

Review Article

DO MALES ALWAYS LIKE WAR? A CRITIQUE ON FRANCIS FUKUYAMA AND HIS HYPER MASCULINE ASSERTIONS ON “FEMINIZATION OF WORLD POLITICS”

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Background

Francis Fukuyama's article in *Foreign Affairs* (Fukuyama, 1998) has, once again, glittered intense debates over the issues on women, gender, demography and world politics. Drawing arguments from a wide range of fields, such as archaeology to psychology, demography to primatology, Fukuyama ensues on the evolutionary psychology to explain the international politics of the contemporary and the future world. He portrays that women are “incapable” to venture in the realm of politics that has always been “male-friendly”: aggressive, competitive, tough and force demanding (Fukuyama, 1998:32).

Fukuyama's arguments have made many feminist scholars to respond to and react against his “grossly untenable ideas,” some of which are spurious while others unsupported. The *Foreign Affairs* has published some of them (see Ehrenreich, 1999; Ferguson, 1999; Jaquette, 1999; Pollitt, 1999; Tiger, 1999). In this paper, I would try

to appraise Fukuyama's main contention on human nature and critique on it bringing different feminist arguments together.

Fukuyama's Main Contentions

Fukuyama's academic writing commences from his earlier and the much debated article “The End of History?” (Fukuyama, 1989), published in “the neo-conservative” Washington quarterly *The National Interest* (Knutsen, 1991). In that article Fukuyama acclaimed the triumph of the West and the Western liberal democracy with the end of the Cold War. At that time, Fukuyama used to work as State Department of US Government. Knutsen, a strong critique of Fukuyama, argues that as a young employee in the US Government, Fukuyama's philosophical inquiry on the nature of historical change attracted immediate attention, not only in the US but also abroad (Knutsen, 1991:78)¹. In the second time, he chose *Foreign Affairs*, “another conservative journal” to publish his article (Knutsen, 1991).

While the first article (Fukuyama, 1989) was published as an immediate response to mark the end of Cold War, the second article (Fukuyama, 1998), however, was published in the context of world politics characterized by violent wars in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Georgia, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, etc. Simultaneously, this is also the period when the liberal democracy and neoclassical/market-oriented economy have been reinforced. Thirdly, this is the period that has given wider recognition to feminist movements. It is in this global context that we can understand the hidden agenda of a migrant scholar like Fukuyama for writing article like this. Ling argues:

“...Fukuyama is targeting precisely...markers of difference [such as race, class, culture, nationality] to rehash a racialized neocolonialism under the seemingly less incendiary rubric of “men vs. women.” Moreover,

...Fukuyama's reactionary masculinity – i.e., his *hyper* masculinity – stems from his own subaltern position as a Japanese-American male in white-male dominated America” (Ling, 2000:3. Italics original).

Fukuyama has organized his article into eight subheadings. First, he cites two stories of chimp behaviour,² and says, “chimps, like humans, are intensely social creatures whose lives are preoccupied with achieving and maintaining dominance in status hierarchies” (Fukuyama, 1998:25). According to Fukuyama, a) politics is based on violence, and b) violence and coalition-building are primarily the work of males. His argument such as this has been based on underlying sociobiological assumption of human nature; i.e., males are purely instrumental, calculating and political in their alliances, while females are emotionally attached (Fukuyama, 1998:25). However, without giving sufficient reference, he concludes, “...male bonding is in fact genetic and predates the human species” (Fukuyama, 1998:26).

Criticizing some of the common beliefs that the savage were noble and that violence comes not from human nature but from civilization, Fukuyama reacts “war [among the savages] was actually more frequent and rates of murder higher, than for modern ones” (1998:26). He further claims:

“The problem with the feminist view is that it sees these attitudes toward violence, power, and status as wholly the product of a patriarchal culture, whereas in fact...they are rooted in biology...*What is bred in the bone cannot be altered easily by changes in culture and ideology*” (Fukuyama, 1998:27, italics mine).

In the third section of the article, Fukuyama tries to refute “social-constructionist” views put forward by social anthropologists, like Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer, Franz Boas, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. Instead, upholding the evolutionary and neuro-

physiological ideas, he attempts to demonstrate sex psychology as biologically determined. Sex differences, according to Fukuyama, are “genetically rather than culturally rooted...and extend beyond the body into the realm of mind” (1998:30). “Stereotypical gender identities,” he goes on to say, “associate men with war and competition and women with peace and cooperation” (Fukuyama, 1998:33). It is, therefore, primarily men not women, who a) enjoy the experience of aggression, and b) revel in the ritualization of war (Fukuyama, 1998).

