

## **INTERPRETING INDONESIAN NETIZEN RESPONSE TOWARDS PUTIN'S MASCULINITIES IN THE RUSSIAN INVASION FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract**

Since Putin executed his invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, it has generated various responses in the real world and on social media. Among the most active users worldwide, Indonesian netizens contribute significantly to social media debates. It is intriguing since the past pattern indicates that Indonesian social media seldom generate a massive response to international affairs issues, especially those unrelated to Indonesia. However, in the case of Putin's Invasion, the Indonesian netizens behaved out of pattern by reproducing extensive narratives to support Russia's invasion by glorifying Putin's masculine side. In this paper, we trace how the narrative glorifying Putin's masculinities is constructed within Indonesian netizens' responses by interpreting Twitter data right after the first Russian attack from February 2022 to March 2022. Further, we also explain under what conditions the narratives emerge. We found that the narrative created two different patterns: the first pattern radiated romanticizing Putin's machoism aspect and, at the same time, feminizing the Indonesian government. We then argue that the supporting narratives are linked with how Indonesian gender relations are imbued with hegemonic masculinity products of the past Indonesian colonialism that shaped the praise for the hegemonic masculinity point of view.

### **Keywords**

Russia, Ukraine, Indonesia Netizen, Putin, Masculinity.

### **Resumo**

Desde que Putin executou a sua invasão da Ucrânia, em 24 de fevereiro de 2022, gerou várias reações no mundo real e nas redes sociais. Entre os utilizadores mais ativos a nível mundial, os internautas indonésios contribuem significativamente para os debates nas redes sociais. É intrigante, uma vez que o padrão anterior indica que as redes sociais indonésias raramente geram uma resposta maciça a questões sobre assuntos internacionais, especialmente as que não estão relacionadas com a Indonésia. No entanto, no caso da invasão de Putin, os internautas indonésios comportaram-se fora do padrão, reproduzindo narrativas extensas para apoiar a invasão da Rússia, glorificando o lado masculino de Putin. Neste artigo, traçamos a narrativa que glorifica a masculinidade de Putin e como é construída nas respostas dos internautas indonésios, interpretando os dados do Twitter logo após o primeiro ataque russo de fevereiro de 2022 a março de 2022. Além disso, também explicamos em que condições as narrativas emergem. Descobrimos que a narrativa criou dois padrões diferentes: o primeiro



irradiava a romantização do aspeto machista de Putin e, ao mesmo tempo, a feminização do governo indonésio. Em seguida, argumentamos que as narrativas de apoio estão ligadas à forma como as relações de género indonésias estão imbuídas de produtos de masculinidade hegemónica do passado colonialismo indonésio que moldaram o elogio do ponto de vista da masculinidade hegemónica.

**Palavras chave**

Rússia, Ucrânia, internauta indonésio, Putin, Masculinidade.

**How to cite this article**

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### **Introduction**

The relationship between public response toward other countries' foreign policy has never been studied comprehensively. At the same time, it might provide a luminous pathway to understanding the curve of public opinion and reshaping foreign policy, primarily how they are related in the social media sphere. We delve into the matter by scrutinizing how Indonesian netizens responded to the Russian invasion. It is an intriguing event due to the fact that international affairs seldom generate broad responses among the Indonesian public, except for the Palestine issues (Nasution, 2018). The "insensitivity" towards foreign affairs is presumably related to the domestically focused foreign policy instead of outward-looking (Rosyidin, 2017). However, it indicates that momentous international affairs can affect others, even in an "insensitive" to foreign affairs society like Indonesia, if the narratives hit a societal nerve. In this case, it is Putin's masculine traits in Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In addition, Indonesia also prepared to conduct a G20 meeting, which Russia and Ukraine are scheduled to attend. Hence, it was important for the Indonesian government to participate to defuse the tension by first knowing where the public stands. With both aspects going on, we consider Indonesia a perfect example to exercise the relations between public opinion in international affairs and the masculinities projection of another state.

Vladimir Putin's masculinity has been widely discussed since Russia's attack on Ukraine occurred in early 2022. It also sparks debates on how the individual leader has affected foreign policy decision-making. On one side, scholarly arguments were built around the personal ambition to unite all Russian speakers, especially to counter injustice motives over Russia in the post-Cold War era (Hunter, 2022). On the other hand, a more material approach to the conflict emerged and constructed an argument regarding The West and Russia rivalry. Here, we contribute to the dialectic by analyzing Putin's agency in the decision-making structure.



