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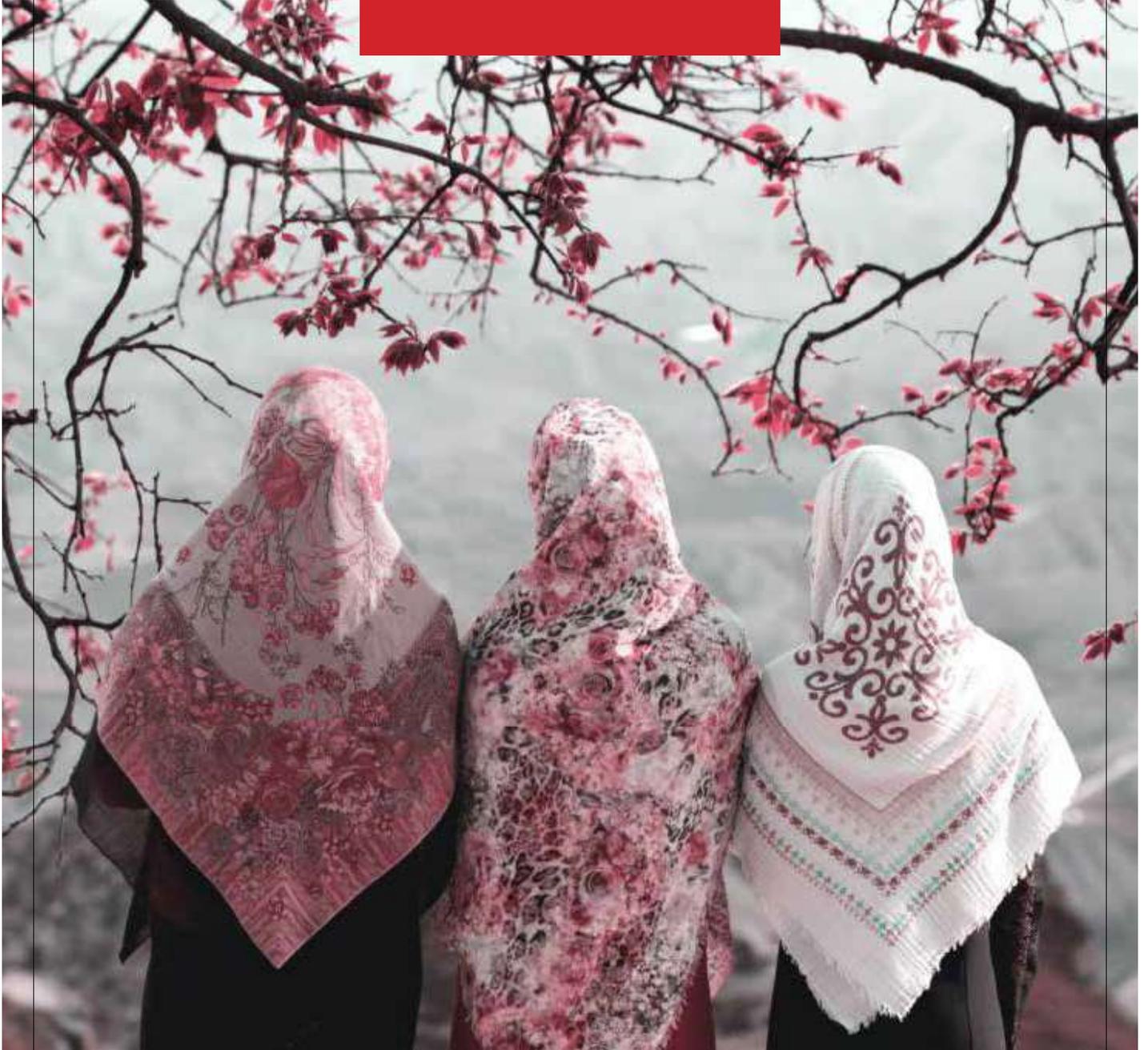
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**WINNERS
OF THE CENTURY**



Editorial

During the course of recent events in Iran, which were accompanied by some unrest, the anti-Islamic Republic western media and their allies tried to portray a false image of Iranian women - “emerging revolutionary heroes” opposing and confronting the system and the state. As a matter of fact, the opponents of the Islamic Republic tried to create a make-believe scenario that these events are the beginning of a trend that will eventually result in the system change in Islamic Iran. In one of its recent issues, Time magazine called Iranian women “Heroes of the Year”; an expression that may appear to be very glamorous and a matter of pride at the first glance. However, what the western media have failed to realize is that the most appropriate name for Iranian women is “The Winners of the Century”; an expression that is certainly very different from what the western media has been trying to project.

