

The ‘Duel’ Meaning of Feminisation in IR: The Rise of Women and the Interior Logics of Declinist Literature

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Abstract:

‘Feminisation’ in International Relations refers to multiple, and sometimes contradictory, concepts. Much of the time it refers to the incorporation of women into various organisations and institutions, such as women’s participation in militaries or in politics. The decline of violence, or declinist, literature lists it as one of the contributing factors in the decline of violence and associates feminisation with women’s social, political, and economic empowerment. Feminist theory in IR, however, conceptualises ‘feminisation’ in a different light. As the feminine is often devalued or deprioritised for the preferred masculine, feminisation is synonymous with devalourisation.¹ Therefore, this paper will play with the dual meaning of feminisation, offering a cautionary tale for the dependency on women’s empowerment in the declinist literature by asserting that it is hampered by masculinist thinking. It will do so by challenging the equation of women with gender in the declinist literature. Gender equality and/or progress cannot simply be limited to raising women’s status, which implicates an understanding of gender as a binary categorisation of men/masculinity or women/femininity. Instead, gender is a spectrum that understands the multitude of gender identities, going beyond heteronormativity to lesbian, bi-, gay, trans, queer, and intersex (LBGTQI). Limiting gender to women means violences against other communities, particularly sexual minorities, is unrecognised and unaccounted for.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender, Post-colonialism,

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¹ V. Spike Peterson, ‘Feminist Theories Within, Invisible to, and Beyond IR’, *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 10 (2003).

however, conceptualises ‘feminisation’ in a different light. As the feminine is often devalued or deprioritised for the preferred masculine, feminisation is synonymous with devalourisation.² Therefore, this paper will play with the dual meaning of feminisation, offering a cautionary tale for the dependency on women’s empowerment in the declinist literature by asserting that it is hampered by masculinist thinking. It will do so by challenging the equation of women with gender in the declinist literature. Gender equality and/or progress cannot simply be limited to raising women’s status, which implicates an understanding of gender as a binary categorisation of men/masculinity or women/femininity. Instead, gender is a spectrum that understands the multitude of gender identities, going beyond heteronormativity to lesbian, bi-, gay, trans, queer, and intersex (LBGTQI). Limiting gender to women means violences against other communities, particularly sexual minorities, is unrecognised and unaccounted for.

The decline of violence literature is most closely associated with Steven Pinker³, Joshua Goldstein⁴, and Nils Petter Gleditsch’s⁵ scholarship. Together this scholarship challenges one of the fundamental assumptions of post-Cold War IR: that civilian death in war now outnumbers combatant death eight-to-one.⁶ Arguing that this was a

² V. Spike Peterson, ‘Feminist Theories Within, Invisible to, and Beyond IR’, *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 10 (2003).

³ Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and Its Causes* (London: Penguin, 2011)

⁴ Joshua S. Goldstein, *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (London: Penguin, 2011).

⁵ Bethany Lacina and Nils Petter Gleditsch, ‘Monitoring Trends in Global Combat: A New Dataset of Battle Deaths’, *European Journal of Population*, 21/2-3 (2005): pp. 145-166; Nils Petter Gleditsch, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Håvard Strand, ‘Armed Conflict 1946-2001: A New Dataset’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 39/5 (2002): pp. 615-637.

⁶ Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era* (London: Polity, 1999).

miscalculation, the declinist literature gives scholars of war hope that something is forcing a shift in war-making and fighting. While there are multiple, inter-connected proposed reasons for this, one such rationale is the aforementioned ‘feminisation’. This argument coheres with the women=peace thesis, one that Francis Fukuyama (somewhat, as it never really went away) revived and championed in a controversial 1998 *Foreign Affairs* article.⁷ It is a proposition that has had traction in recent research, including the work of Valerie Hudson in which she argues that women’s security is correlated to regional security.⁸ Others argue that women’s economic empowerment is also an indicator of both societal security and economic development.⁹

The declinist argument and the associated literature are right to identify women's empowerment/feminisation as a contributing force. However, they are reliant upon Western masculinist presuppositions, which work to reify a Western-centric notion of security, empowerment, and development that erases gender structures/constructions and intersectional politics. The feminisation argument is reliant upon legal and bureaucratic changes to stand for actual socio-structural changes—in effect forcing gender equality from the top-down and not encouraging or accounting for dispositional changes about the lived realities of gender hierarchies. This means that the declinist feminisation argument is possibly headed for failure as it unwittingly props up the current gender hierarchy without effecting lasting change. In other words, because ‘woman/women’ is being made to stand for ‘gender’, when other

⁷ Francis Fukuyama, ‘Women and the Evolution of World Politics’, *Foreign Affairs*, 77/5 (1998).

⁸ Valerie M. Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli, Chad F. Emmett, *Sex and World Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

⁹ Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).

gendered violences are (finally) recognised (like homophobic or transphobic attacks) and affect peace measurements, does this mean ‘feminisation’ will be seen to have failed? Declinist literature is already critiqued for failing to integrate violences that fall outside of the confines of its methodology, including sexual and gender-based violence¹⁰ and structural violence.¹¹ Changing the declinist conceptualisation of feminisation by taking a more holistic account of empowerment, inclusive of non-binary gender identities and diverse sexualities, would be more productive.

Therefore, this paper will focus on the vulnerability of the LBGTQI community not just globally but more specifically in the United States. While the International Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Agency (ILGA) highlights the spectrum of LBGTQI rights secured (or not) worldwide, this fails to acknowledge the high-levels of violence against this community. Legal rights, such as marriage equality, do not equate to personal and social security. Indeed, the conventional wisdom holds that as rights are secured for marginalized and vulnerable communities violent backlashes are probable.¹² For example, whereas the United States has technically granted this community the highest level of rights—marriage—violence towards the community happens across the country and has been steadily increasing, particularly against transgender people of colour.

¹⁰ Jacqui True, ‘Winning the Battle but Losing the War on Violence’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 17/4 (2015): pp. 554-572.

¹¹ John Gray, ‘Steven Pinker is Wrong About Violence and War’, *The Guardian*, 13 March 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/13/john-gray-steven-pinker-wrong-violence-war-declining> accessed 16 September 2015.

