

The Challenge of Fundamentalisms

Lynn P Freedman

Few developments in the post-Cold War era have captured public attention, stirred primal fears, stoked the fires of racism, and stymied critical thinking quite so thoroughly as the rise of fundamentalism. Although it is a force to be reckoned with in virtually every area of public endeavour, the rise of fundamentalism presents a very specific, and somewhat unique, challenge to the emerging field of reproductive health and rights. The 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) – replete with death threats from militant Egyptian Muslim groups, eschatological rhetoric from the Vatican, and a high-profile alliance among conservative forces identified with various religions – ensured that fundamentalism would push its way onto the international stage. Having captured the spotlight of the moment, what role will fundamentalism be permitted to play as the reproductive health and rights field takes shape?

THE ICPD Programme of Action signals a paradigmatic shift in the way that governments purport to deal with the relationship between population, development, women's health and human rights. Moving from a model that focused on population growth as a primary obstacle to social and economic development and on the spread of family planning as the primary means for curbing population growth, the Programme of Action announces an emerging model that focuses on the promotion of women's health, rights, and empowerment as the route to both increasing development and decreasing population growth. Of course this new view, the 'reproductive health' approach, did not spring full-blown from the minds or pens of the government delegates assembled in Cairo nor, indeed, from the group within the UN charged with writing the initial drafts. Rather it was an approach carefully shaped and nurtured over the decades that preceded ICPD through writing, research, meetings, conferences, lobbying and activist campaigns nationally.

Much of the post-ICPD commentary has focused on the shifting alignment of interests between the population establishment and women's health and rights advocates that paved the way for a consensus Programme that seemed almost eerily easy to enact in Cairo. While that consensus may be 'the right agenda for the right time,'¹ many feel that it is a shaky coalition whose durability will be sorely tested in the years to

come.² But even if this analysis of the 'Cairo consensus' is correct, it is not the end of the ICPD story. To many others at ICPD, the dynamics of population growth and its effect or non-effect on development actually mattered very little, if at all. For them, Cairo was a stage on which a different drama was playing out:

The scene: a post-Cold War world riven by bloody conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia, Rwanda, the Middle East and elsewhere; by a resurgent communalism in India and other parts of South Asia; by an economic order powered by US and European interests in a relentless push for privatisation and the creation of free markets for transnational corporate capital and for a globalising media spreading a particular brand of American consumerism; and, perhaps most of all, by the rise of conservative social movements that used the language, the symbols and the intense power of religion to cloak their political goals.

The cast: In Cairo itself – the Vatican, Al Azhar University, the Muslim Brotherhood, and an array of anti-abortion forces aligned against human rights and reproductive rights activists. At home (in both the North and South) – social conservatives decrying the 'immoral, imperialist ICPD' and clashing with human rights and women's health advocates struggling to be heard in response.

The central prop: women's bodies, their sexuality, their roles in family and society.

Here, in the list of props, lies the crux of the matter. Women's bodies, their sexuality, their social roles – the tools of population policy and family planning programmes, and the subject of women's rights campaigns – are also the quintessential tools of fundamentalist political projects. Thus all three forces share a common currency. And while each can retreat after Cairo into their own familiar patterns of discourse and interaction, the woman who is the object of such machinations has only one body, one womb, one life.

Much ink has been spilled to analyse the 'Cairo consensus' and its potential for overhauling population and family planning programmes, and for shaping health and development policies. But surprisingly little attention has been given to the implications of the confrontation in Cairo with fundamentalism. Indeed, if the 'Cairo consensus' does not fall of its own weight, then it may be pushed by the failure of both the population establishment and the women's health and rights movements to deal with the challenge of fundamentalism through an honest examination of their own assumptions and motivations, and a renewed commitment to the most basic human rights principles on which that consensus was first constructed.

The phenomenon of fundamentalism

In both academic and activist circles, there is much controversy surrounding use of the term 'fundamentalism,' first coined by American Protestant movements in the late 19th century to identify their own brand of literalist interpretation of the Bible,³ but transformed in recent years by the western press to refer most often to Muslim groups and to invoke an instant apprehension of Islam itself as threatening, violent, and irrational. Some feel the term has become so loaded as to be useless or worse; others feel the term levels such important differences in the varied movements labelled 'fundamentalist' that it obscures more than it elucidates; still others feel the term is politically potent and that it is important to maintain and elaborate it.⁴

While recognising that the term can be problematic and is best avoided in some particular political circumstances, I use it guardedly here for several reasons. First, although careful study of the distinct historical origins of each

movement labelled 'fundamentalist' is no doubt absolutely essential to full understanding, I am convinced that there is a sufficiently meaningful set of 'family resemblances' among different movements to make their analysis as an international, cross-cultural phenomenon both illuminating and urgent.⁵ Second, such movements have shown themselves capable of allying politically across international borders (as at ICPD) and it is therefore essential to see how and why their interests and agendas dovetail. Finally, the demonisation of some religions as being given to intolerance and violence, often blinds people to the same tendencies in the history of their own or any other religious traditions. Seeing the 'family resemblances' helps keep perspective on what is inherent within a particular religion itself and what is more likely to be the result of fallible human beings who appropriate and manipulate the power of religious doctrines and symbols for their own distinctly earthly ends.

So what is this phenomenon called 'fundamentalism'? I do not attempt to give it a definitive or even provisional definition; indeed I think it important to resist seeing fundamentalism as a fixed category or school of thought to which any given group either does or does not belong. Rather I attempt here only to describe some particular characteristics of the phenomenon that seem most relevant in its challenge to the reproductive health and rights field. In making these observations, I draw on the growing body of academic work that examines fundamentalist or fundamentalist-like movements originating in a wide range of religious traditions.⁶ I also draw on the work of activist women's groups who, coping with quite diverse manifestations of this phenomenon in their own communities throughout the world, have found that comparative analysis opens not only new understanding, but also new possibilities of response.⁷

Academic studies, even when they consider gender specifically, typically focus on religious traditions and look carefully at how religious texts and doctrine are used in fundamentalist projects. This is certainly an extremely important part of what we need to do to understand and cope with fundamentalism. But activist groups add two equally important points to the analysis, drawn from their intimate, day-to-day experience of confronting fundamentalism. First, without denying that many who participate in

fundamentalist movements feel deeply moved by religious faith and symbols, experience on the ground demonstrates that in many cases the use of religious language and imagery is deeply, profoundly cynical.⁸ To automatically credit any political project that chooses the discourse of religion as therefore 'religious' is a grave mistake.

