

The Shifting Of Masculinity Practice In The Global Political Constellation

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Abstract

Political masculinity is portrayed in ways that are full of aggression through the gun, war, and the military. After World War II subsided and entered a new chapter of the Cold War, inter-physical wars began to be replaced by ideological wars between the west and east poles, communists, and liberalists. Even though physical warfare has subsided, various countries still highlight the masculine character to show its extension through hegemony that leads to soft power. This study conducted information searches through literature studies and group discussion forums about global political masculinity which were then extracted in the form of qualitative descriptive research. The goal of this research is to determine the shift in the practice of masculinity in the global political constellation. The results showed that there has been a shift in the practice of masculinity in several countries due to several factors, one of the most significant is globalization. Globalization requires countries to open up and lessen arrogance in order to maintain national stability and its existence also strengthens the bargaining position in the global political constellation all at once.

Keywords: masculinity, global politics, constellation.



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I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the twentieth century has marked a period of extraordinary geopolitical change. Two major events such as the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union have provided a new beginning for each country to re-conception of their system and political direction. The demise of communism and the triumph of liberalism seem to signal the prospect of a new, more flexible international system. One of the phenomena that need to be highlighted is the expansion of globalization through economic activities, cross-border investment, and trade spearheaded by transnational banks and transnational companies. Today's global economy has become more functionally integrated and interdependent than ever (Hirst & Thompson, 1996). Due to the increasing integration and interdependence of national economies on a global scale, business experts, international economists, and liberal politicians claim that the world today has entered a 'borderless' mode (Ohmae, 1990). The

convergent effects of globalization resulting in cross-border interdependence rapidly transcend the influence of different cultures, national institutions, and social systems (Mueller, 1994). Due to increasing convergence, the geopolitical landscape has become different in a 'borderless' world. The end result is the demise of geography and national boundaries.

To reflect the excitement of the developed business community in free trade, transportation, and communication, which are usually brought together under the rubric of globalization in order to produce unparalleled economic prosperity, Kenichi Ohmae (1995) asserts that 'nation-states have lost their role as units, meaningful participation in today's borderless world global economy.' The state should reclaim this role from business people and participate in regulating global political architecture. It means that the global political constellation is not determined by military power but economic. Each country is competing to strengthen their position through acts of economic hegemony. This action produced a new, more moderate international system that stood between realism and liberalism without eliminating the masculine character of each country.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This article uses masculinity as a lens to examine shifts in global political practice by focusing on three main regions, namely Asia, ex-communist countries, and the Middle East. Masculinity is a stereotype about men that can be disputed with femininity as a female stereotype. Masculine vs. feminine are two polar traits opposite and form a straight line that at each point describes the degree of malehood (masculinity) or femininity (femininity) (Brod, 1987). Further, this study describes Connell's (1995) conceptualization of masculinity, especially his emphasis on how hegemonic masculinity reproduces hierarchy and gender inequality in the global political order. As noted by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), the practices that construct hegemonic masculinity must be understood as complex, dynamic, and potentially contradictory. Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, is not unitary or static but varies significantly across time and space (Morrell, 2001) and at local, regional, and global levels (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The conception of hegemonic masculinity about the shift in the practice of global political masculinity as an implication of globalization is the core of this research analysis. Masculine political discourse refracts gender relations in new ways in some regions, destabilizing prevailing notions of male authority and the proper role of men. Hegemonic masculinity, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) put it, "provides a solution to these tensions, tending to stabilize patriarchal power or reconstitute it in new conditions." They also note, however, that the idea of hegemonic masculinity remains open to being challenged if they fail to resolve these tensions and conflicts. As discussed in this study, various responses to the political culture in several regions suggest that the established configurations of hegemonic masculinity are only partially able to resolve these tensions. Simultaneously, different variants of hegemonic masculinity that incorporate new discourses on soft power while maintaining existing notions of male authority combine and create a shift in the practice of political masculinity.

This hegemonic masculinity is identified with patriarchal culture. In a patriarchal culture, which praises masculinity for men and traditional rewards of femininity for women, political actors often use gendered statements, symbols, and actions in trying to increase their own political authority. Power correlates with the traditional attributes of masculinity (strength, reason, will, responsibility, passion, justice). Whereas obedience is more likely to correlate with traditional attributes of femininity (weakness, passivity, emotion, bias, impressionability, doubt) (Riabov & Riabova, 2014).