¹² Lucas Grindley, ‘We Saw the Backlash Coming, But Have You Really Notice All of It?’, *The Advocate*, 1 April 2016, <http://www.advocate.com/commentary/2016/4/01/we-saw-backlash-coming-have-you-really-noticed-all-it> accessed 17 May 2016.

This paper will explore the ‘duel’ meaning by bringing the two literatures on feminisation together through the juxtaposition of the post-colonial writings on modernity, particularly by Dipesh Chakrabarty.¹³ In his article and subsequent book, *Provincialising Europe*, Chakrabarty first argues that European/Western societies and governments are the model to which all other states are held in comparison. Furthermore, he explores how women in colonised societies are held as the bellwether for progress and modernisation. In order to demonstrate the applicability of a post-colonial perspective, the paper first examines the declinist literature on feminisation is tied to neo-liberal Western expectations. After a deeper exploration of how women are often used as social standard bearers in modern Western thinking. The paper then looks at the feminist literature on ‘feminisation’. It concludes that while it is helpful that the declinist literature emphasises women’s rights and empowerment it does so by problematically conflating women with gender and then saying that the rise of women indicates gender progress when gender progress is so much more than this. This is evidenced through the endemic violence against the LGBTQI community not just worldwide but in the United States.

Gendered Peace, Feminisation, and the Decline of Violence

The women=peace thesis is dependent upon the gender binary, stemming from the Greek patriarchy, that men are more independent, rational, and assertive and women

¹³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘Provincialising Europe: Postcoloniality and the Critique of History’, *Cultural Studies*, 6/3 (1992); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2000).

are inherently more nurturing, emotional, and passive.¹⁴ This of course helped to create and maintain the division of the public/private spheres, where men are associated with government, war, and business and women home-making and child-rearing.¹⁵ Jean Bethke Elshtain looks at how the gender binary operates in war through the Hegelian conceptualisation of men as ‘Just Warriors’ and women as the ‘Beautiful Souls’ that the Just Warriors fight to protect.¹⁶ This has further implications for how citizenship is conceived: a good citizen is one who is able to die defending the state. If women are left out of this war-citizen matrix, women are unable to be good citizens.¹⁷ Thus, women’s association with the ‘Beautiful Soul’ narrative is circular: women’s supposedly essentialist peaceful dispositions barred them from the military and hence full entry into material or epistemological understandings of citizenship thereby reinforcing their place in the private sphere.

Instead of offering an alternative way of seeing gendered bodies, Elshtain’s overarching argument in *Women and War* (1987) holds that these differences between women and men’s role within society should be implicated equally in the value of their citizenship. Therefore, rather unfortunately, Elshtain continues to reify the binary between bodies gendered only as men and women, failing to take into account the different range of experiences different bodies/individuals, from cis-gender to queer, have as well as fully engaging and dismantling the gender hierarchical structure. While her work examined in this section are more than likely *not*

¹⁴ Peter Beckman and Francine D’Amico, *Women, Gender, and World Politics* (Westport: Greenwood, 1994): p. 3.

¹⁵ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

¹⁶ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1987).

¹⁷ Elshtain, *Women and War*.

biologically essentialist, unfortunate echoes linger. Masculine or feminine characteristics that feminists and poststructuralists would see as socially constructed, such as women are innately peaceful and men are innately prone to violence, are taken as a given in biological essentialism.

Elshtain's argument sustains the women=peace thesis. It is a sentiment that Francis Fukuyama picked up on in a 1998 *Foreign Affairs* article. He finds that there are sociobiological reasons behind women's inherent peacefulness, which are independent of gender structures, and that

[a] world run by women would follow different rules...and it is toward that sort of world that all postindustrial or Western societies are moving. As women gain power in these countries, the latter should become less aggressive, adventurous, competitive, and violent.¹⁸

He terms this 'rise' the 'feminisation' of world politics: 'women have won the right to vote and participate in politics in all developed countries, as well as in many developing countries, and have exercised that right with incredible energy'.¹⁹ These empowered women are less supportive of wars, defence spending, and the use of force abroad (in the US at least).²⁰ While Fukuyama is less positive about men's ability to be peaceable, he believes 'democracy and modern capitalism...ope[n] up many more peaceful channels for satisfying' a desire for hierarchy.²¹ Thus, feminisation in declinist literature is tied with Western ideas about modernisation, economic (capitalist) progress, and good democratic governance. Before

¹⁸ Fukuyama, 'Women', p. 27.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 34.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 34

²¹ *ibid.*, 40

demonstrating in the next section how such gender essentialisation reifies problematic gender hierarchies, I wish to clarify how the women=peace thesis continues to influence approaches to international politics and development.

Feminisation in Declinist Literature

This section serves as an overview of ‘feminisation’ in the declinist literature. Most of the authors covered in this section argue that empowering women through voting rights, the provision of physical security, and economic inclusion will enable societies and states to progress and stabilise.²² These are all encapsulated within policies like the Hillary Doctrine, UNSCR 1325, and development projects. Together, the declinist literature makes feminisation dependent upon a neo-liberal perspective because women’s empowerment and individual security is seen as being achieved through democratic participation and capitalist economic empowerment. These are all achievements to be lauded, yet, these presume that political and economic liberalisation is the best means of achieving peace,²³ which then leads to an erasure of certain types of violence. This erasure is made deeper when gender is conflated with women, which means gender violence, like cis-gender idealisations that drive homophobic attacks, is unseen in the realm of declinist feminisation.

Feminisation is as much about legal rights as it is about economic ones. For instance, Steve Pinker attributes feminisation to four processes, including political

²² Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*; Hudson et al., *Sex and World Peace*; Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*.