Second, the same style of discourse and basic set of strategies that are employed by fundamentalists when religion is used to characterise a group's identity, are also employed when other markers of identity, such as ethnicity or nationality, predominate. Thus, from an activist perspective, it is important to go beyond explicitly religious fundamentalisms and to include in the analysis events such as the war in ex-Yugoslavia with its 'ethnic cleansing' or the experience of Nazi Germany with its 'final solution' – and, indeed, to consider how religion, ethnicity or race, and nationality all relate to each other.

Surveying fundamentalist movements from this broader perspective, it is important to recognise that fundamentalists are not spiritual, other-worldly dreamers; they are pragmatic ideologues who organise themselves to engage in active, future-oriented, political projects. At the core of virtually all such projects is a profound sense of siege: fundamentalists see themselves as part of a community in danger. However they define and name the danger – whether it be secularism; the encroaching, decadent West; a pervasive immorality symbolised by abortion; or a one-world government – that danger is the source of chaos and disorder. But fundamentalists do not opt to insulate themselves from the danger by withdrawing from modern society and retreating to some golden past of timeless, enduring principles. Rather, they fight back with militancy, with absolutism, and with selective use of the implements of modernity, as they seek to control the dislocation they feel and to impose order on the broader societies in which they live.

Clearly the specific strategies that fundamentalist groups employ will vary – sometimes, but certainly not always, incorporating violence in the repertoire; sometimes, but not always, incorporating community service (eg. running schools or providing health care).⁹ Here I focus on some of the strategies common to almost all such movements. Perceiving grave threats to the very existence of their community and identity,

fundamentalists virtually always fight back by constructing a view of the world premised on difference and confrontation, and on the ability to define and maintain the purity and integrity of their own community against the polluting, contaminating reach of those outside. This means building borders by making clear demarcations between self and other. But it is an invented, inflated self and other. While the fundamentalist's own community is reinvented with a righteous and glorious past, the Other is demonised and vilified, thus lending an apocalyptic quality to the battle that is looming.⁶

For the emerging reproductive health and rights movement, what is immediately important about this great confrontation and the boundary-building that goes with it is (1) the way that it uses women to map its territory and construct its borders; and (2) the way that it uses law, particularly laws relating to reproduction and sexuality, to harness women to this task.

But the escalating rhetoric that fundamentalists use to stage this cosmic drama should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there are other, seemingly less ominous forces operating at the global level, which also use the discourse of difference and/or confrontation in pursuit of their own political agendas. Perhaps the most obvious example can be found in the shifts of mainstream, US foreign policy discourse that have followed the end of the Cold War. In the new world order as sketched out by such influential and respected analysts as Harvard professor Samuel Huntington and eagerly promoted by the popular media, US and European economic interests are identified with the continued dominance of western (read white, Christian) civilisation; and 'western civilisation' is positioned in opposition to darker, more threatening civilisations defined by religion, specifically 'Islamic' and 'Confucian' civilisations. Such scenarios are given their own apocalyptic flavour: Predicting 'the next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations', Huntington surveys the world today and warns us, 'Islam has bloody borders'.¹⁰

Ultimately, it is the ways in which fundamentalist movements, with their intense focus on women, feed on and fuel these other global forces that poses the deepest challenge to the reproductive health and rights movements emerging in every part of the world.

Women, law and the re-creation of tradition and modernity

Among the most persistent misconceptions about fundamentalist movements is the notion that the beliefs and practices which their adherents assert to be fundamental and inviolable are actually authentic, ancient, uncontested doctrines or customs. In this view, tradition is understood to be something fixed and identifiable, which fundamentalists retrieve and then assert aggressively against modernity. But this is an unduly static view. In fact, just as fundamentalists engage in a process of inventing self and other, so they engage in a similar process of simultaneously constructing both the tradition to which they cling and the corrupt world to which they react.

Women are central to the fundamentalist project of defining and mythologising tradition – and thus to the process of imagining and living the highly-charged cosmic drama in which fundamentalists typically locate themselves and their perceived enemies. Of course, the use of women to define and maintain a society and culture is certainly not unique to fundamentalism. Indeed, there is a substantial literature exploring the ways in which discourse about women – and particularly about their biological nature and their social function within the family as housewives, sexual partners, childbearers and childrearers – becomes a basic tool through which identity is shaped and maintained. The subtle dynamics of this process have been demonstrated particularly effectively in writing about colonial encounters. A number of scholars have shown how the European colonisers' perceptions of the nature and roles of women in colonised societies were basic to their understanding of those societies as a whole, and thus to their strategies for subduing, controlling, reshaping, and exploiting them. However, this was not a simple, one-directional gaze: ultimately, the discourse about women of different classes and races shaped not only the coloniser's view of the colonised and vice versa, but also the way in which each culture – colonised and colonisers – created and perpetuated its view of its own identity.¹¹

One means by which such evolving visions of self and other – and of women and tradition – were translated into the actual institutions that governed everyday life was through the articu-

lation and implementation of laws. Analysis of specific legal debates helps elucidate the process by which this happens. For instance, in a brilliant essay on the debate on *sati* (widow immolation) in colonial India, Lata Mani asserts that, while women are emblematic of tradition, these debates were 'in some sense, not primarily about women, but about what constitutes authentic cultural tradition.'¹² She shows how colonial discourse – a discourse in which Bengali intellectuals also participated – ultimately privileged Brahmanic texts in a manner that was actually quite alien to the varied forms of Hindu religious practice that existed throughout India. Premised on the (misguided) assumption that the true source of tradition lay in selected scriptures and that such texts could and should be treated as prescriptive rules – essentially religious laws – that would override customary practices, the colonial debate on *sati* became a debate about scriptural interpretation, not a debate about the interests of women or even about cruelty to women. Though the British prohibition against *sati* is often seen as evidence of British concern about the status of Indian women as part of their self-described 'civilising mission,' the nature of the debate, particularly the hegemony granted to texts, actually marginalised women:

*'Given that the debate on sati is premised on its scriptural and, consequently, its 'traditional' and 'legal' status, it is little wonder that the widow herself is marginal to its central concerns. The parameters of the discourse preclude this possibility. Instead women become sites upon which various versions of scripture/tradition/law are elaborated and contested.'*¹³

This analysis of a 19th century debate holds important clues for the way fundamentalist discourse functions today – even beyond the practice of *sati* which has recently re-emerged as an issue in Hindu fundamentalist politics in India.¹⁴ Certainly more work needs to be done to test the generalisability of Mani's analysis. But her tantalising demonstration that women are marginalised by a style of discourse that privileges texts as the most authoritative source of religious authenticity, and that converts such texts into prescriptive rules, may help us to understand the mechanisms by which fundamentalists have often been able to set the terms

of the debate about women's place in society.