Many explanations have been described as hegemonic masculinity practices in some countries. For the past several decades, scholars of political science have been trying to gain a better understanding of the political masculinity portrait. This study found three previous studies regarding the practice of political masculinity in three countries which are considered to represent a portrait of hegemonic masculinity. The first research entitled "Contesting Hegemonic Order: China in East Asia" emphasizes that social exchange, power relations, and negotiations are ways to conceptualize the hegemonic order architecture in the world, in this case especially how China fights the United States. Meanwhile, the second research entitled "Sociology of Masculinity in the Middle East" explains that globalization has created new challenges in the Middle East. Gender as a social construction, in the Middle East, is shaped by patriarchal societies and Islamist masculinity is based on cultural institutions and has survived through cultural practices. Social factors that lead to the intensification of the growing gap between social classes will hinder progress towards gender equality. The latest research entitled "Photographing Vladimir Putin: Masculinity, Nationalism and Visuality in Russian Political Culture" introduced Vladimir Putin as a representation of the figure of political masculinity in Russia. The figure reproduces hegemonic discourses about forms of public masculinity in Russia to help understand the geopolitical world. The three studies represent how political masculinity is formed from a social and cultural system, variables that influence a country to dominate, and the influence of leading figures in the formation of masculine political constructs.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive qualitative research. Data collection through Focus Group Discussion on "Global Political Masculinity" and webinars that are supported by secondary data in the form of related information documents with this research (textbooks, scientific articles, scientific journals, and interest sites). The explanation of the Shifting of Masculinity Practice in The Global Political Constellation using gender and politics specify by hegemonic masculinity.

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study describes masculinity in the global political constellation in several regions such as Asia, ex-communist, and the Middle East countries. The main findings that played an important role in shifting political masculinity practices in several regions are listed below.

IV.1. Dynamics of Political Masculinity in Asia

Based on the discussion results, political culture in Asia is influenced in large part by cultures from India, Persia, and the Middle East. Structurally, countries in Asia consist of many ethnic groups and nations with very strong patrilineal ties so that the father has a very strong central role. This affects the state where men are the main actors. This patrilineal structure is clearly illustrated through the theory of realism which is based on everything that is rational, the national interest is the main, and violence and war are the main ways to maintain power. Just like humans, masculine characters are used to attract attention and influence other countries.

In the Asian context, this practice of political masculinity is represented by Myanmar, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea. Myanmar and Thailand are examples of countries in ASEAN that place the military as the highest control center. Meanwhile, in the long history of Japan, it can be seen the process of change regarding the position and function of women in social and political life. Initially, women had a very big role. The role of these women underwent changes as a result of the influence of Chinese culture, especially Confucianism. In a long historical process, the matriarchal system changed to become patriarchal. The emergence of the feudal system together with the teachings of Confucianism caused the position and function of women to seriously decline, both in the social, economic, and political fields. The end of Japanese feudalism was followed by modernization by Meiji Tenno, and tremendous changes occurred but the status and function of women had not changed much. The social and political position of women was only better improved after World War II. The role of Japanese women has grown by following the fast industrialization process. Meanwhile, in South Korea, during the Joseon Dynasty, women did not have legal status in the state if they had not become wives. Even girls can be killed, most women cannot determine their own destiny.

From this description, it can be concluded that the practice of political masculinity in Asian countries is influenced by culture and beliefs. Although industrialization has gradually reduced the hegemonic masculinity, patriarchal culture is still the dominant value in Asia.

IV.2. Political Dynamics in Ex-Communist Countries

The practice of political masculinity in ex-communist countries is represented by China, North Korea, Russia, and Cuba. In fact, ancient China has embraced a strongly patriarchal culture. This is indicated by the number of kingdoms who were dominated by kings and even entered the modern era. The government also censors attributes that resemble women. In terms of domestic and foreign policies, China has carried out many developments in the fields of artificial technology, intelligence, and the military. The One Belt One Road project is one that many countries are joining in. For now, China has put forward a political strategy that is reformative and soft power through economic efforts such as restoring investment abroad, providing loans to other countries, and selling products at low prices. These have made China one of the largest economic powers in the world.

North Korea has a large military force and a significant defense network because it is a mountainous country. They have been trained to deal with Military Aggression so cities are designed to be militarily defensible. But even so, we can consider that North Korea's strength

in terms of the military is also very limited because most of the defense equipment is out of date, and as compensation, North Korea develops a nuclear weapon.

In North Korea, it is deeply instilled that a leader is considered God so everyone exalts the leaders. They have a protocol in calling leaders like Kim Il-sung we should call them with some noble addition 'General' or 'Great Leader'. The entire central leadership is a man. This can also be seen from the many photos, posters, and statues of the three leaders of North Korea: Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un scattered everywhere in the country. They never show their wives or their partners in public to portray a strong masculine figure as the Father of Korea. Each leader of North Korea also has their own song to describe the side of greatness as the respected and revered father of the Korean nation. However, this is a little different from the case with Kim Jong-un, he is the only president in North Korea who show or invites his wife directly where he also invites his younger sister, Kim Yo Jong, in many places. This is influenced by Kim Jong-un's educational background, where he studied abroad so that he has a different vision or viewpoint from his father, Kim Jong-Il. Kim Jong-un imagines himself as a North Korean leader who is quite millennial and slightly transgressed the boundaries shown by his love for western life, for example by inviting NBA basketball player, Dennis Rodman, and western scientists to teach at North Korean universities.

