**[Supreme patriarchy](https://www.dawn.com/news/1697289/supreme-patriarchy)**

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THE dissenting opinion by three judges in last week’s landmark US Supreme Court [decision on abortion](https://www.dawn.com/news/1696482/us-supreme-court-overturns-landmark-ruling-on-abortion-rights) spelt it out rather succinctly: “After today, young women will come of age with fewer rights than their mothers and grandmothers had.”

This is neither the first time the court has stripped US citizens of their rights, nor will it be the last. Justice Clarence Thomas — whose wife, coincidentally or otherwise, has been implicated in the conspiracy to overturn the popular verdict in the 2020 presidential election — made it fairly explicit in his concurring judgement that related rights such as contraception and same-sex marriage could now also be rescinded.

That sense of mission wasn’t echoed in the majority opinion — but then, the three Trump appointees on the bench also dissembled during their confirmation hearings when asked about Roe vs Wade, the 1973 judgement that established the right to terminate unwanted or risky pregnancies.

Notwithstanding the outrage it has sparked, last week’s verdict did not come as a shock, given that it conforms pretty closely with the draft opinion by Justice Samuel Alito leaked last month. But perhaps the entire trend should hardly be a surprise.

Who’ll stop America’s relapse into the Dark Ages?

After all, at international “women’s health” conferences over the decades, the US has fairly consistently voted alongside some of the worst transgressors against the equality of the sexes, including Saudi Arabia and Iran. Furthermore, under some administrations it has withdrawn aid from organisations facilitating contraception in parts of the world where the rate of population growth poses a serious problem.

And besides, the Equal Rights Amendment passed by the US Senate 50 years ago wasn’t approved by enough states before the deadline for its ratification passed.

It remains in limbo, much like the United States itself. A majority of Americans of every significant faith agree that abortion on demand should be available in all or almost all circumstances. Evangelicals are the only segment of society where it’s the other way around. The American Taliban, as they are sometimes described, believe in a God-given right to prescribe what women can do with their bodies.

There is a monumental irony in the fact that women’s rights were paraded as one of the excuses for [invading Afghanistan](https://www.dawn.com/news/1640977). One would like to know where were the ‘pro-life’ activists when children were being killed by American artillery in Afghanistan, Iraq or Yemen — or, for that matter, being bayonetted in Vietnam half a century ago by ‘our boys”?

At a Trump rally in Illinois on the weekend, congresswoman Mary Miller applauded the supreme court verdict as a “historic victory for white life”. Her campaign claimed she meant to say “right to life”. But it wasn’t necessarily a Freudian slip. Just last year she declared, “Hitler was right on one thing. He said, ‘Whoever has the youth has the future’.” Yes, many people remember the Hitler Youth. Donald Trump himself, appropriately taking credit for the supreme court verdict — after all, he appointed the three judges who made it a slam dunk — hailed Miller at the rally as a “warrior for our movement and our values”.

**Read:** [*Unsafe abortions*](https://www.dawn.com/news/1688935)

A lot more of her ilk could end up in the House of Representatives in November. There is no clear evidence so far that the national pro-abortion majority can pre-empt a Republican majority in the House, or prevent the Democrats from losing their fairly pointless parity in the Senate.

That, in turn, suggests Senator Elizabeth Warren and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are pretty much whistling in the wind when they bring up the worthy ideas of enhancing the supreme court bench or impeaching the unworthy errant justices.

It may not be impossible to halt America’s regressive trajectory towards the kind of misogynist dystopia envisaged in Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale, but there is little evidence so far of the kind of popular mobilisation and the federal and state legal and legislative efforts that would be required to stave off the extremist onslaught.

More alarmingly accurate, perhaps, is the scenario sketched out by former PEN America president Francine Prose, who worries about how great the shock would be “to wake up one morning and find that while we were driving the kids to soccer practice and enjoying that welcoming after-work cocktail, more and more of our rights had been stripped away … The overturning of Roe v Wade should shock us … into looking beyond the dance floor of the Titanic and spotting that iceberg, looming in our path, not so very far away.”

The analogy isn’t all that far-fetched. President Joe Biden seems keen to “save Ukraine” by [gifting it the firepower](https://www.dawn.com/news/1686210) to prolong the war, but on the home front he is frequently missing in action as the retrograde Putinesque elements gather force, presaging unpleasant consequences on a global scale.

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