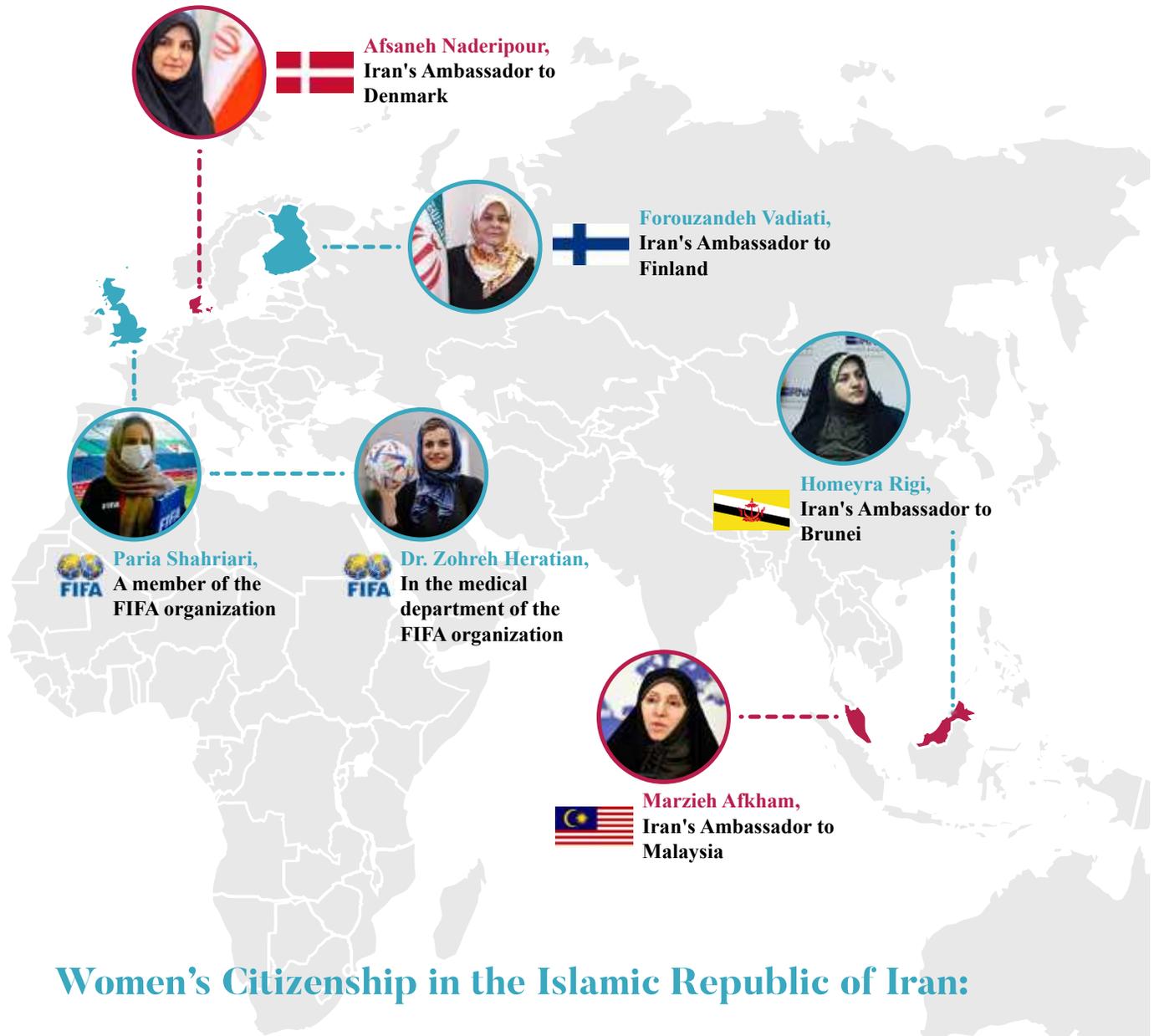
Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution and with the expansion of women’s participation in educational and academic areas, a special social force called the women’s class has emerged in the modern world, which is, in fact, the outcome of the deserving importance and value that the Iranian system has reinstated for the female class; an emerging force that seeks its place in politics, culture, knowledge, economy, etc. and looks forward to conquering new fields of constructive activities.