Indeed, while many fundamentalist movements profess to be centrally concerned with morals and values, experience shows that they are rarely willing to engage in genuinely open debate or discussion about philosophical or spiritual matters. Instead, they typically convert value-laden questions into a narrow and rigid analysis of text and law premised on the assertion that they possess exclusive access to truth and divine meaning. Such an approach to religious texts and law leaves little or no room for interpretation or debate or theological inquiry, or for a religiosity derived from personal, spiritual experience.¹⁵ Religious language becomes political language, as religious content is used instrumentally to advance political goals.¹⁶ Thus, even when they purport to be the guardians of religious traditions such as Islam or Judaism that can boast hundreds, even thousands, of years of rich legal debate, jurisprudential fluidity, and remarkable on-the-ground adaptability, fundamentalists typically construct a religious-legal system that brooks no ambiguity or dissent. All legal, moral and ethical matters are black-and-white; shades of grey cease to exist. As Joseph Scheidler, a former Benedictine monk and now a national leader in the US anti-abortion movement, put it:

*'We are going to win because we are right. They are wrong. We are good. They are bad. It's that simple.'*¹⁷

In this fundamentalist framework, legal rules are sacralised and thus made absolute and unchallengeable. The breach of a rule – sometimes even the verbal challenge to a rule – is taken as an offence, not just against the State that promulgates the rule or the community authorities who enforce it, but against the divine will as well. Moreover this absolutist approach to law and to religious authenticity enables fundamentalists to ignore or condemn any diversity of belief and practice that exists within their broader communities. This, in turn, facilitates their efforts to create and maintain the notion of a monolithic, homogeneous (powerful and glorious) people – a particularly potent formula in Islam, with its appeal to preservation and unity of the worldwide *ummah* (community of believers); and in Judaism, with its appeal to

the preservation and unity of *am Yisrael* (the Jewish people), and even to some extent now in Hinduism with its appeal to *Hindutva* as the essence of Indianness.¹⁸

Activist women's groups, particularly in Muslim countries and communities, have demonstrated how such a myth of a monolithic, homogeneous Islam (or Judaism or Hinduism or Christianity, for that matter) can be paralysing, particularly when it gives the exclusive power to define religious authenticity to those who would adopt an approach to text and law of the kind described above.¹⁹ Much of the research and activist work conducted by such groups is designed to explode the myths of homogeneity and to counter the exclusive claim to authenticity by documenting (and celebrating) the enormous diversity – in lifestyles, in legal systems and interpretations, in theological discourse – that actually exists in the Muslim world.²⁰

In doing so, it has been important to understand the historically specific roots of the very legal concepts and systems which today are championed by fundamentalists as divinely inspired and thus immutable. For instance, over 200 years ago in colonial India, the British established a legal system that required the civil and criminal courts to apply 'indigenous legal norms' in 'all suits regarding inheritance, marriage, caste, and other religious usages and institutions.'²¹ The 'indigenous legal norms' to be applied were 'the laws of the Koran' with respect to Muslims and the laws of the Brahmanic Shasters with respect to Hindus, all of which were to be authoritatively interpreted by *maulvis* and *pandits* on request from the (British) court. This basic system had enormous implications, still reverberating in communal politics today.

First, it assumed that Islam and Hinduism were, in their 'authentic' state, homogeneous religious traditions in which the 'true' and 'correct' legal rules could be determined through reference to text and authoritative interpretation – when, in fact, both religions had historically tolerated a wide range of practices and beliefs. It also assumed that the people of colonial India could be divided neatly into Muslim and Hindu communities – when, in fact, many followed aspects of both (and other) traditions, never being forced to identify as one or the other. The result was the application of a legal system that, in historian Michael Anderson's words, 'was

often more alien than familiar to putatively “Muslim” [or Hindu] groups.’²¹ Yet this system of separate personal laws to be applied by religious courts and authorities within each religious community has remained essentially intact. Despite the historical (indeed, colonial), rather than divine, origins of this system, religiously based personal laws with their emphasis on women’s status and behaviour, have remained the focal point for religious identity. As such they provide much of the fodder for the communal tensions gripping India today.

The central place that law and religiously-justified rules of behaviour have come to play in virtually all fundamentalist projects forces us to acknowledge that fundamentalism is not simply a matter of adherence to the kind of turbulent, apocalyptic worldview described earlier. It also entails the commitment to convert that view into an active political programme. And what makes fundamentalist programmes quintessentially political – and not just theological or even social – is their determination to use the power of the state to implement their vision of the social order. Thus, a professed goal of most fundamentalist movements is the institution of religious law as state law, or at least the incorporation of ‘religious values’ into state law. Yet it is not just any religious values or any religious laws that seem to preoccupy fundamentalists. Rather, for reasons explored below, fundamentalist projects give top priority to laws that focus intensively on women’s bodies – on controlling their movements, their sexuality, their interactions with others in public and private – and thus on their roles in the home, the family and the society.

The precise political programmes adopted by fundamentalists in the name of religion can vary substantially from place to place, even when they purport to derive from the same religious tradition. Thus, the strategies that women adopt to counter such movements have been developed with careful attention to the specific historical, cultural, and political context in which each movement operates. In the case of Iran, for example, the religious framework has yielded substantial space – even if it is the only space – for women activists to negotiate with a fundamentalist regime which, having gained power, must now deliver on its promises.²² In other situations, such as Bangladesh, where Islam has

been recognised as the state religion and fundamentalist movements have been gaining ground, most women activists are united in their demand for a secular civil law.²³

Women, difference and the rise of fundamentalism

While effective strategies to counter fundamentalism at the local level must grow from an engagement with particular fundamentalist forces in their specific contexts, it has become important to understand not just the commonalities that different forms of fundamentalism share, but also the way in which fundamentalism has begun to function as a trans-national, trans-cultural – even global – phenomenon. Moreover, as fundamentalist movements grow in power and influence, it will be vital to see and understand the ways in which they use and are used by other powerful interests functioning at the global level, and the impact this ultimately has on the spaces available to women. Being a basic building block in whatever system a society uses to organise and perpetuate itself, gender will also be a critical issue for other movements striving for social change – including, of course, women’s movements and human rights movements. As these varied movements interact in the quest for political power or social influence, the pivotal question is whether women will capture the space to participate as full agents in determining the scope and direction of change, or whether they will find themselves struggling to resist attempts by others to use them in the promotion of various agendas which are not of their own making.²⁴

Given the central role that gender ideologies play in so many social movements, one might legitimately ask whether fundamentalism is really distinguishable from other ‘isms’ that use women instrumentally. In some sense, fundamentalism is one point on a long continuum of different patriarchal ideologies or systems. As a consequence, many conservative political and social movements that might not be tagged so readily with the label of fundamentalism, actually do much to support and strengthen it.

