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Essay Report

In the essay "Empowering Women: Rebuilding Society: The Role of the Foreign Service in Promoting Women's Rights in Afghanistan," Eva Lam denotes what the US Foreign Service does in order to make sure that Afghan women are no longer oppressed because of their gender. Despite concerns of imperialism and unwanted interference in the religious culture of another, the initiatives that are being exercised by the Foreign Office do indeed promote women's rights in Afghanistan, and are ultimately the best thing to do.

The programs of the Foreign Office are comprehensive, helpful and pervasive in helping women exert power they were heretofore refused because of the culture in which they lived. By pointing out the gender inequality of Afghan culture, the various economic and cultural detriments are made clear, and steps have been taken to increase education for women, as well as granting them more political power and representation. This way, women's rights can be advocated for by the people who live there, and not just foreign dignitaries and military forces.

There are concerns that there are Muslim women who agree with their place in traditional Muslim culture, and for whom these changes may be intrusive in their own right. Some can argue about the fact that this is a foreign country, with their own sets of rules and norms, and it can seem arrogant and presumptuous to impose one society's beliefs over another's. With this sort of invasion of policy comes the threatened "Americanization" of the world, where we change everything to suit our own values.

The basic human rights issues that took place in Afghanistan under Taliban rule underline the need for foreign intervention, if only for the physical and emotional welfare issues regarding the oppressed Afghan women. Despite the concerns of imperialism, the fact that noncompliant Muslim women are given such terrible fates as death, mutilation and rape, it is the obligation of those who can take action to do so. In the case of the US Foreign Office, they are offering Muslim women the freedom to take action and free themselves from objectively oppressive rule and subjugation.

In conclusion, Lam's thesis that the Foreign Office helps Afghan women by providing them with the skills and education to make a life for themselves independently is correct. Arming women with the basic know-how to make it in their own country leaves them less in danger of being harmed in a physical way, and can free those who choose from the oppression of Taliban and traditional Muslim rule. However, it must be made clear that Muslim women who do choose to take a more traditional path are allowed to do so. To force them to do otherwise would be a gross invasion of their culture, and a means of merely spreading Western ideals to foreign countries. As it stands, the situation is to merely give those who would like an option to rise above their submissive station the chance to do so.