Within the frameworks of religiosity, love of family, and patriotism, the concern of Iranian women is very lofty and sublime, which is the concern of every elite. And even if some Iranian women may not observe full hijab, they have thoughts that are by far loftier than the meaningless western slogans.

History has proved

Iran is a land, which has faced various events to the extent it had developed the ability to withstand them and make them part of its essence and nature and this is a special quality that has ensured its growth and excellence. During the course of their revolution, the Iranian people gained the wisdom of dealing with and confronting conspiracies and plots designed and implemented by their enemies. One of the characteristics of the Iranian society that the theoreticians of power pay great attention to and have repeatedly intended to use as a tool for achieving their objectives is the diversity and plurality of the Iranian society. However, contrary to what evil forces think, this element cannot be used as a passageway for the penetration of enemies and is rather a leverage of strength for our dear Iran.

The greatest lesson from recent developments in Iran is that the historical memory of Iranians will never forget the crimes committed by the so-called superpowers and the false promises they have made all over the world, which have resulted in nothing but violence and massacre and destruction wherever they have interfered (poked their nose in).



Women's Citizenship in the Islamic Republic of Iran:

An Implication for New Knowledge Politics

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■ Introduction

Gender is “one of the modalities through which modernity is imagined and desired” (Rofel, 1999, p. 197); “being modern” cannot be approved as long as one’s position towards gender as a “basic component” of modernity is identified (Deeb, 2006, p. 29). Gender is simultaneously a historical element of the West’s imperial dominance over the East. As Edward Said proposes in his pivotal work *Orientalism* (1979), the West’s imperial colonialism has been a “gendered” project: gendering the colonial narratives bestows on the imperial West a “male power fantasy” to dominate the “feminized Orient” as the “Oriental feminine” (Said, 1979, p. 6).

The colonialization of Muslim women, thus, implies the picture of victims of misogynist Islam homogenized under a uniform category of the oppressed “Muslim woman” (Badran, 2008). The “Muslim woman” category today has shifted into an “archetypal paradigm” that reflects the ebb and flow of the political discourse between the West and the Islamic world (Zine, 2002).

The typical evidence for this is the four-decade concentration of the American media and academic circles on the status of women in Iran since the onset of the 1979 Revolution. The long lasting demonization and the stereotypical representation of the Iranian woman by Western media and academics have gone so far that Lila Abu Lughod (2013), a prominent scholar on feminism in Islamic countries, questions,

It is not clear whether and in what ways women have made gains and whether the great increases in literacy, decreases in birthrates, presence of women in the professions and government, and a feminist flourishing in cultural fields like writing and filmmaking are despite or because of the establishment of an Islamic Republic (p. 44).

The present paper assumes the likelihood of achieving an epistemological emancipation and a possibility of thinking about Iranian women in a different mode, this time embedded in the Western neo-imperialism. Some arguments are as follows: First, as Hamid Algar (2015) asserts:

Iranian women along with Iranian men played a very crucial role in furthering the aims of the revolution. They participated massively in all the important demonstrations. They suffered torture,



Hamid Algar



Lara Deeb

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imprisonment, and abuse. Since the triumph of the revolution, they have continued to play an important role (p. 19).

Second, women's active participation in national development persists responsibly after the establishment of the Islamic Republic: Ayatollah Khomeini's call for the social movement for literacy and health was well received by the majority of "not only religious but also middle- upper-class, secular women" (Bahramitash et al., 2018, p. 23).