²³ Such thinking has already been problematised by the ‘liberal peace critique’ proffered by Oliver Richmond and Roger Mac Ginty. (Oliver Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace* [London: Routledge, 2012]; Roger Mac Ginty, ‘Indigenous Peace-Making Versus the Liberal Peace’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 43/2 [2008]: 139-163).

empowerment, the declining emphasis on male honour, women's increased ability to make their own marital choices, and women's reproductive rights.²⁴ Women's economic empowerment has become a common phrase and motivation in development circles. Women's lack of education and absence from the labour market is detrimental not just to women's own social standing but it also holds the state economy back.²⁵ Thus, the international development community has placed a greater emphasis on helping women enter the labour market, believing such changes lead to women's empowerment.²⁶

Empowerment and the rights of women is reflected in how much women can expect to have their bodily person and integrity respected by the law, arguably leading to decline in violence against women.²⁷ Economic empowerment limits the effects of 'everyday violences,' or the often overlooked violences against women that include rape, sex slavery, genital mutilation, and that these work in tandem to eradicate global poverty.²⁸ Other scholars connect women's activism, which may come in a context, or not, of political and social rights, to the creation of security. Making a similar argument to Fukuyama's, in *Winning the War on War* Goldstein pays particular attention to the role women play in peace-making and conflict resolution. He traces out how women's peace activism has shaped world affairs with a focus on the UN's 1995 Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing and in the subsequent UN's Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 (which will be discussed in more depth shortly).²⁹

²⁴ Pinker, *Better Angels*, 684-689; see also True, 'Winning the Battle'.

²⁵ Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, p. xv.

²⁶ Andrea Cornwall, Jasmine Gideon, and Kalpana Wilson, 'Introduction: Reclaiming Feminism: Gender and Neoliberalism', *IDS Bulletin*, 39/6 (2008): p. 4.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, pp. xv, xxi, xxiv.

²⁹ Goldstein, *Winning the War*, p. 197.

More specific to the declinist argument is the work that links women's status with regional security concerns. Societies with a male 'surplus,' which is owed to social preference for male children leading to female foeticide and infanticide, higher childhood mortality rates in girls, and the abandonment of girls, are more secure societies.³⁰ The 'surplus' population of men will lead to social instability because:

men who are not provided the opportunity to develop a vested interest in a system of law and order will gravitate toward a system based on physical force, in which they hold an advantage over other members of society.³¹

Hudson and Den Boer conclude that this particular population 'are already at risk for establishing a system based on physical force in order to obtain by force what they cannot obtain legitimately'.³² The authors relies the classic binary: if women are both peaceable and pacifying, then without women men are brutish and nasty. Without marriage, this population of men 'may not transition from potential threats to potential protectors of society'.³³ Thus, gender imbalance must be taken seriously by government and regional actors.

This argument is taken further by Hudson et al. in later work that correlates women's insecurity, due to interpersonal violences, with state and regional instability. They argue that 'societies that are more gender-equal are less likely to go to war, to use

³⁰ Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea M. Den Boer, *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea M. Den Boer, 'A Surplus of Men, A Deficit of Peace: Security and Sex Ratios in Asia's Largest States', *International Security*, 26/4 (2002): pp. 10-11.

³¹ Hudson and Den Boer, 'A Surplus of Men', pp. 21-22.

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

force during conflicts, or to be involved in violent international crises'.³⁴ Gender inequality is owed simply to the 'subordination' of women to men in economic, physical, and social instances.³⁵ The creation of gender equal societies is both a top-down process encompassing family law, quotas, and including women in law-making practices³⁶ and a bottom-up process of changing gendered norms and attitudes within society.³⁷

Bringing women into security and economic equations are reflected in the policy realm as well. The Hillary Doctrine was defined during Hillary Clinton's tenure as Secretary of State under President Obama and it is assumed it will feature in her possible presidency.³⁸ The Hillary Doctrine places both economic and physical security at the centre of foreign policy. It originated in a 2010 TEDWomen's conference talk in which then-Secretary Clinton argued:

Let women work and they drive economic growth across all sectors. ... Give women equal rights and entire nations are more stable and secure. Deny women equal rights and the instability of nations is almost certain.³⁹

The Hillary Doctrine fully encapsulates declinist feminisation: women's economic development provides women with a social standing in their community that enables

³⁴ Hudson et al., *Sex and World Peace*, pp. 3-4.

³⁵ *ibid.*, chapter 1.

³⁶ *ibid.*, chapter 5.

³⁷ *ibid.*, chapter 6.

³⁸ Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, 'The Hillary Doctrine', *Newsweek*, 6 March 2011, <http://www.newsweek.com/hillary-doctrine-66105>, accessed 24 February 2016.

³⁹ CNN, 'Hillary Clinton: Empower Girls and Women', <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/OPINION/12/12/clinton.empower.girls/> accessed 24 February 2016.

individual and communal security which is then correlated to regional and (possible) international security.

Perhaps the most prominent place that one can see the feminisation argument in global politics today is in UNSCR 1325. It is considered a landmark document that works to secure women's places

in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.⁴⁰

However much lauded UNSCR 1325 was, it has also been the recipient of feminist criticism that is relevant to my later argument. In short, the critique is that UNSCR 1325 is beholden to a biological essentialist lens, where 'gender has been interpreted as woman, and women remain differentiated from men'.⁴¹ In a conflict framework this means women are identified solely as 'victims in need of protection' and men 'as protectors and policymakers',⁴² and arguably, adversaries.

This literature assumes the gender binary of man/masculinity or woman/femininity and often assumes gender is a variable that can be weighed. Yet, there is another way of looking at gender, which is to see it as a structuring force, like race or class, and as

⁴⁰ United Nations, 'Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security', <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>, accessed 24 February 2016.

⁴¹ Susan Willett, 'Introduction: Security Council Resolution 1325: Assessing the Impact on Women, Peace, and Security', *International Peacekeeping*, 17/2 (2010), p. 143.

⁴² *ibid.*

something that makes assumptions not just about people but about places and ideologies. These assumptions then structure people, society, and international politics.⁴³ The neo-liberal paradigm of declinist literature rests upon modern Western propositions about what good governance and economic practices are and these are masculinist and assume heteronormativity (as discussed later).

By presuming a gender binary and in reifying a gender hierarchy, things that fall outside of the binary and are thereby devalued in the hierarchy go unseen in the declinist literature. Again, gender is not a binary but a spectrum. When gender is conflated with women, the spectrum is unrecognised. In this focused attention on women, violences and biases that are owed to gender politics, like those against the LBGTQI community, go unaddressed. Such a conflation fails to see violence against this community is driven by heteronormative gender idealisations that harm this community in a multitude of ways. Before fully engaging in the feminist critique, it is also necessary to work through how women have been used as the ‘standard bearers’ for progress, modernity, and perceptions of civilisation and how this erodes once we go beyond the man/masculine and woman/feminine binary.