For Fukuyama it has two apparent implications, so far as international relation of the world politics is concerned. First, only the feminization of world politics would lower societies' overall rate of violence. Fukuyama says, “Only by participating fully in global politics can women both defend their own interests and shift the underlying male agenda” (1998, 34). For example, by so doing, women can contribute to make “*now aggressive*” states such as the United States “*less inclined to use power around the world as freely as they have in the past*” (Fukuyama, 1998:35, italics mine). Secondly, feminization of politics is most likely to occur in the “democratic zone of peace” than in the “authoritarian states” of the South. It is, therefore, Fukuyama's main concern that in the future, the non-US, the non-European states would be aggressive (due to their politics led by the hotheaded young men and less female participation). But, politics in the states of “democratic zone of peace” would have gone by then to the hands of peace-loving, cooperative women who are genetically “less supportive of defense spending and use of force abroad” (Fukuyama, 1998:34). This would be a situation very undesirable to scholars such as Fukuyama.

In the sixth part of his article, Fukuyama demonstrates his bleak hope that feminization of world politics has certain constraints also.

According to him, "there will be limits to how much international politics can change" (Fukuyama, 1998:36). Fukuyama then goes on to say that since the "democratic zone of peace" will have to deal with "those parts of the world run by young, ambitious, unconstrained men" such as "Mobutu, Milosevic,³ or Saddam," at least *masculine policies* will be still required (Fukuyama, 1998:36-37). Again, although women can hold politics, they, however, cannot penetrate other key sectors of strategic importance, such as military, that need "male bonding" and "unit cohesion."

Fukuyama projects some interesting demographic trends in the seventh part of the article. Given that the trend of population ageing continues in the West, it is highly likely that elderly women will form "one of the most important voting blocs." They will "help elect more women leaders" less inclined toward military intervention. On the contrary, says Fukuyama, people in agriculture countries will be still inclined to military causalities. Furthermore, the future sex ratio of the population in agricultural countries will be in favour of male due to abortion of female fetuses (Fukuyama, 1998).

Finally and importantly, Fukuyama offers political solutions. He says, "... accepting the fact that people have natures that are often evil, political, economic, and social systems⁴ can be designed to mitigate the effects of man's baser instincts" (Fukuyama, 1998:39).

Fukuyama on Gendered Terrain of Human Nature

Biologists describe human nature as something imbedded in the ways they study organism (Hubbard, 1990). Fukuyama's conception of human nature too is not beyond it. He has tried his best to demonstrate that human nature is the outcome of biology, not of culture or civilization. Fukuyama shares the line of reasoning, as did Darwin, Freud and Wilson. The opening stories of chimp

behaviour indicate sufficiently towards his belief on "biologically based psychological differences between sexes" (Fukuyama, 1998:26).

For him male are by nature always aggressive and violent, seeking a "dominant" position in the status hierarchy.⁵ Referring to crime statistics but not presenting any of them specifically, he concludes, "crimes are overwhelmingly committed by young men" (Fukuyama, 1998:32). Unlike males, according to him, females are emotionally attached, conciliatory and cooperative. Here, Fukuyama shares the idea of Herbert Spencer that women are altruists (Spencer, 1884, as quoted in Sayers, 1982). It is due to their altruism that female can favour the weakest members of society (as in voting). What implies is that, in future, the states in the "democratic zone of peace" will have a) more elderly women in politics, and b) they will be hesitant in using the force to keep the South under control.

Thus, Fukuyama builds his arguments on human nature based on the legacy of Darwinian concept of "sexual selection," Bagehot's concept of "natural selection" and Geddes and Thomson's concept of "katabolic vs. anabolic metabolism" of the two sexes (Sayers, 1982).

The feminist scholars, however, have long been challenging such a "circular" way of explaining human behaviour. Ruth Hubbard, for example, says, "Because sociobiologists posit that stubborn kernel of human biological traits, honed over eons of evolution, their human-nature theories are *conservative* (1990, 118, italics mine). Hubbard denies the claim that all human societies have competition and dominance hierarchies.⁶ She argues, "there is no reason to believe that biology determines the ways different societies are constructed" (Hubbard, 1990:118).

To say that male always like war is a kind of over simplification of the reality. Very few men can make themselves hard to shoot directly at individual enemies (Ehrenreich, 1999). Fukuyama cites only the names of "hard-wired" leaders, be it Margaret Thatcher or Saddam, Melosevic or Mobuto. He never cites war-disliking, peace-loving leaders such as M. K. Gandhi, Olaf Palme, Willy Brandt, Martin Luther King, but to name a few (Ehrenreich, 1999). If male are really "hard-wired" it is not necessarily because of biology, but because of socialization. There are widespread taboos on female handling of weapons, but at the same time, male are encouraged to do so cross-culturally right from the initiation rites (Ehrenreich, 1999). Does not it support that gender behaviours regarding war and violence are shaped and perpetuated culturally?