The spectacular entrance onto the American scene of the Promise Keepers, an organisation founded by an evangelist former college football coach, is a good example. In massive rallies

around the country, Promise Keepers packs huge sports stadiums with tens of thousands of Christian, mostly white, men chanting their faith in Jesus Christ and their determination to take back from women the leadership of their families and communities. In the basic treatise of the organisation, *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, under the heading 'Reclaiming your manhood', preacher Tony Evans gives men the following advice:

*'... sit down with your wife and say something like this: "Honey, I've made a terrible mistake. I've given you my role. I gave up leading this family, and I forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim that role." ... I'm not suggesting you ask for your role back, I'm urging you to take it back... there can be no compromise here. If you're going to lead, you must lead.... Treat the lady gently and lovingly. But lead!'*²⁵

While not overtly political, Promise Keepers is funded by right-wing, Christian political organisations whose social – and ultimately political – agenda is clearly being advanced.²⁵

Yet, in other important ways, fundamentalism is different because of the place of women in the fundamentalists' cosmic drama and, more importantly, in the concrete political projects that flow from and feed it. To understand the specific role that women play in such projects and how that role ultimately revolves around the regulation of women's behaviour and the control of their sexuality, it is useful to go back to the original assertion that fundamentalism is a reaction to deep social dislocation and the feeling of impending chaos that accompanies it. Certainly it is possible to point to many economic and political conditions, such as massive and abrupt shifts in labour markets or rapid urbanisation, that help account for such dislocation – and it will ultimately be essential to understand fundamentalism in the context of these forces. But aligned with massive social dislocation is the breakdown of patriarchal structures that keep women in carefully circumscribed roles, particularly within the family. In this context the uncontrolled woman is symbolic of the disorder all around. Moreover, it is precisely her uncontrolled sexuality that is often understood and felt as the deepest source of such danger.²⁶

This set of symbolic relationships linking uncontrolled women to an out-of-control economic and political order, taps into the patriarchal strains that exist in many of the world's religions – often alongside equally longstanding (even if ultimately incompatible) traditions that support a commitment to gender equality and justice. For example, elucidating elements in the traditional religious literature that provide a basis for Hindu fundamentalists to construe women's behaviour as both the symptom and the cause of the social decay, John Hawley quotes a passage from the *Bhagavad Gita* in which Arjuna warns Krishna:

*In overwhelming chaos, Krishna, women of the family are corrupted; and when women are corrupted, disorder is born in society.*²⁷

A somewhat analogous point can be made about Islam, focusing on the connections among certain constructions of the Islamic familial order (premised on the wife's obedience to the husband), social order (premised on women's subservience to men), and cosmic order (premised on man's submission to God). Indeed, Fatima Mernissi has argued that it is precisely because of these symbolic relationships that *nushuz* (an individual woman's rebellion against her husband) is regarded, in some Muslim societies, as threatening to the community as a whole – and therefore as behaviour that must be contained and controlled.²⁸

Although such relationships between women's behaviour and the order of society and the universe may indeed have ancient roots in many religious traditions, in the context of fundamentalism, they take on a different quality of importance and urgency. Faced with impending destruction, the collectivity and its identity must be strengthened and defended by shoring up its borders, by drawing clear lines of difference and then policing those lines to ensure that they are not crossed. There is heightened concern, even hysteria, about issues of purity and authenticity; about the mixing of races, ethnicities, or religions. In this, women's sexuality and reproductive capacity are viewed as points of both vulnerability and opportunity.

So in the most extreme situations, women's wombs are used literally to produce the pure

race, as in the *lebensborn* programme in Nazi Germany in which blond, blue-eyed women were sheltered in secret homes to breed with elite SS troops to produce 'pure Aryan' children.²⁹ In other situations, women's wombs are used to destroy the enemy polluting race, as in the systematic 'ethnic cleansing' operations in the former Yugoslavia in which rape was used by Serbian forces to terrorise, humiliate, sometimes murder and ultimately drive out Croats and Bosnians. When combined with forced pregnancy, rape was further used to demolish the identity of the Bosnian or Croatian women (and, by extension and intent, the existence of their ethnic communities as well) by forcing them to produce future soldiers for the Serbian state.³⁰ In still other situations, women's wombs are used to effect a 'violent polarisation of difference,' as in the communal riots in India where rape – justified by the 'inherent immorality' of the minority community and its members – became a tool through which the majority community asserted its distinctiveness from and hegemony over them.³¹

But also in the everyday situation when fundamentalist groups gain influence or authority, even without the added stress of war or riots, there is an intensification of concern about women's behaviour. Women's sexuality is controlled and policed; their personal physical space is constricted, their movements regulated. This is one reason why dress and spatial concerns become so highly charged in many fundamentalist discourses. Most often written about is Muslim fundamentalist imposition of 'the veil' – even in some situations such as Algeria in which the style of dress that fundamentalists demand that women wear, on threat of death, is not even traditionally known in that culture.³² But dress codes and concern about women's movements and interactions with outsiders are a common feature in other religious and ethnic fundamentalisms as well. For example, in Sri Lanka, during the height of women's activism in the Tamil nationalist movement, handbills appeared in the streets, requiring 'proper' dress for Tamil women – a requirement whose basic spirit, even if not its specific restrictions, was supported by the women's wing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In the context of the bloody civil war gripping Sri Lanka, a 'woman who merely travels to the South [from Tamil controlled territory in

the north] is constructed as 'sexually loose,' and therefore as a traitor to the cause: her sexuality is a site for the control of her movements.'³³

If controlling the enemy within, the intimate other, is basic to the building of borders that is at the heart of fundamentalism, equally basic is the creation of the worthy enemy against whom borders are drawn and barriers built. In much of the world this enemy is conceived as the decadent west. And the primary symbol of that decadence is its immoral, licentious women. Yet attention is not focused on such seemingly obvious manifestations of sexual decadence as prostitution or trafficking in women and children. Rather, energy is saved for the real enemy that has the power to sow chaos in the social order: the 'western feminist movement.' This connects the enemy within to the enemy outside. As Mernissi explains:

*'...women's disobedience is so feared in the Muslim world because its implications are enormous. They refer to the most dreaded danger to Islam as a group psychology: individualism. I want here to suggest that Muslim societies resist women's claim to changing their status, that they repress feminist trends which are actually evident all over the Muslim world, and that they condemn them as western imports, not simply because these societies fear women, but because they fear individualism.'*²⁸

The strategy of condemning women's claims as 'unauthentic' western imports – despite the long and rich history of feminist initiatives within various Muslim societies – is actually aided and abetted by those forces in the global economy, originating in the US and Europe, who have created and effectively used a sort of cartoon version of feminism to expand their markets at home and abroad, while effectively robbing political feminism of its radical, transforming potential:

*'The market has to transform the militancy of this feminist individualism into consumerism. It attempts to do this by focusing on freedom, which the mass market absorbs, instead of equality, which the market rejects. Feminism gets redefined as an individualized consumer self-help market; and the politics surrounding the struggle for equality drops out the bottom.'*³⁴

In this way, a caricaturised feminism is mass marketed in the west and then, with 'glitzy advertising and romanticised displays [that] fantasize the freedom of the "west," exported around the world.³⁴

Thus, pop feminism often ends up turning women against themselves as it turns others against women; for one thing is ultimately clear: 'These misreadings and misuses - with their transnational effect - construct anti-feminist stances both at home and abroad.'³⁴ As a result, a woman's assertion of her most basic human rights is condemned as a crass display of selfish individualism and so automatically deemed to be an abandonment and betrayal of her family and community - and thus of her own, valued identity.