Holding the Light

In Greek mythology, Medea is a powerful sorceress seduced by Jason to enable his quest for the Golden Fleece. Different accounts deal with her actions during her relationship with Jason, which included Medea murdering her brother in order to overthrow or weaken their demigod father, King Aietes, and her two sons when Jason

⁴³ Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

left her for another woman.⁴⁴ Medea's story is complicated and thus Medea is a complicated 'heroine.' Her femininity is constantly called into question as her use of magic and possible position of power refuses to be hemmed in by the classic (stereotypical) behaviour of a passive yet supportive wife and nurturing mother.⁴⁵ Even though Jason, the archetypal (patriarchal) hero, needed Medea's (unfeminine) power for his success, he was also put off by her strength. It is no surprise then that upon discovering his infidelity she declares incredulously, 'I made you victor/ I held the light that saved you'.⁴⁶

Why do I bring up Medea and Jason here? Feminisation 'holds the light' of the declinist argument. While I do not dispute the use of statistical analysis to demonstrate the decline of violence thesis, I do query the interior logistics of how the argument works, or in this case, potentially does not. Currently, the declinist literature cannot account for two distinct possibilities that will undo feminisation. The first, and one that I will not spend time on in this paper, is that women are not necessarily more peaceful. Female heads of state can be just as aggressive, one only has to think of Margaret Thatcher or Golda Meir. Women participate in genocide, torture, and terrorism.⁴⁷ Second, gender cannot be hemmed in by conflating it with 'women'.⁴⁸ Such a conflation will be the ultimate downfall of 'feminisation'. The better solution is to be more inclusive of all identities, particularly those on the

⁴⁴ Emma Griffiths, *Medea* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2006): pp. 7-8.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁶ as quoted in Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (New York: Little, Brown, 1969 [1940]): p. 128.

⁴⁷ Caron E. Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Thinking About Women's Violence in Global Politics* (London: Zed, 2015).

⁴⁸ Terrell Carver, *Gender is not a Synonym for Women* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996).

margins and the ones that lay outside of the gender binary of heterosexual idealisations.

The critique I wish to raise here is that resting an argument on women's status is not new and not without power dynamics. The focus upon women's empowerment is embedded in a larger dependency on Western masculinist thinking that de-prioritises the concerns of those on the margin. While the focus on women should be welcomed, the focus on *gender* only works if the epistemological, if not ontological, arrangements of Western conceptions of society and governance remain unquestioned. In other words, they only work if the heteronormative gender hierarchies remain in place. The current gendered configuration is harmful as will be shown in the criticisms of UNSCR 1325 and development goals. Other feminists have already critiqued Fukuyama's argument presented above and declinist literature for failing to understand how gender structures impact the performativity of gendered behaviours.⁴⁹ The section below utilises a post-colonial and gender lens to view declinist 'feminisation' from a different perspective. It demonstrates that women and their position in a society have always served as the 'light that saves' particular socio-political theses, from colonialism to the decline of violence. Because of this, women's rights, bodies, and lives become tools for the success of the project instead of ends in their own right. Additionally, this 'end' means examining other forms of gender violence is no longer necessary.

Civilisation, Progress, and Decline of Violence

⁴⁹ J. Ann Tickner, 'Why Women Can't Rule the World: International Politics According to Francis Fukuyama', *International Studies Review*, 1/3 (1999); True, 'Winning the Battle'.

The declinist literature is based on the assumption that ‘progress’ looks like specific notions of a desirable, good government and society, similar to Francis Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’ argument. The premise of Fukuyama’s thesis held that the liberal democratic West had won the Cold War and liberal democracy ‘remain[ed] the only coherent political aspiration that spans different regions and cultures around the globe’.⁵⁰

The idea of civilisational progress and its Western reliance upon democratic and capitalist participation is inherent within declinism. The intolerance towards violence and violent solutions is owed to ‘civilisation, modernity, and Western society’.⁵¹ ‘Peaceable societies’ are ‘richer, healthier, better educated, better governed, more respectful of their women, and more likely to engage in trade’.⁵² Thus, there is a presumption within the declinist literature that the best way to achieve non-violence or more peace is via a particular form of government and economic organisation, one that is more specifically Western and holds very Western norms about what public life is meant to look like.

Therefore, the rationale behind the declinist literature rests within a Eurocentric framework. ‘End of history’, modernisation, economic progress, and (democratic) rights reside within Western understandings of how governments and economics are meant to be organised. These may be the most statistically advantageous ways to arrange human life; nevertheless, the problem that arises is one where all other state

⁵⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992): p. xiii.

⁵¹ Pinker, *Better Angels*, p. xx.

⁵² *ibid.*, pp. xxi-xxii.

actors are compared to and are held in comparison with ‘Europe/The West’ and the seeming perfection contained therein. Whereas I have critiqued the presumption within this literature that the West is nearly flawless, particularly in the advancement of women’s security, in a previous publication,⁵³ the argument in this paper asserts it is problematic to hold women as the ‘proof’ of a state’s progress. Women are the ones that hold the light.

‘Europe’ operates as both a ‘master narrative’ and a ‘silent referent’.⁵⁴ While there is not a singular understanding of ‘Europe’ nor one that holds up under academic scrutiny, there is nonetheless a concept ‘reified and celebrated in the phenomenal world of everyday relationships of power as the scene of the birth of the modern’.⁵⁵ When ‘philosophers and thinkers who shape the nature of social science’ attempt to produce ‘theories that embrace the entirety of humanity’ they are ‘produced in relative, and sometimes absolute, ignorance of the majority of humankind—that is, those living in non-Western cultures’.⁵⁶ Europe is the theoretical premise upon which all studies are based and thus ‘all other histories are matter of empirical research that fleshes out a theoretical skeleton that is substantially “Europe”’.⁵⁷ Another way of positing this argument is to recognise that if a singular ‘Europe’ cannot be said to exist outside of theoretical discussions of it, this ‘Europe’ borrows its ontological weight and significance of what it is not. Chakrabarty argues that in the words of various European philosophers, Europe is not what is identified by Husserl’s descriptions of the ‘mythical-religious’ ‘oriental philosophies’; similarly, it is not the

⁵³ Caron E. Gentry, ‘Epistemological Failures: Everyday Terrorism in the West’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 8/3 (2015): pp. 362-382.

