuses, as well as a much higher risk of contracting AIDS. Some women are forced into prostitution, although the number of such cases is difficult to determine.

Incidents of coerced prostitution most commonly involve women who are not ethnic Thai from hill tribes or are from neighboring countries; the number of such women entering the country to work as prostitutes continues to rise. Because they cannot speak Thai, and are considered illegal immigrants, these women are particularly vulnerable to physical abuse, confinement, and exploitation.

Some women are lured with promises of jobs as waitresses or domestic helpers, but are then forced to work as prostitutes. As illegal immigrants, these women have no right to legal counsel or health care if arrested, and this group is not protected under new regulations concerning illegal alien workers.



Human rights monitors believe that the majority of those who engage in prostitution are not kept under physical constraint, but that a large number labor in debt bondage. Brothel procurers often advance parents a substantial sum against their daughter's future earnings, often without the consent of the young woman involved. The women are then obligated to work in a brothel in order to pay back the loan.

On the border with Cambodia, procurers provide women and girls as young as the age of 14 who were trafficked from Vietnam or China and live under slave-like circumstances in Cambodia. Observers believe that

their illegal border crossing for the purposes of prostitution is accomplished with the complicity of local officials."

Legal and enforcement efforts--by government and international agencies--are in place throughout the region, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Economic and Social Council work; Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others; and the Fourth World Conference on Women and Nongovernmental Organizations Forum on Women held in Beijing, China in Sep 1995.

In portions of Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines, *"military installations have resulted in considerable demand for prostitutes despite restrictive legislation."* (See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol 15, 1975, p. 78.)

b. Reasons

(1) Economic Historically, monetary concerns are one of the primary reasons prostitution exists. Whether due to greed, exploitation or poverty, finances are a big part of the business.

(a) Greed In some East Asian countries, prostitution offers a fairly easy means to gain wealth. It also provides a "quick fix" for acquisitive emotional desires.



(b) Exploitation In Myanmar, trafficking in *"women and girls remains a serious problem. There were reliable reports that many women and children in border areas, where the Government's control is limited, were forced or lured into working as prostitutes in Thailand. It is unknown how many young women have been deceived into working as prostitutes, but a common practice is to lure young women to Thailand with promises of employment as a waitress or domestic servant."* (L. of C. Country Studies--Burma.)



Within the Philippines, use of others for selfish profit sees women and girls "in the lower economic stratum seeking economic improvement through employment overseas.

They are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by unethical recruiters who promise jobs abroad or, in some cases, arrange marriages with foreign men. Some find work only as prostitutes or suffer abuse at the hands of their foreign employers or husbands.

Those recruited to work as maids, entertainers, or models may, while overseas, be forced to participate in public shows or dances where nudity and the prospect of sex is the principal attraction." (L. of C. Country Studies--Philippines.)

Similar conditions exist in China. "The increased commercialization of sex and related trafficking in women has trapped tens of thousands of women in a cycle of crime and exploitation. These women face a high risk of drug addiction, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases. According to media reports, 80 percent of Beijing's massage parlors offer sex services.



In July the Beijing municipal government announced a crackdown on massage parlors in the capital, but the long-term effectiveness of the crackdown on this lucrative business, which involves organized crime groups...

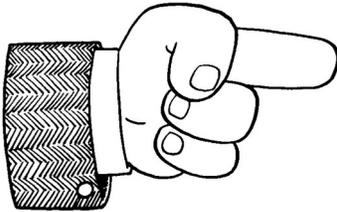
business people, and even the military is uncertain. Unsafe working conditions are rampant among the saunas, massage houses, and hostess bars that have sprung up in large numbers.

The abduction of women is a serious and growing problem. The Government continued to condemn and to take steps to prevent and punish the abduction and sale of women for marriage or prostitution." (L. of C. Country Studies--China)

(c) Poverty What is true of South Korea could apply to many other East Asian countries.

"In some cases, they [lower class women] were obliged to become part of the 'entertainment industry' in order to survive economically.

According to one estimate, brothels, bars, massage parlors, discos, and what are known as 'Taiwan style' barbershops (that is, those often employing a greater number of masseuses than barbers) employed as many as 1 million women, though not all were prostitutes.



This underworld of abuse, exploitation, and bitter shame has begun to be criticized and exposed by women's activists." (Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, South Korea--A Country Study, p. 108.)

Prostitution remains an illegal, though widespread fact of life for poor, disadvantaged women--slaves, captives, divorcees, widows, outcasts, the unmarriageable--who have limited economic and job opportunities.