We have many examples *to refute* Fukuyama's assertion that women do always like peace, not violence. The mythological warrior-goddesses that some religions of the world have today do attest the fact that human society has recognized aggressive and violent women too.⁷ We come across many news reports that in many guerilla-style fights, women fighters have been given the responsibility of forefront.⁸

To sum up, first, war cannot be explained by any individual impulse. Genetic roots of analysing human behavior are therefore untrue (Pollitt, 1999). Secondly, evolutionary psychology is not *the* only theory that should be picked up, and ignoring others, to analyse the cause of gender role differences. Finally, if women are more inclined to negotiation than on war or violence, what difference does it make (Jaquette, 1999:129)?

For the moment, even if we accept that male are really aggressive and violent, is there anything that their aggression and violence have contributed for human progress, other than wars, struggles, inter-tribal conflicts, and most importantly nuclear threats? May be,

their violent aggression was functional in some "savage" ages; it is useless in modern world (Lerner, 1986:19). These sorts of reasoning are "reductionist" and "ahistorical" for they try to reduce larger social phenomenon to biology, say gene, and they do not take into account particular society as reference. According to Hubbard, substantial physical and psychological changes in human behaviour are possible through major political and economic transformations of human society (Hubbard, 1990). Modern human society is not in a state of nature; it is now very much a part of cultural inventions and innovations.

Gender Implications

In this article, Fukuyama has presented his views on gender relations between men and women very tacitly. Given the "aggression of men" on the one hand and "emotional attachment of women," on the other (Fukuyama, 1998:25), the gender relation at the interpersonal level is universally unequal. Men are dominant while the women submissive. At the institutional level of gender relations, Fukuyama seems to be selective. He says that some sectors such as military need "gender segregation" (Fukuyama, 1998:38). Likewise, violence and aggression are basically the domain of men, not of women. Fukuyama says, "In no area is sex-related difference clearer than with respect to violence and aggression" (Fukuyama, 1998:31). Although politics is never women-friendly (Fukuyama, 1998:32), Fukuyama suggests, let it be feminized so that threats of violence and war can be minimized (1998:34).

Fukuyama very sharply differentiates the world into two major parts: the authoritarian South, and the democratic North. Although Japan falls territorially within the South, her demographic reality, according to Fukuyama, does match her with the North. Likewise, due to the differential rates of fertility and immigration, even the

European countries have different kinds of demographic trends than that of the US. Given that contemporary trends in demography and politics both are unequally gendered in the North as well as in the South, Fukuyama speculates a very surprising scenario of international relations in the future. According to Fukuyama, the world has three major demographic trends:

First, there is "precipitous fall in fertility rates" across the developed world. As a result, population aging will be more rapid in this area. This trend will have pronounced impacts more on particular regions, such as Europe, whose rates of immigration are very low. Fukuyama speculates that given the growing size of elderly population, their votes will go to the female candidates.

Secondly, due to the popularity of small family norms in the advanced countries, the future child will have to grow up "with no cousins, siblings, aunts or uncles." Fukuyama observes, when compared to "the surpluses of young, hotheaded men" in the agricultural societies of the South, children of the advanced countries would be "more leery of military casualties."

Thirdly and on the contrary to the points mentioned above, the high rates of abortion of the female fetuses in the countries of the South will shift sex ratios there "sharply in favour of men." So, it implies that risk of leaders such as "Saddam, Mobuto or Meloevic" coming in power in future cannot be ignored (Fukuyama, 1998:36).

According to Ehrenreich, "...the female, and hence over-kindly, heads of the states" that arise in the northern democracies "will be a poor match for the macho young males" whom Fukuyama expects to dominate the south (Ehrenreich, 1999:121-122). Fukuyama's main concern is towards the implication this phenomenon will have in US foreign policy and national security issues (Fukuyama, 1998:34).

In this point, Fukuyama may seem relatively logical. However, the deeper we analyse his arguments, the more he appears as "conservative." First, it is not always that individual qualities determine the inter-state relationship in international politics. Usually, voters do not make foreign policy, they are the old leaders (yes- usually male) who decide it (Pollitte, 1999). Second, it is really surprising to speculate that women leaders of the North who come in power in the future will be transforming American foreign policy ("against the will of those now in control," such as, for example, Bill Clinton) (Pollitte, 1999).