⁵⁴ Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe*, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 29.

‘prebourgeois’ or ‘precapital’ economies articulated by Marx. Instead, in opposition to what exists outside of Europe, European philosophies enable scientific (rational) investigations and liberal economic progress.⁵⁸

Modernity and the modern stem from ‘ideas ...[that] emerg[ed] out of the processes of economic and political revolution located in Europe’.⁵⁹ Modernity is a binary discourse that was utilized by European colonisers to set themselves up as progressive and ‘non-Europeans as... “static” [and] “prehistorical”’.⁶⁰ Therefore there is a ‘tendency’ of reading non-Western histories ‘in terms of a lack, an absence, or an incompleteness that translates into “inadequacy”’.⁶¹ There are multiple forms of modernity that exist outside of Europe and within it as well. As it is well known, colonialism and neo-imperialism were about exporting Western values, ideas, and epistemologies.⁶² When deliberating the non-West the modern is seen ‘as a *known* history, something which has *already happened elsewhere*, and which is to be reproduced, mechanically or otherwise, within a local content’ (emphasis true to text).⁶³ Progress and/or modernisation are dependent upon what is assumed to already have happened in the European (and Western context): empowering capitalism that

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁹ Gurinder K. Bhamba, ‘Historical Sociology, Modernity, and Postcolonial Critique’, *The American Historical Review* 116(3) (2011): 653-662, p. 653.

⁶⁰ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 161.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 32.

⁶² Colonialism was not simply a movement extending from the West to the non-West but a more complex process that involved hegemonising the non-West as well as hegemonising perceived outsiders that existed in the West. (Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* [London: Routledge, 1995]).

⁶³ Meaghan Morris, ‘Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower’, *New Formations*, 11 (1990) as cited in Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe*, p. 39.

works in tandem with full civil/human rights in functioning democracies. Or in the presumption that the women/gender question is settled in the West.

From this perspective, the West comes sweeping in with its need to ‘protect its little brown brothers’ or convert ‘heathens’ to Christianity or teach ‘dirty’ people basic hygiene.⁶⁴ Makau Mutua identifies the Western actor as constructing itself as a saviour and the non-West as either a victim or a savage.⁶⁵ Savages and victims’ agencies are both curtailed. Savages ‘are presented as so cruel and unimaginable as to represent their state as a negation of humanity’⁶⁶ whereas the victim is a ‘human being whose dignity and worth have been violated by the savage’.⁶⁷ Finally, the saviour is truly the ‘better angel’:

the saviour or the redeemer, the good angel who protects, vindicates, civilises, restrains, and safeguards. The saviour is the victim’s bulwark against tyranny. The simple, yet complex promise of the saviour is freedom: freedom from the tyrannies of the state, tradition, and culture. But it is also the freedom to create a better society based on particular values.⁶⁸

Furthermore, ‘the saviour is the human rights corpus itself, with the United Nations, Western governments, INGOs, and Western charities as the actual rescuers, redeemers of a benighted world’ and ‘savage cultures and peoples’ exist outside of ‘regime of political democracy’.⁶⁹ In many ways then, the assumption of the necessity of feminisation to the decline of violence thesis operates unwittingly within

⁶⁴ See McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

⁶⁵ Makau W. Mutua, ‘Savages, Victims, and Saviours: The Metaphor of Human Rights’, *Harvard International Law Journal*, 42/1 (2001): pp. 201-245.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 202.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 203.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 204.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

a Eurocentric paradigm where the European model of society and government is the model that can fix those in the non-West.

Holding the Light in the Decline of Violence

This Euro- or Western-centric paradigm is deeply gendered. Guyatari Spivak's renown phrase is apt: 'white men saving brown women from brown men'.⁷⁰ When Western colonial and neo-colonial interventions are made on the 'behalf' of women, those women become the standard bearers for modernity and progress. The question of women's empowerment in nineteenth-century India was a significant concern to its European colonisers, who believed that women's rights stood as exemplars for the progression of the 'modern individual, freedom, equality, and rights'.⁷¹ Women's education and their living conditions became increasingly emphasised, seeing these as necessary for India's progression into 'modernity'.⁷² Yet this is clearly hypocritical and lacking critical self-awareness as 'the women question' was far from settled in the colonising states (and remains unsettled).

Through the lens of post-colonialism, declinism's claim that it is Western civilisational progress, with an emphasis on political organisation, political rights, and economic empowerment, looks all too familiar. When Chakrabarty's critique is applied to declinist literature, feminisation becomes all the more suspect. Women's

⁷⁰ Guyatari C. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988): p. 93.

⁷¹ Chakrabarty, 'Provincialising Europe', p. 343.

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 344.

positions in society, not women themselves, are manipulated to hold the light that saves a deeply Western discourse.

When gender is conflated with women the prioritisation of this conflation is done in a way that may fail women and all other marginalised populations. The conflation erases nuance and intersectionality, where race, gender, class, sexuality, and so forth, all may interact to hold a person back.⁷³ ‘Feminisation’ in practice, in policies like UNSCR 1325 or gender mainstreaming and inclusion in development work, is not without its challenges. The earlier criticism of UNSCR 1325 argued that instead of 1325 becoming a way of reworking UN (gendered) hierarchies and gendered practices, it simply became a way of re-inscribing them.⁷⁴ Similarly, Carol Cohn, a feminist anti-militarist activist and scholar who runs 1325 training and workshops, has herself admitted she ‘fear[s] 1325’s focus on ‘Women-as-peacemakers’ and that it ‘leaves the dominant political and epistemological frameworks [of the UN] untouched’.⁷⁵

Women have become the face of development policies; the push to include women in development policies is referred to as ‘gender equality equals smart economics’.⁷⁶

This push is dependent upon the notion that since women represent 50 percent of the

⁷³ Combahee River Collective, ‘A Black Feminist Statement’, <https://we.riseup.net/assets/43875/combahee%20river.pdf> accessed 29 February 2016.

⁷⁴ Willett, ‘Introduction’.

⁷⁵ Carol Cohn, ‘Mainstreaming Gender in UN Security Policy: A Path to Political Transformation’, *The Boston Consortium of Gender, Security and Human Rights*, working paper 204 (2004): p. 18.