Marshaled in the context of identity politics, such anti-feminist rhetoric effectively blocks the efforts of women to organise both locally and internationally. Moreover, when lodged within a fundamentalist discourse that magnifies and mythologises the corrupting power of the enemy, and then describes the enemy as a monolithic and encroaching west, the identification of feminism with the west becomes an even more powerful tool for social control.

Of course, in the west, Christian fundamentalists do not identify the enemy as the west *per se*. Rather it is secular humanism, feminism and the godless actions of those who control public life. These are understood not as products of western civilisation - ie. white, Christian civilisation - but as betrayers of that civilisation. Alternatively, these are the acts not of betrayers from within, but of infiltrators from outside - the affinity with rising anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant sentiment being obvious. As for feminism, its corrupting influence was graphically described by the founder of the Christian Coalition, an organisation that is now among the most influential forces in mainstream US politics:³⁵

*'The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft and become lesbians.'*³⁶

To many in the US, such pronouncements are little short of comical. But when they are folded into a discourse that equates access to contraceptive and abortion services with the

alleged crumbling of the patriarchal family, and then equates the perceived decline of the patriarchal family with the weakening of white, Christian civilisation, then the consequences for women's rights and reproductive health become all too real. Whether intentionally or not, such rhetoric emboldens those in the US who condone violence, including the fire bombing of abortion clinics and the murder of abortion providers, as religiously-inspired 'rescue' missions. It also feeds the most extreme elements of white American racism whose rhetoric of conflict and bloodshed is a match for any fundamentalist movement in the world.³⁷

In many countries, it remains all too easy to dismiss such violence as the work of the local lunatic fringe. But for women's health and rights advocates confronting this phenomenon throughout the world, and listening closely to the language and imagery of difference and confrontation that nourishes and sustains it everywhere, the need to make the connections between growing fundamentalism and broader social and economic forces is increasingly urgent. As with so many other aspects of reproductive health and rights, attention to the specific actors who threaten women's autonomy - in this case fundamentalist movements - without attention to the most basic social and economic conditions that give those actors power and the semblance of legitimacy, can have only limited success.

It is thus critically important to see that the construction of a world in which difference and otherness are positioned along racial, cultural or religious lines, can serve the interests not only of fundamentalist forces, but of other global players as well. For instance, the relentless drive to open global markets that has characterised the post-Cold War era, requires policies, such as structural adjustment programmes and free trade agreements, which have sunk millions of already poor people into even more desperate poverty while enriching the elite few (in both North and South) positioned to take advantage of the new space created for transnational capital. Yet in this economic order, 'the world is simultaneously borderless for capital and rebordered by cultural/racial identities defined by "difference".'³⁴ In fact, corporate interests actually use the re-entrenchment of identities along cultural/racial lines to their advantage attempting to disguise real power differentials and growing inequality

between rich and poor, behind the constructed divides of culture, race and religion. The result is a kind of 'corporatist multiculturalism' that 'authorises or allows diversity in order to contain it.' In short, such rewriting of difference and otherness 'does not renegotiate the white center for the globe, but adds differences around it.'³⁴

Meeting the challenge to reproductive health and rights

When the rewriting of difference along cultural/racial/religious lines and the promotion of a caricaturised feminism has the potential both to serve the interests of transnational capital and simultaneously to validate fundamentalists' worldviews, then it is time for reproductive health and human rights advocates to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges they face. This will require a recognition of the different arenas and levels of social life and public discourse at which fundamentalists operate – and an ongoing analysis of how they connect to each other.

When fundamentalists fight for or succeed at implementing a political programme that includes specific laws and policies designed to limit women's access to contraception or medical care, or even to limit their rights to marry, divorce, or enter the labour force, then the connection to reproductive health and rights is fairly obvious. When fundamentalists initiate physical attacks on individual women who have transgressed social or sexual mores, or when they organise campaigns of threats and intimidation against NGOs who have promoted women's autonomy or participation in civil society, then the challenge to the reproductive health field escalates to another level. This has recently been happening in Bangladesh, for example, where right-wing religious forces have not only instigated extra-judicial proceedings and punishments against individual women, but have also fomented attacks on NGOs – including the women's credit programmes of Grameen Bank, the educational programmes of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, as well as community-based family planning initiatives – as part of their struggle for political power in the country.³⁸ Focused strategies to fight specific laws and policies, and the intimidation of individuals and organisations, will continue to be developed by women's and human rights groups

in the affected communities, sometimes including campaigns that solicit support from other organisations and advocates internationally.

But fundamentalist movements also pose a different, if subtler, kind of challenge to reproductive health and rights advocates. With the supremely confident assertion that they are championing the truest, purest, most authentic embodiment of whichever religion, ethnicity, nationality, or culture they claim to represent, fundamentalists have been remarkably successful at setting the terms of public debate, putting on the defensive those who would claim different principles and values for their communities and for the construction of their identities. Moreover, by shrewdly employing the most effective language and imagery of other social movements, fundamentalists have often been able to disguise their true political goals, simultaneously creating new alliances on particular issues and paralysing potential opponents whose causes they appear to defend.³⁹ The Vatican's constant refrain that the ICPD Programme of Action was a new form of 'cultural imperialism' slyly foisted by Western feminists on the rest of the world, is a good example; their condemnation of pornography for its use of 'women as sexual objects' and their challenge to corrupt and authoritarian governments in the name of the 'oppressed classes,' are others.

Strategies to resist fundamentalism at this level will require women's and human rights activists to make connections and build collaborations across geographic, religious, cultural and professional communities. However, in the reproductive health field, the simple act of striking an alliance between the population establishment and the women's movement will not be enough; such an alliance must be based on something stronger than happy coincidence of matching short-term goals. It must be grounded in a renewed and deepened commitment to the basic principles and values that underlie this emerging field. These are perhaps best captured by the notion of women's human rights – not as a wooden, legalistic, text-bound, historically limited concept, but rather as a fundamental commitment to women as valuable in their own right; as subjects able and entitled to make decisions about their lives rather than as objects used to advance someone else's political goals; and as people with spiritual, physical and intellectual needs, bound

up with and intensely committed to the wider social units in which they live.