(2) Men over Women In South Korea, the *"tradition of total female submission persisted in Korean villages until relatively recent times. Even today, an "extreme double standard concerning the sexual behavior of married men and women" persists. (Country Study, South Korea, p. 105.)*

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Japan's 1993 public acknowledgment and apology for comfort women could be interpreted, in part as the result of traditional "men over women" perspectives.

The Imperial government, in the past, condoned the Japanese army's practice of forcing an estimated 200,000 women (including Koreans, Filipinas, Chinese, Indonesians, Burmese, Dutch, and Japanese) to provide sex to soldiers between 1932 and 1945."



Presently, the "Asian Women's Fund was established in July 1995 as a private, government-sponsored fund to compensate former comfort women. The fund will support three projects. The first will provide direct compensation payments to individual victims and will be financed entirely through private donations. A second projects will provide medical and welfare assistance to individual comfort women. A third will fund projects to improve the general status of women and girls in Asia." (Library of Congress Country Studies--Japan.)

(3) Subordination to Family A poverty related perspective sees women accepting questionable jobs-- prostitutes, entertainers, models, hostesses, masseuses--to support parents, children or other family members.

c. Impact on Armed Forces Personnel

For isolated, comparatively wealthy, sometimes lonely Armed Forces personnel stationed in East Asia or visiting on a short TDY stint, participation in the sex trade can seem an overwhelming and attractive temptation. Consideration of the following issues, in addition to the matters raised above, may assist personnel in dealing with the issue.

(1) Risk Participating in the prostitution trade--whether legally or illegally--involves physical and emotional/psychological risk. Physical hazards are well-known--exposure to venereal diseases, AIDs, and an underground world lucrative for criminal activity.



Less familiar are the emotional/psychological risks. For married personnel, the dissonance raised in "playing the Asian field" while having wives and children back home can effect emotional ties once a return to CONUS (Continental United States) occurs. Whether single or married, engaging in a kaleidoscopic venue of sexual favors cannot but impact relations involving more long-term commitments.

(2) Values

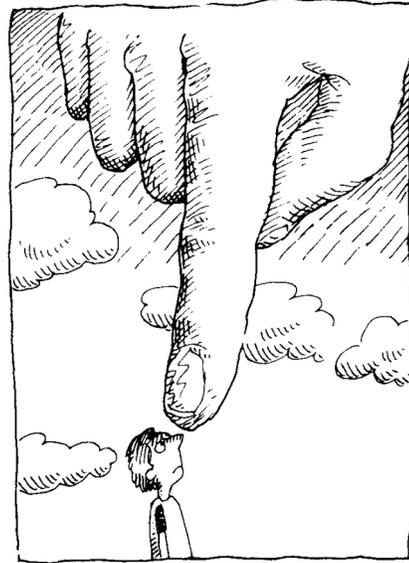
Armed Forces personnel represent the United States. As military members, we possess values--integrity, selfless service, commitment, competence, loyalty--which apply whether in or out of uniform. When participating in a questionable trade, it defames these values.



Marriage vows are dishonored. Religious ethical practice is ridiculed. The illegality of the prostitution trade is increasingly seen as a crime, not only by those who sell the services, but by clients engaging in the business.

(3) System Perpetuation In a recent (25 Mar 1997) U.S. Department of State report to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, delegate Robert Loftus stated, "*If outright chattel slavery has ended in almost every country of the world, there continues to be an alarming number of closely related practices.*"

One of the most reprehensible of these is the trafficking of women and girls for sexual purposes. The responsibility for this loathsome practice, which is particularly prevalent in certain countries of southern and southeast Asia, but also growing elsewhere in the world, is not solely confined to those who conduct the sex trade. Those who engage in sexual tourism are equally culpable." Military members who engage in the sex trade are guilty of sustaining and maintaining the practice.



2. Women in the People's Republic of China

The following narrative, adapted from the Library of Congress Country Studies/Area Handbooks Program, gives an overview of the current standing of women in the People's Republic of China.



"...while party leaders condemned the oppression and subordination of women as one more aspect of the traditional society they were intent on changing, they did not accord feminist issues very high priority. In the villages, party members were interested in winning the loyalty and cooperation of poor and lower-middle-class male peasants, who could be expected to resist public criticism of their treatment of their wives and daughters.

Many party members were poor and lower-middle-class peasants from the interior, and their attitudes toward women reflected their background. The party saw the liberation of women as depending, in a standard Marxist way, on their participation in the labor force outside the household.