⁷⁶ Sydney Calkin, “‘Tapping’ Women for Post-Crisis Capitalism: Evidence from the 2012 World Development Report”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 17/4 (2015): p. 612.

world's population, better inclusion of women in the economy just makes 'smart economics'. Sydney Calkin critically examines the World Development Report from 2012 for this gendered concept of 'smart economics'. While Calkin applauds the 'acknowledgment of the intrinsic value of gender equality' in the Report, much like Cohn's appreciation of 1325, she feels it has been at the expense of critical, feminist interrogation of the 'gendered nature of markets and the gendered harms of neo-liberal policy'.⁷⁷ Calkin ultimately argues that gender development initiatives that have received positive attention, 'such as microcredit [and] conditional cash transfers', only 'wor[k] to discipline and control women'.⁷⁸ Thus, even though the onus of these policies is 'empowerment' and autonomy, these policies also reinscribe problematic gender dynamics.

Additionally, Cornwall, Gideon, and Wilson look at the inclusion of gender and women the neo-liberal institutions of the World Bank and the Department for International Development (DFID). These two institutions 'have...a growing interest in women' even though they do not 'grasp the concept of gender'.⁷⁹ Because the development community does not share a common definition of empowerment, they often fail to change gendered structures and biases—thereby revealing this lack of gender-as-power awareness.⁸⁰ Women are held by these organisations as 'resourceful providers, reliable micro-entrepreneurs, cosmopolitan citizens, and positioned as "disposable domestics"'.⁸¹ Thus, when DFID articulates women as 'a "weapon" in the fight against poverty' they do so dependent upon the potentially harmful gender

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 615.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 625.

⁷⁹ Cornwall, Gideon, and Wilson, 'Introduction', p. 2.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 2.

norms that exist in those social contexts.⁸² These policies replicate gender structures that contain and constrain: women, due to their lack of mobility due to social and familial dependency, are construed as less risky and more reliable for loan repayment. Because women are more negatively affected by ‘shame’, they are less likely to skip payments and/or default entirely.⁸³ Women’s positions then become a way for DFID to manipulate a better outcome itself, not the society. The perspective that women are more ‘reliable’ and ‘stable’ depends on an element of essentialism and takes advantage of how women are controlled and dependent in the local environment, thus the policies depend upon these harms and replicate them to their own end. Feminisation then replicates the gender hierarchy rather than dismantling it.

An understanding of gender as a tool for power that operates similarly to class and race is in desperate need here. The first step is to recognise that woman does not equal gender.⁸⁴ The second step is to understand the hierarchical nature of gender does not just operate between individuals, but through organisations and institutions, structuring global politics. In a gender hierarchical structure, masculine priorities come at the expense of feminine ones. Even with lip service to gender and women’s positions, without an understanding of gender structures international politics will never move beyond masculine priorities.⁸⁵ This is devalorisation, or the de-valuation of the feminine for the prioritisation of the masculine. Declinism’s feminisation is falling into the same trap as modern Western thought due to its masculine underpinnings and conflation of women with gender.

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸⁴ Carver, *Gender is not a Synonym for Women*.

⁸⁵ Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict*.

Feminisation as Devalorisation

IR scholarship, amongst other scholarship, has always valued masculine traits above feminine ones: rationality of capability over weakness (as well as the rationality of attitude over one informed by emotion); sovereignty over cooperation/dependency.⁸⁶ Therefore, the discourse of progress and good governance is not only Western-centric but inherently masculinist as well. To demonstrate this I will unpack the feminist understanding of ‘feminisation’. It is not enough to think that simply by ‘including’ women in policies, solutions, or measurements means that progress is being made. This is the assumption that Chakrabarty pointed out as a hypocritical fallacy. Instead, a deeper grasp of what gender is and how it operates as a structure must be understood. The declinist literature is not manipulating women’s positions but it is replicating gender dynamics when it fails to pay attention to certain violence, like structural violence, sexual and gender-based violence, and violence against sexual minorities.

Ann Tickner begins her seminal text on gender and international relations by working through a critique of how Morgenthau transposes the rational man onto the state. This has given mainstream IR scholars the presumption that states are (or ought to aspire to being) rational, sovereign actors.⁸⁷ Yet, as Tickner points out, rationality and sovereignty are masculine attributes.⁸⁸ In a logocentrism, such as the one that exists in the masculinity-femininity binary, one side is always valued over another.

⁸⁶ Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict*; Neta C. Crawford, ‘The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships’, *International Security*, 24/4 (2000): 116-156.

⁸⁷ J. Ann Tickner, *Gender and International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992): Chapter 2.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

Particular masculinities are valorised—rational, wealthy, white, heteronormative ones⁸⁹; most if not all femininities are devalorised.

The bias towards masculinity is what V. Spike Peterson refers to as feminisation.⁹⁰

Peterson clarifies that

Gender is not simply an empirical category that refers to embodied men and women and their material activities but also a systematically *analytical category* that refers to constructions of [privileged] masculinity and [devalorised] femininity and their ideological effects (emphasis true to text).⁹¹

She continues by adding that ‘the privilege and power attributed masculine qualities *depends* on the devalorisation of feminised qualities’ (emphasis true to text).⁹² The creation of gendered hierarchies depend on the ‘natural[isation], depolitical[isation], legitim[ated]...denigration of the feminine, and it is the feminisation of “others” that link multiple oppressions’.⁹³ It is not that the declinist literature intends to oppress—this is more than likely the opposite of what is desired—but that due to its devalorisation of particular violences, this is an unexpected outcome.

Gender analysis can be used to undo feminisation. Gender analysis, or utilising a gender lens, means paying attention to what is socially constructed as masculine or feminine. Gender, like race or class, determines what is prioritised.⁹⁴ This analysis

⁸⁹ V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues in the New Millennium* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013): p. 56.

⁹⁰ Peterson, ‘Feminist Theories’, p. 39.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 40.

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 40.