For many Russians and non-Russians alike, Putin's strong male personality symbolizes Russia's growing economic power and its assertion as a world power. Patriotism is the source of the courage, fortitude, and strength of our people. If we lose patriotism and national pride and dignity, which are connected to it, we will lose ourselves as a nation capable of achieving extraordinary achievements (Novitskaya, 2017). Putin's figure as a masculine figure has been shown on several occasions, such as "Putin Plays Hockey", "Bare-chest Putin with his steed", and "Bare-chest Putin in Ephipany's ritual". Even further, to strengthen Russia as a masculine country, Russia carried out a ban on LGBTQ which ultimately sparked protests by LGBTQ activists. In 2013, State Duma approved Federal Law "for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values". By characterizing authentic Russian masculinity as strong, heterosexual, and patriotic human beings, making the understanding of other masculinities automatically becomes fluid, unstable, and even immoral, often symbolizing the collapse of other nations (Erik Vlaeminc, 2016). In addition, political masculinity was also shown by policies such as the Russia Muzhik, military operations in several countries, expansion, and annexation of Crimea, and the Victory Day Parade which was held to commemorate the victory of the Soviet Union over Nazi Germany and to highlight a strong Russian image from all kinds of threats.

Fidel Castro is depicted in the novel *Ciudad Rebelde* (1967) as the ideal character image as a young man becoming a revolutionary during an armed uprising. Fidel Castro's warrior manhood who fought the forces of US imperialism was symbolized by the army uniform he wore morning, noon, and night (Butler, 2012). Universal health services and free education were the basis for the Castro regime after the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista. Cuba's priority in the health sector has also made Cuba has a bargaining position in international politics through the diplomacy of the 'Army of White Coats'. Currently, there are about 50,000 Cuban

doctors who work in 67 countries and generate a foreign exchange of 11 billion dollars. In fact, Cuba has sent 52 doctors and nurses to Italy to help deal with the Covid-19 virus.

In China, hegemonic masculinity has shifted towards soft power through domination in the economic sector as a result of globalization and interdependence between one country and another. Even though the influence of masculinity in North Korea is still strong, Kim Jong-un's leadership has given a new color to North Korean politics to be open and slightly westernized. Russia, as a country that was an opponent of the United States during the cold war, still maintains political masculinity through its policies and leading figures. Cuba is the most anti-US country on the American continent, did not put hard power as a bargaining value or priority for their country, but instead through feminine policies such as health and education.

IV.3. The Dynamics of Political Masculinity in the Middle East

1970 was the beginning of the formation of the modern political culture in the Middle East. The year was also the most important point of departure for the Middle East in terms of the economy, security, and law in the region. Developed countries that have technology flocked to control the oil fields in the Middle East. In 1970 Middle Eastern countries had started to realize their potential. Oil has the potential to be used as fuel for hegemony and used as weapons of war. The destruction of the World Trade Center building and the front yard of the Pentagon in New York by what Osama bin Laden alleged, in the end, turned out to be an event that made the world not about West and East anymore, not about communism and capitalism or liberalism but about Islamic or western ideology.

2010 is also noteworthy because there was a history of ending the US occupation of Iraq, but that year was also the beginning of other chaos in the Middle East such as the Arab Spring phenomenon which was an important starting point for the dynamics of the Middle East region marked by the fall of President Ben Ali. This revolution from Tunisia spread to neighboring countries. And finally in Syria is the last country that is still in conflict to date because it is motivated by a lot of foreign interference.

The invasion of Islamic countries by western colonial powers intensified the language of 'motherland rape' by penetrating foreign forces (Ahmed, 1992). Thus with colonialism, men who protected women's honor became symbols of national honor. This creates a serious challenge for local masculinity because male honor is threatened and called to protect the motherland (Gerami, 2005). Another example is another institution that has an impact on the masculinity of Palestinian and Israeli youth in the military institution. Peteet (2000) examines the Intifada (Palestinian uprising) in which the male Palestinian masculine identity is closely linked to resistance to the much larger powers that the Israeli Defense forces possess.

The conflicts that have been occurring in the Middle East cannot be separated from cases that have made women and children become victims and instruments of war. Further, the formal control of men over women and families, exercised by fathers, husbands, and brothers in the Middle East is very strong. It is estimated by the United Nations Population Fund that

as many as 5,000 women and girls are murdered by family members each year in so-called "honor killings" worldwide.

The patriarchal social structure as a legacy has been surviving through culture and religion.

V. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The end of the cold war marked a new chapter in the global political map. Globalization requires all countries to open themselves or cooperate with the other countries, so they can take advantage of this globalization era for their national interests. The national interest which is achieved through masculine ways has experienced a shift in practice from hard power to soft power. For example, through China's economic domination, democratization in the Middle East, and the openness of North Korea to the world. Meanwhile, Japan and South Korea, with a very strong patriarchal culture as a remnant of the existing royal and dynastic systems, have gradually progressed even though patriarchal values are still the dominant domain. Instead, this practice of masculinity is articulated differently by Cuba through feminine policy priorities such as the health and education sectors.

Of course in this study, there are still shortcomings so that research can continue to develop in accordance with the current political context, further research is needed. The exposure was carried out using normal assumptions, and it is very possible to change because of the current abnormal world conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further researches are needed to explain other factors that caused a shift in the practice of global political masculinity, for example, climate change or the global pandemic issue. Thus, the development of political science can be in line with the development of real practice in the global political constellation.

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