Without a strong sense of what this means – its potential but also its bottom lines – the field risks disarray and co-optation. While established international law and formal treaty obligations certainly have a role to play, this field also has the opening to fill the concept of human rights with new meaning. Efforts to expand and elaborate human rights within the frameworks of different religious traditions,⁴⁰ to make meaningful the concept of indivisibility between civil and political rights on the one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights on the other;⁴¹ to link the basic premises and tools of human rights and public health;⁴² and to work through these concepts on the ground through dialogue with people around the world via human rights education programmes,⁴³ all contribute to our growing understanding of how human rights can relate to human well-being – morally, politically and strategically.

The text of the ICPD Programme of Action acknowledges the centrality of human rights concepts to the emerging reproductive health field – and most publications following ICPD imply or proclaim that these were the principles on which the ‘Cairo consensus’ was built. But words are easy to come by. A true commitment to these principles in their fullest sense will require the kind of painful self-examination and reformulation of assumptions and aims that few academic disciplines or professional fields are able to accomplish, particularly under the conflicting political and financial pressures that prevail today.

Indeed, a careful look at the history of the population establishment and the specific development of its affiliated academic field, demography, gives much reason for scepticism about the depth and solidity of the commitment to broadly understood notions of women’s human rights. In many respects, demography and, more importantly, the family planning industry (ie. family planning programme managers, policy-makers, contraceptive manufacturers and so on) are the products of the Cold War, and it was the American politics of that era that most dramatically shaped both the theory and the practical, financial realities of the field.⁴⁴ Those politics boiled down to one overwhelming imperative: reduce Third World population growth through

the diffusion of contraceptive technology.

The Cold War may be over but, as Susan Greenhalgh has persuasively shown, for reasons related to its failure to develop an adequate basis in social theory and for reasons related to the funding and institutional imperatives of the primary actors, the spread of contraceptives remains the dominant driving force of the field.⁴⁴ It is a force that has managed to absorb and convert each challenge to its success into a tool to promote its ultimate ends, for example in the way in which ‘culture’ as an analytic category has been incorporated into family planning projects. Much as transnational capital absorbs, de-politicises, and then re-deploys both genuine diversity and political feminism in pursuit of its own ends, so the family planning field attempts to de-politicise and re-deploy culture in its efforts to spread contraceptives. Thus: ‘culture is seen as communication about contraception, while fertility decline is portrayed as a socio-technical process spreading contraceptive technology.’⁴⁵

It does not take a great leap of imagination to see that the population establishment could be tempted to try to effect a similar kind of absorption and redeployment with fundamentalism (or with human rights, for that matter). Although fundamentalists are intensely concerned with the control of women, this does not necessarily mean that all fundamentalists are inherently opposed to contraception. Indeed, the experience of Iran shows that fundamentalists, particularly when in power, will continue to be pragmatic. There, the government used the tools of scriptural interpretation, to accomplish a 180-degree reversal from a pro-natalist to an anti-natalist policy. While this may open the space for women activists,²² this does not thereby change the discourse to put the interests, feelings, and needs of women themselves over the requirements deemed to flow from scripture. In turn, if the ultimate goal of the population establishment is really the spread of contraceptives, for which the Cairo consensus is currently a convenient strategy, then an alliance with particular fundamentalist forces, even at the expense of the woman at the heart of the Cairo consensus, does not seem out of the question.

But fundamentalism is not just an analytical construct. It is a potent political force with a clear political vision and specific political goals. Such a force is not likely to be absorbed, de-politicised

and redeployed to increase the empowerment of women, though it might be useful in promoting 'acceptance' of contraceptives. Thus, for example, efforts to make information, education, and communication programmes more effective by working through whichever religious authorities hold power, just like efforts to increase primary education by working through whatever religious schools exist no matter what their political bent, is a potentially problematic strategy. An approach to reproductive health premised on the empowerment of women will not be effected through institutions dedicated to keeping women under control.

The same is true at a discursive level. When fundamentalists succeed at turning the public debate about reproductive health into a debate about cultural imperialism – claiming, for example, that items in the ICPD document 'offend our religious feelings, our culture and above all our civilisation'⁴⁶ – then the understandable desire to respect and not to offend kicks in. But respect for a culture cannot mean uncritical deference to the fundamentalist version of it, thereby denying respect for the basic dignity and aspirations of many of those who see themselves as part of that culture. In parsing out the discursive strategies at work here, it is vital to recognise that for the fundamentalists who opposed the ICPD Programme, it was not fertility regulation itself that was threatening and thus offensive, rather it was the challenge to 'traditional' patriarchal social structures posed by the Programme's commitment to women's empowerment that sparked such vehement protest. Yet precisely that notion of empowerment lies at the heart of what respect for others should mean for the reproductive health and rights movement. If we bargain away a commitment to women's empowerment, we bargain away the very respect that we are striving to realise and uphold.

By this discussion, I certainly, most emphatically, do not mean to imply that religion itself is irrelevant to the ways in which women think about and live out their lives – including the decisions they might make about childbearing or their ability or willingness to access contraceptive and other reproductive health services – and thus to their empowerment. But religion is not synonymous with religious authorities or with institutions or individuals who choose the

discourse of religion to legitimate or disguise their political ambitions. Indeed, the certain importance that religious belief and practice has for millions of women around the world is one of the most important challenges for the human rights and reproductive health movements today. At the very least, meeting that challenge will require women's health advocates to develop a self-consciousness about their own work, their presentation of it, and the political implications of both, in order to understand how it can be captured, redefined and deployed against them.

More importantly, the confrontation with fundamentalism should give renewed energy to the determination to develop a theory and practice that privileges the fully contextualised experiences of women themselves as the starting point. Thus, the commitment to putting women as subjects at the center of health programmes and policies – in short, the commitment to human rights – must include a willingness on the part of women's advocates to see the world from the woman's own perspective. This means recognising the important roles that religion, culture and ethnicity often play in women's life choices and constructions of identity. It also means acknowledging the very complex set of forces that the post-Cold War world has created for women in many countries.

There may be little choice about the call to engage with fundamentalism as the reproductive health and rights field develops. To quote Zillah Eisenstein: 'the body is a symbolised site because it is such a basic political resource.'³⁴ As such, women's bodies are the currency of all three movements: fundamentalism, population and feminism. At the level of international discourse, in conferences and internal policy discussions, each can, for a while, pursue its political programme, keeping the others at bay. But for the woman herself, there is only one body, one womb, one life. Ultimately the conflict will be resolved at that site – and only time will tell whose interests will finally determine the choices made.