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹⁴ Peterson and Runyan, *Global Gender*, p. 6.

acknowledges that gender shapes more than people, it shapes organisations, institutions, and states.⁹⁵ Some feminists see this as an apparatus, a la Althusser,⁹⁶ and others see this a laddering of sorts, where competing masculinities vie for the hegemonic position.⁹⁷

Deprioritised Violences

The critique of the implementation of ‘feminisation’ in UNSCR 1325 and development policies is illustrative here. Instead of fundamentally changing how the structural gender inequalities, these policies reified them. These policies fundamentally misunderstood what feminists believe gender to be. They see gender as women, as an operational variable instead of as the aforementioned way of ordering people, organisations, and international hierarchies. My fear is that a declinist understanding of ‘feminisation’ mirrors feminism’s ‘feminisation’. It does so, in the first instance, by minimising, if not deprioritising, violences that are not combat-related. In the second instance, by conflating gender with women and prioritising women’s rights, it fails to make actual change by challenging the very structures that subordinate women and other marginalised peoples. By only seeing gender as ‘women’ it fails to see gender as a hierarchical structure that organises international relations⁹⁸ (both in *what* is studied and *how* it is studied).

⁹⁵ Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations, 3rd Edition* (London: Polity, 2013).

⁹⁶ Bonnie Mann, ‘Gender Apparatus: Torture and National Manhood in the U.S. War on Terror’, *Radical Philosophy*, 168, July/August (2011).

⁹⁷ Robert W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept’, *Gender and Society*, 19/6 (2005): 829-859.

⁹⁸ Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict*.

When declinist scholarship prioritises the statistical measurement of certain types of violence, particularly combatant death versus non-combatant death, it then fails to see other forms. Specifically, John Gray criticises the declinist thesis for failing to recognise the deaths that happen under dictatorships or due to structural violence.⁹⁹ Equally, Jacqui True discusses how the declinist literature fails to account for and take seriously sexual and gender-based violence.¹⁰⁰ This paper is concerned with how it deals with the rights and empowerment of marginalised people whose identity lies outside of the gender binary that declinist's modern Western focus cannot account for.

Feminisation in declinist scholarship is defined by rights, empowerment, and legal, if not social, recognition of these. Feminisation in feminist literature is about the deprioritisation of what is seen as the feminine. Feminisation in declinist literature thankfully takes individual security seriously, something feminist IR has championed for decades. Yet, it only pays attention, seemingly, to *certain* people's rights, mainly women in the conflation of women and gender. This has led to an ignorance of the issues outlined above. Yet, if we take Hudson's argument in *Sex and World Peace* or Pinker's 'rights revolution' argument seriously, it is not just legal rights that matter, but the personal security of marginalised individuals. Since gender and gender identity is not a binary but a fluid and multifaceted spectrum, just looking at women as an indicator of changing norms or progress does not work. It is not just that declinist feminisation scholars omit homosexuality (because Pinker includes homosexuality within his rights chapter), but that the rise of women cannot be a stand in for gender progress. It has to be the rise of all people that 'fail' to live up to the hetero-masculine norms.

⁹⁹ Gray, 'Steven Pinker is Wrong'.

¹⁰⁰ True, 'Winning the Battle'.

Among the many insecurities and violences we should then be very alarmed at includes the ongoing and quite likely rise of violence against the LGBTQ and HIV-affected community in the US, Russia, and elsewhere.¹⁰¹ Even if LGBTQI rights are more secure, particularly in the West, they are still tenuous. Furthermore, rights, like the legal right to marriage, says little about social acceptance and being free from mental and physical harm. In order to illustrate the difference between secured rights and individual insecurity, the yearly publication of ‘The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Map of World Laws 2015’ by the ILGA is useful.¹⁰² The map colour codes each states based upon the strength or weaknesses of their laws recognizing gay rights. ‘Recognition’ is shaded in green—the darkest (highest) green indicates the right to marry or full recognition of same-sex unions. ‘Persecution’ is shaded in a red-scale that fades to yellow. Additional symbols are added to various countries: an exclamation mark in a triangle indicates ‘anti-propaganda laws’; a question mark in a triangle indicates unenforced death penalties; and a shield indicates laws that prohibit discrimination. Finally, a pale citrine colour is used to denote countries without specific legislation.

Dark green states, those that recognize marriage or the equivalent, include all of North America, Uruguay, Argentina, Europe, Iceland, and South Africa. Yellow countries with anti-propaganda, or homophobic or homonegative propaganda towards non-binary people that encourages discrimination, but without other legislation

¹⁰¹ Adam Withnall, ‘What Are the Worst Places in the World to Be Gay?’ *The Independent*, 25 February 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/and-you-thought-uganda-was-bad-map-shows-where-in-the-world-it-is-worst-to-be-gay-9152558.html> accessed 26 February 2016.

¹⁰² http://old.ilga.org/Statehomophobia/ILGA_WorldMap_2015_ENG.pdf

persecuting on the basis of sexual orientation is limited to Russia and Lithuania. Algeria and Nigeria are a pale red but with a warning of anti-propaganda laws. India, Tanzania, and Guyana are a mid-tone red as they have laws that could mean imprisonment from 14 years to life for homosexual behaviour. The dark red states include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, and Mauritania. Afghanistan and Pakistan have a non-implemented death penalty whereas Iran's death penalty is carried out by non-state actors. Therefore, rights for the LGBTQI community are globally unsettled, but the main focus on 'rights' and particularly the securing of the right to marry are, in some ways, red herrings as the rights mask the continued violence against LGBTQI folk.

The focus on violence against this community in the US is purposeful: the declinist argument tends to argue that rights equates to personal security; yet, even though the US has some of the most equitable LGBTQI laws in the world, the personal security of LGBTQI individuals is far from settled. Violence against the LGBTQI community in the US has been marked by several stand-out instances: the police raid on the Stonewall Inn in New York City that led to the Stonewall riots in 1969 and the first Pride parades across the US the following year; the sexual assault and murder of Brandon Teena in 1993, a trans-man upon whom the movie *Boys Don't Cry* is based; and the beating, torture, and death of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming in 1998. While there are far more many incidents of hate violence against the LGBTQI community than these, the latest crystallising moment is the June 2016 mass shooting at the Pulse Orlando gay nightclub. Forty-nine people were killed and another 53 were injured, making this the largest mass shooting in the US to date.