To sum up, it seems that the non-white men of the South and the white women of the North, as Fukuyama tacitly speculates, are the two potential threats. The "historically unprecedented shift in the sexual basis of politics" in these regions can lead to a change in international relations (Fukuyama, 1998:36). Fukuyama's only bleak hope rests on the speculated possibility that "gender segregation in certain parts" such as in military, seems to him not just appropriate but necessary (Fukuyama, 1998:38).

Conclusions

As a Professor of public policy it is natural for Fukuyama to write on policy level issues. First he wrote on the failure of communist states as an "end of the history." This time he wrote on the issues of increasing threats to the political hegemony of US. The first kind of threat is internal in nature. The simultaneous trends of population ageing and the increased participation of women in politics in the northern democratic states pose risk that future leaders of these countries would be women who are "biologically conciliatory." The second category of risk is external in scope. Given the practice of aborting female fetuses, according to Fukuyama, the sex ratio of the population of the South will go in favour of potentially the "hotheaded" young men. For Fukuyama, the nature of problem is

serious; because “biologically determined sex difference” has made the problem complicated. So, the implication is, both White House and Pentagon should formulate strategy in such a way so that political hegemony of US can still be maintained.

The way of Fukuyama’s writing is very strong and persuading. We find, nevertheless, a number of shortcomings, frauds and contradictions. First of all, the basic and underlying assumption upon which Fukuyama’s main thesis has been based (that gender behaviors are biologically rooted) is spurious. It immediately posits question on Fukuyama for the validity and reliability of his arguments. Secondly, he is very selective --and therefore biased-- in his examples and cases. For example, he repeatedly cites the name of Saddam, but never cites other exemplary names such as M.K.Gandhi, among others. His subject matter of discussion is very much prejudicial. Thirdly, and corollary to the second, Fukuyama’s article has some methodological problems. His references are very vague without proper citation and/or quotation.

One can understand why is Fukuyama so worried about the nature of white women and non-white men, but one cannot understand why is he so silent about white men and non-white women? Nowhere in the whole article has Fukuyama cited time-specific and space-specific cases so that verification could be made. Fourthly, his arguments are self-contradictory. Fukuyama, for example, claims that social, political, and economic institutions in the North are well effective. But, in the case of the South, he observes, biological predisposition is extremely influential. It reflects no other things but Fukuyama’s academic servitude towards them, for whose interest he wrote this article. Finally, when we compare all of these frauds in the light of Fukuyama’s personal position, it helps us to formulate epistemological charges against his *hypermasculine*, imperialist, and racial prejudices (Ling, 2000). Fukuyama’s

methodological and epistemological fallacies one the one hand, and his analysis based on spurious assumption and selection bias (of cases, references, and subject-matter) on the other hand, put his entire thesis under question.

End Notes

1. Knutsen Torbjorn was Assistant Professor at George Mason University at that time. Coincidentally, Fukuyama joined the same university as Professor of Public Policy, later.
2. Fukuyama presents the cases of captive chimp colony at the Berger’s Zoo in The Netherlands and the Gombe National Park in Tanzania to show that the chimps, like humans, have “proclivity for routinely murdering peers” (Fukuyama, 1998:24-25).
3. Slavodan Milocevic, defeated in the election of 2000 by his pro-Democracy rival, was from the Eastern Europe, not from the Third World.
4. For Fukuyama, these systems are nothing but liberal democracy and neoclassical economy, as opposed to “utopian” socialism and feminism (Fukuyama, 1998: 39-40).
5. “Boys are” Fukuyama says, “more aggressive, both verbally and physically, in their dreams, words, and actions than girls” (1998: 31). Their domination extends from politics to war.
6. Ferguson (1999) even argues that chimpanzees do not routinely murder their peers, as claimed by Fukuyama, until they are undisturbed. According to him, both the Burger’s Zoo and the Gombe Park represent the disturbed habitat for the chimpanzees cited.
7. In the Hindu religion, for example, *Durga Kali* is one of the female goddesses portrayed as a very brave fighter. She is depicted as having several hands, weapons in each. Riding on a huge and roaring tiger, she has worn garland not of flower but of human heads.
8. In conflict-ridden countries such as Peru (especially during 1990s) and Nepal (since the last one decade) where “peoples’ war” instigated by Maoists has come out, women trained in guerilla warfare are reported to be having a very strong proclivity on fierce face-to-face fighting, atrocious killing, and group war with the enemies (government security

forces, in particular). Recently in Nepal, for example, women warriors from Maoist side are in deputation at the frontline of the war especially in big and strategic attacks. There are separate female battalions as well. Keeping this into consideration, the Royal Nepal Army, too has initiated recruiting women and girls into army force since 2004, targeting primarily on war widows, both for their livelihood support as well as for retaliation attacks.

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