Correspondence

Lynn P Freedman, Columbia School of Public Health, 60 Haven Avenue B-2, New York NY 10032, US. Fax: 1-212-305-7024.

References and Notes

1. Germain A and Kyte R, 1995. *The Cairo Consensus: The Right Agenda for the Right Time*. International Women's Health Coalition, New York.
2. Hodgson D and Watkins SC, 1996. Population controllers and feminists: strange bedmates at Cairo? Paper presented at annual meeting of Population Association of America, 9-11 May, New Orleans.
3. Ammerman NT, 1991. North American Protestant fundamentalism. *Fundamentalism Observed*. Marty ME and Appleby RS (eds). University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Bendroth ML, 1993. *Fundamentalism and Gender: 1875 to the Present*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
4. For a spirited condemnation of both the term and the concept generally, see Harris JM, 1994. 'Fundamentalism': objections from a modern Jewish historian. *Fundamentalism & Gender*. Hawley JS (ed). Oxford University Press, New York. For a review of the debate in the context of Islam specifically, see Al-Azm SJ, 1993 and 1994. Islamic fundamentalism reconsidered: a critical outline of problems, ideas and approaches. *South Asia Bulletin*. Part I:XII(1,2), Part II:XIV(1). For a discussion from the activist perspective, see *WAF Journal* 1(5), particularly Pieterse JN. Fundamentalism discourses: enemy images; and Sahgal G and Yuval-Davis N. The uses of fundamentalism.
5. Of course, the fact that the phenomenon may be real, does not itself justify the choice of the particular word 'fundamentalist.' While bordering dangerously on misnomer (because of the implication that something 'fundamental' is also 'authentic'), I would agree with Marty and Appleby (from whom the phrase 'family resemblances' is borrowed) that there is no perfect word available, that alternative suggestions have even more serious defects, and that in any event the term is already firmly entrenched in popular usage – in short, 'fundamentalism' is here to stay.' Marty and Appleby (eds), [3] above.
6. Perhaps the most comprehensive of these is *The Fundamentalism Project*, sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Marty and Appleby (eds), [3] above.
7. For example, proceedings of the workshop 'The political uses of religion, ethnicity and culture,' NGO Forum, ICPD, sponsored by Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Women Against Fundamentalism, and Catholics for a Free Choice. Portions in *WAF Journal* 7:13-15 and *Women's Health Journal* 1/96; Full transcripts on file with the author. Also Sahgal G and Yuval-Davis N (eds), 1992. *Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain*. Virago Press, London.
8. Eg. Ahmed SI, 1995. Blasphemy bill: revenging the war of liberation? *Sanglap: Attack on Fundamentals*. 4(Aug). Ain O Salish Kendra, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Reprinted in *Fatwas Against Women in Bangladesh*. 1996. Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Grabels, France.
9. See the essays in Marty ME and Appleby RS (eds), 1993. *Fundamentalism and Society: Reclaiming the Sciences, the Family, and Education*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
10. Huntington S, 1993. The clash of civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*. Summer.
11. McClintock A, 1996. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*. Routledge, New York; Ahmed L, 1992. *Women and Gender in Islam*. Yale University Press, New Haven. The instrumental use of women as the repository and protectors of culture and community identity did not end with the demise of formal colonialism, nor was it unique to the colonial situation. Today, women continue to be both targets and tools in the struggle. See Moghadam V (ed), 1994. *Identity Politics & Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*. Westview Press, Boulder CO.
12. Mani L, 1990. Contentious traditions: the debate on *sati* in colonial India. In Sangari K and Vaid S (eds). *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick NJ.
13. Sangari K and Vaid S (eds), 1990. (See [12] above). p.115.
14. Hawley JS, 1994. Hinduism: *sati* and its defenders. *Fundamentalism & Gender*. Hawley JS (ed). Oxford University Press, New York.
15. Strozier CB, 1994. Religious militancy or 'fundamentalism'. *Religion and Human Rights*. Kelsay J and Twiss SB (eds). Project on Religion and Human Rights, New York.
16. Ahmad M, 1991. Islamic fundamentalism in South Asia: the Jamat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat. In Marty and Appleby [3] above.
17. Quoted in Hitchcock J, 1993. Catholic activist conservatism in the United States. In Marty and Appleby [3] above.
18. On the relationship between the discourse of *Hindutva*, women, law and communal politics in India, see Kapur R and Cossman B, 1995. Communalising gender, engendering community: women, legal discourse, and the Saffron Agenda. Sarkar T and Butalia U (eds). *Women & Right-Wing Movements: Indian*