The Pulse shooting is often referred to as a hate crime against the LGBTQI community and hate crime against the community has been rising in the US. Overall, '[r]eported homicides against the LGBT community [in the US] have surged since 2007'.¹⁰³ A 2011 FBI analysis of hate-crime statistics revealed that 'LGBT people are more than twice as likely to be the target of a violent hate-crime than Jews or black people'.¹⁰⁴ In 2013 'sexual orientation motivated roughly 20 percent of hate crimes' and 'the only factor that accounted for more was race'.¹⁰⁵ One of the most insecure groups are trans-people of colour and 'hate-motivated violence against transgender people rose 13 percent' in 2014.¹⁰⁶

An article that looks at hate crime against the LGBTQI community maintains that the violence has everything to do with social attitudes towards gay and non-binary sexualities. For instance, '[i]n 2014, a majority of Americans said they believed gay sex is morally unacceptable'.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, 'anti-LGBT groups form a plurality of hate groups' according to the Southern Poverty Law Centre; these groups are mostly affiliated with 'fundamentalist religious groups'.¹⁰⁸ This is crucially important to recognize: because laws may change, rights may be secured, but that does not mean that the individual is any more safe. While many LGBTQI folk felt that they could

¹⁰³ Rob Wile, 'It's Still Dangerous to Be Gay in America. Here are the Statistics That Prove It,' June 13, 2016, <http://fusion.net/story/313047/lgbt-violence-statistics/>

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Emma Green, 'The Extraordinarily Common Violence Against LGBT People in America,' *The Atlantic*, June 12, 2106, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/06/the-extraordinarily-common-violence-against-lgbt-people-in-america/486722/>

¹⁰⁶ National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 'Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2014', http://www.avp.org/storage/documents/Reports/2014_HV_Report-Final.pdf accessed 25 February 2016: pp. 4-6.

¹⁰⁷ Green, 'The Extraordinarily Common Violence'

¹⁰⁸ Wile, 'It's Still Dangerous'

report to the police, there is a perception that LGBTQ people of colour, gender non-conforming, and youth ‘are disproportionately targeted by the police and subjected to traumatising forces of state violence’. This leads to the reluctance to report violence to the police and, even when the violence is reported, either the victim or the police may not code it as a hate crime.¹⁰⁹

This discomfort shows up in the reporting of violent attacks. More violence against LBGTQI individuals is reported in states that are often assumed to be ‘gay friendly’, such as California, Massachusetts, and New York. These three states are ‘amongst the top ten [US] states with the highest rates of anti-gay hate crimes’ from 2003 to 2013.¹¹⁰ States that are more often associated with conservative social values, such as Alaska, Wyoming, and Mississippi, reported zero-LBGTQI hate crime in the same time period.¹¹¹ This could be owed to the community/individuals in ‘gay-friendly’ states being more willing to report this violence to the police and that the police take the violence seriously.¹¹² Thus, the violence, the reporting of the violence, and the investigation of the violence is dependent upon social attitudes and dispositions towards the rights and lives of those within this targeted community.

A response could be that while laws are changing, normative and attitudinal change are slower. After all, President Obama only signed an Executive Order ‘outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity for federal employees and contractors’ in July 2014 and the Supreme Court decision allowing for marriage equality only followed a year later. Marriage-rights continue expand, but we are

¹⁰⁹ National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, ‘Lesbians’, pp. 4-6.

¹¹⁰ Flory, ‘FBI Anti-LGBT’.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*

warned that this must come with the assurance of other ‘fundamental rights’.¹¹³ As the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs notes

Those within the LGBTQ communities that live at the intersection of other marginalised identities continue to face disproportionate violence and discrimination—justice and equality for LGBTQ communities are innately connected to issues affecting communities of colour, immigrant communities, low-income communities, people with disabilities, and any others that face oppression through a history of systemic and structural barriers.¹¹⁴

The point is that we cannot isolate one group’s status, mainly women, see it as improving, and say it is the bellwether or the ‘holder of light’ for a partial explanation of the decline of violence. Conflating women and gender is a trap. It means we fail to fully contextualise and understand what gender is—more than women—and how it structures societies. Heteronormative gender idealisations of individuals and how this idealisation should be reflected in laws are behind the violent targeting of the LGBTQI community in the US. Even though feminisation is only one piece of the declinist argument, it pins its relevance to gender-as-represented-in-women and this very limited way of thinking about gender means that an entire breadth of violence is missed. The way that feminisation is described in declinist literature, which is limited at best, and how the canon as a whole exceptionalises a particular idea of society and government indicates a very narrow perspective.

Conclusion

¹¹³ National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, ‘Lesbians’, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 5.

The decline of violence thesis offers a new way of approaching war in international relations: as declining, becoming a thing of the past as humanity works towards a better peace. Yet, the decline of violence is limited on what violence is included and, more specifically to this paper, how it understands gender. Gender is not synonymous with women nor is it simply a variable to statistically analyse individual relations. Instead, gender is a structuring force, determining what is seen as relevant and necessary. In this case, being gender-blind has meant that declinist literature has limited the definition of ‘feminisation’ to only encompass the rights and empowerment of women.

It does so at the expense of minorities and marginalised groups. If the feminisation argument holds that the more women rights are accounted for then the greater social stability and peace, then gender is not understood. Because it is not understood, women stands in for gender. The increasingly better position of women in the world is thus used as the exemplar for highlighting how rights are being secured worldwide. So when the rights of other gender/sexuality identities, like the LGBTQ community, are unsettled, and the fight for them unsettles society as witnessed in the violence against them, then feminisation and gender are seen to have failed. What does this then do for the feminisation premise in declinist literature?

I propose something rather challenging and potentially divisive. Let’s drop the term ‘feminisation’ from the literature, but adopt a more holistic and inclusive gender perspective. The focus should instead be on the ‘rights revolution’, but instead of projecting that the West has all rights deficits resolved, let’s acknowledge where some immense problems and difficulties still lie in all regions and corners of the world. For

instance, the US is not post-race nor is it post-homo-/trans-phobic. There is still a long way to go in order to say that all members of US society have a secure place within it. Once there is greater awareness of the pitfalls that exist in all countries, we can remove some of the harmful, gendered dynamics that are holding us back from achieving a deeper, lasting peace.