Third, the Islamic Republic as a political system was established through a national referendum in which both women and men participated, and for which 98.2 percent of those eligible voted. From 1979 to 2022, the Islamic Republic has held 35 elections, presidential, parliamentary, urban and rural councils, and assembly of experts, with high rates of participation of women and men alike.

Fourth, according to UN parameters of development, the empowerment of women (2022) has been a significant achievement in a variety of sectors such as below as national figures indicate:

- Over 2390 women serve on the boards of directors of knowledge-based companies, as women make up to 33.3% of faculty members at universities.
- When women hold 25.2% of all government positions at all levels, they serve in delicate posts such as 1000 of whom that serve as judges, or presidents of the Environment Organization in four frequent terms.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), women's life expectancy has increased from 63 years in 1991 to more than 79 years in 2019 (vs. men 75).
- The proper access to 60 midwives and 2.8 gynecologists has been

provided per 100.000 women in different parts of the country.

- The mortality rate of children under 5 has decreased by 14.2 per 100.000 lived births.
- Today, the Iranian young girls and women access 784 different vocational majors in various sectors including agriculture, industry and services; among them are mechanics, computer sciences, electronics, IT, ICT, etc. (Interactive Dialogue - Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), 13-24 March 2017, 4th meeting, 2017).
- Women make up a great number of ICT users in Iran, e.g. they constitute 45% of the total mobile users, 48% of the computer users, and 48% of the users of the internet.
- Getting access to 16.111 gyms, Iranian women have won 3302 medals at recent international sports events.

■ Iranian Women: The Role Model with Regional Legacy

Despite of such a developing self-portrayal of women in recent decades, still insufficient depth of knowledge sometimes makes the scholarly works suffer negligence. However, a very narrow space has been preserved by few Western academicians such as Lara Deeb (2006) whose ethnographic project in Lebanon, *Enchanted Modern*, indicates a different perception of the Islamic Republic. Here it serves as a role model and its enabling and empowering role for the modern pious women is appreciated by Lebanese Shia women.

As Deeb (2006) suggests, the establishment of an Islamic form of state in Iran is perceived by them as a "powerful worldview" of independence and self-determination, even an engine to "restructure" the willpower of Muslim women for the spiritual along with the material development (p. 75).

The Islamic Republic, then, is acknowledged by them to embody “the inseparability of religion, politics”, and Muslim women’s social responsibility to live a pious modern life with a strong sense of leadership and collective self-esteem among Muslims (Deeb, 2006, p. 231).

The success of the Islamic Republic is embedded in the “visibility” and agency of the pious women in modern public spaces and in professional milieus, in other words, the “public piety” (Deeb, 2006, p. 180).

To summarize, the Islamic Republic has symbolized Muslim women’s “reason”, “understanding”, and “spiritual progress” against the absolute materialism of Western modernity and its embedded “ignorance, immorality, and emptiness” in Western culture (Deeb, 2006, p. 20 & 23).

■ Conclusion

During the past four decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been represented by the western media and academia as a political system that stands against the “normal” model of secular liberal democracy. It is, thus, perceived as an “unthinkable”, “enigma”, “puzzle”, “paradox”, and “at war with history” (Matin, 2013, p. 1).

The Iranian women’s participation in the establishment of the Islamic Republic and the agency and empowerment it bestows to women, the present paper argues, deserve to be addressed in new terms, at least adrift of the historical simplification and intentional ignorance of the Western observers.

Illustrating some, among many, concrete national achievements in education, health, employment, and decision-making of/by women in Iran, the paper attempts to draw how Muslim Iranian women step forward to highlight various kinds of modernity, a pious modern identity, to be imagined.

Ultimately, Iranian women’s power of dialogue with other cultures is explored in Lara Deeb’s ethnography of the historically marginalized Shia women in Lebanon. Her study is given as an iconic example of epistemological emancipation from the westernized standards of womanhood: it dares to portray the Islamic Republic of Iran as at least a regional role model in Muslim women’s empowerment and inclusiveness.

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