- Experiences*. Zed Books, New Jersey. On the critically important relationship between *Hindutva* and current legal and political discourse about secularism in India see Cossman B and Kapur R, 1996. Secularism: bench-marked by Hindu Right. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 21 Sept:2613-30.
19. Shaheed F, 1994. Controlled or autonomous: identity and the experience of Women Living Under Muslim Laws. *Signs*. 19(4):997-1019.
 20. For a description of this overall strategy, see Shaheed F, 1995. Networking for change: the role of women's groups in initiating dialogue on women's issues. *Faith & Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World*. Afkhami M (ed). Syracuse University Press, Syracuse NY. For a specific example of diversity in actual laws and practices, see *Chart of Customary Practices in Pakistan in Comparison with Statutory Law*. 1995; Women & Law Pakistan Country Project. Shirkat Gah, Lahore.
 21. Anderson MR, 1993. Islamic law and the colonial encounter in British India. Arnold D and Robb P (eds). *Institutions and Ideologies: A SOAS South Asia Reader*. Curzon Press, London. Reprinted by Women Living Under Muslim Laws as *Occasional Paper 7*, (1996), quoting the text of The Hastings Plan of 1772.
 22. Hoodfar H, 1994. Devices and desires: population policy and gender roles in the Islamic Republic. *Middle East Report*. Sept-Oct.
 23. Kamal S, 1995. Undermining women's rights. *Sanglap: Attack on Fundamentals*. 4(Aug). In [8] above; Fundamentalism and gender: a view from Bangladesh. *Communalism Combat*. 1996; April:5.
 24. An important issue beyond the scope of this paper is the extent to which women are attracted to and participate in fundamentalist movements, even when such movements adopt agendas which include explicit controls over their ability to make choices about key aspects of their lives.
 25. Conason J, Ross A and Cokorinos L, 1996. The Promise Keepers are coming: the third wave of the religious right. *Nation*. 7 October.
 26. See Sabbah F, 1984. *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious*. Pergamon Press, New York.
 27. Hawley JS, [14] above. Quoting *Bhagavad Gita* 1.41, as translated by Miller BS, 1986. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Columbia University Press, New York.
 28. Mernissi F, 1987. Femininity as subversion: reflections on the Muslim concept of nushuz. *Speaking of Faith: Global Perspectives on Women, Religion and Social Change*. Eck D and Jain D (eds). New Society Publishers, Philadelphia.
 29. Papanek H, 1994. The ideal woman and the ideal society: control and autonomy in the construction of identity. In Moghadam (ed), [11] above.
 30. Meznaric S, 1994. Gender as an ethno-marker: rape, war, and identity politics in the former Yugoslavia. In Moghadam (ed), [11] above; Women's Rights Project, 1995. *The Human Rights Watch Global Report on Women's Human Rights*. Human Rights Watch, New York.
 31. Kannabiran V and Kannabiran K, 1995. The frying pan or the fire? Endangered identities, gendered institutions and women's survival. In Sarkar and Butalia (eds), [18] above.
 32. Bennoune K, 1995. SOS Algeria: women's human rights under seige. In Afkhami (ed), [20] above.
 33. Maunaguru S, 1995. Gendering Tamil nationalism: the construction of 'woman' in projects of protest and control. *Unmaking the Nation: The Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka*. Jeganathan P and Ismail Q (eds). Social Scientists' Association, Colombo.
 34. Eisenstein Z, 1996. *Hatreds: Racialized and Sexualized Conflicts in the 21st Century*. Routledge, New York.
 35. Boston R, 1996. *The Most Dangerous Man in America? Pat Robertson and the Rise of the Christian Coalition*. Prometheus Books, Amherst NY.
 36. *Washington Post*, 23 August 1992. Hawley and Proudfoot note that 'fundamentalist rhetoric is often tinged with the suggestion that homosexuality is an inevitable consequence of modernism – a sign of the dishonor and downright emasculation that the collapse of traditional values visits on secular societies.' In Introduction, Hawley JS (ed). [4] above.
 37. The strand of US right-wing ideology that focuses on the 'racial purity' of white, Christian civilisation finds a comfortable home among 'Patriot' groups, such as those subscribing to the Phineas Priesthood, who justify murders and hate crimes with reference to a Biblical passage (*Numbers* 25:1-18) which they interpret as condoning murder to prevent racial mixing in violation of 'God's law'. Paul Hill, confessed murderer of a doctor at a US abortion clinic, was among those calling for such 'Phineas actions'. Terrorists in the name of God and race. *Klanwatch Intelligence Report*. 1996; 83(Aug).
 38. Amin S and Hossain S, 1995. Women's reproductive rights and the politics of fundamentalism: a view from Bangladesh. *American University Law Review*. 44(4):1319-43; see also [8] above.
 39. I am grateful to Mahnaz Afkhami, executive director, Sisterhood Is Global Institute, for articulating this aspect of fundamentalists' strategies and

- for several of the examples used here.
40. Religious human rights in the world today: a report on the 1994 Atlanta conference. *Emory International Law Review*. 10(1):53-193. An-Naim A, 1995. The dichotomy between religious and secular discourse in Islamic societies. In Afkhami M (ed), [20] above.
41. Copelon R and Petchesky R, 1995. Toward an interdependent approach to reproductive and sexual rights as human rights: reflections on the ICPD and beyond. Schuler M (ed). *From Basic Needs to Basic Rights*. Women, Law & Development International, Washington DC.
42. Freedman L, 1995. Reflections on emerging frameworks of health and human rights. *Health and Human Rights*. 1(4):314-48.
43. Mertus J in collaboration with Dutt M and Flowers N, 1995. *Our Human Rights: A Manual for Women's Human Rights*. Organising Committee, People's Decade for Human Rights Education, New York; Afkhami M and Vaziri H, 1996. *Claiming Our Rights: A Manual for Women's Human Rights in Muslim Societies*. Sisterhood Is Global Institute, Washington DC; Yamin AE, 1993. Empowering visions: toward a dialectical pedagogy of human rights. *Human Rights Quarterly*. 15:640-85.
44. Greenhalgh S, 1996. The social construction of population science: an intellectual, institutional, and political history of twentieth-century demography. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 38(1):26-66.
45. Greenhalgh goes on to critique 'diffusion theory', the rationale used in family planning work to justify the programmatic focus on spreading contraceptives, and draws this conclusion: "Through its silence about the structures that support diffusion and its implicit assumption that the place of origin is superior to the place of destination, the notion of diffusion in fact supports a political project, that of justifying efforts to spread modern contraceptives to benighted "traditional" people. Unintentional though it may be, demographic research serves the political goal of "making them more like us." ' In [44] above.
46. Razzaq A, 1994. Keynote paper, Seminar on the Cairo Conference on Population and Development: Human Rights and Moral Issues, Dhaka. Quoted in Amin and Hossain. [38] above.

Résumé

On a beaucoup écrit sur l'analyse du 'consensus du Caire' et son potentiel tant pour la rénovation des programmes concernant la population et la planification familiale, que pour la mise en forme de politiques sur la santé et le développement. L'article analyse comment et pourquoi les mouvements fondamentalistes utilisent les femmes et la loi - notamment les textes juridiques relatifs à la reproduction et à la sexualité - pour mener leurs projets politiques et s'assurer le contrôle de leurs sociétés et de leurs pays, en se fondant sur leurs propres concepts en matière de différence, confrontation, ennemis et tradition. Il suggère que si le 'consensus du Caire' ne tombe pas en raison de son propre poids, comme certains l'estiment probable, il pourrait être poussé par l'échec de l'établissement démographique et du mouvement pour les droits et la santé des femmes à affronter le défi du fondamentalisme par un examen honnête de leurs propres postulats et motivations, et un engagement renouvelé en faveur des principes des droits humains les plus fondamentaux, base même de ce consensus.

Resumen

Es mucho lo que se ha escrito para analizar el 'consenso del Cairo' y el potencial que ofrece para hacer una detallada revisión de los programas de control de población y planificación familiar, y para la creación de políticas de desarrollo. Pero es sorprendente la escasa atención que se les ha dado a las implicaciones del enfrentamiento con el fundamentalismo ocurrido en Cairo. Este ensayo analiza los procedimientos y razones tras la utilización de la mujer y de las leyes vinculadas a reproducción y sexualidad por parte de los movimientos fundamentalistas, con miras a proyectos políticos y a alcanzar el control de sus sociedades, basados en sus propios conceptos sobre diferencia, confrontación, enemigos y tradición. El estudio sugiere que si el 'consenso del Cairo' no fracasa por sus propias debilidades, terminará por hundirlo la incapacidad de la sociedad tradicional y del movimiento en pro de la salud y derechos de la mujer de enfrentar el reto del fundamentalismo por medio de un examen honesto de sus propias presunciones y motivaciones, y de un renovado compromiso con los principios de derechos humanos sobre los que se cimentó dicho consenso.