From this point of view, Putin's masculinity has been his trademark since he stepped into office. Putin's regime has increasingly relied on very conventional gender and sexual norms by "remasculinize" his image and using a masculine persona to increase Russia's image in the post-Cold War era (Sperling et al., 2022). Some of his articulation is to dissimulate authoritarianism as masculine and democracy as feminine. Russian media also adopted the strict black-and-white enunciation of gender nuance in portraying Ukraine's first pro-democracy revolution in 2004 and Putin's response to Georgia Rose's revolution in 2003. Further, some academics refer to Putin's behavior as "hyper-masculine performances," resembling an action consciously taken to produce a specific public performance. He often articulates the notion of masculinity by posing shirtless while riding horses, petting tigers, firing big guns, and doing martial arts for the cameras, which have become an inherent part of his brand (Grouard, 2022).

By far, his articulation of masculinity is often portrayed as a power play. A "hegemonic project" deeply rooted in gender dominance by overusing masculine symbols can be linked to the Russian image as a strong country (Wood, 2016). The common association of leadership masculinities finds a strong presence in wartime. The relationship between masculinities and war is either causal or constitutive (Hutchings 2008). On one account, masculinity remains a crucial ingredient in a war. On another account, the social practice of war manifests a constitutive redefinition of men's masculinities (Goldstein, 2001). In short, scholars often constitute masculinities as enabling precondition to war and vice versa (Elshtain, 1995; Barrett, 2001; Enloe, 2014). The above notion has become a predominant narrative in a patriarchal cultural realm. Hence, Putin's action to attack Ukraine works best within the image of a masculine image, which he cast persistently. The most recent is the war against Ukraine.

While it consistently manifested in Putin's everyday political masculinities, it also provoked various responses in the real world and social media, especially Twitter. Digital analysis by Evello (2022) suggested that many Indonesian netizens responded to the Russian attack on Ukraine in late February 2022. The survey also concluded that Putin's popularity spiked shortly after he launched the first attack. Our preliminary digital observation found that Indonesian netizens frequently intonated discussions about Putin's physics and courage in the war. The pattern is repeatedly shown in Vietnam. The most salient pro-Russia narratives in Vietnam's cyberspace revolve around justifying Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, echoing anti-America and anti-imperialist worldviews, and lionizing Russia while demonizing Ukraine (Ha and Luong, 2022).

Ha and Luong (2022) later argued that Pro-Russia narratives in Vietnam's cyberspace are the result of cross-pollination between sentimental attachment since the Soviet era, psychological bias towards Russia embedded in Vietnam's education and propaganda system, and the overriding imperative to preserve the Vietnamese state's political and ideological interests. We also found the same pattern happening in Indonesia. Nevertheless, when we delve into the data details, we find a denoting amount of masculine tone usage to express the pro-Russian narrative. We depart from this notion to further investigate the linkage between Putin's masculinities and the pro-Russian narrative voiced by Indonesian netizens. Here, we employ gender lenses to grasp how masculinity plays a significant role. We argue that the pro-Russian response developed by



Indonesia Netizen was a product of a hegemonic masculinities point of view. The sphere where the narrative emerges favors dominant masculinities over the other gender expression. We then traced the system of thinking to the Indonesian colonial era, in which the colonialists instilled unconscious gender ideology.

This research collected Twitter data to understand the netizen's response to the Russian invasion. Twitter has been chosen because of its ability to explain narratives from users' tweets (Sadler, 2017). Compared to other picture and video-based social media, Twitter offers data about actors' interactions and their narratives. Moreover, Twitter also fulfills a high range of data scalability and is classified as first-party data (acquired from the user's tweet directly). It helps reveal new patterns of insight into society, politics, and how information is distributed (Chen, 2018). This research uses Mixed-Method Social Network Analysis (SNA), which combines Social Network Analysis with a Qualitative approach to understand connections between actors and their narratives. This method is used because of the nature of data, called relational data. Relational data involves a connection between entities (William & Shepherd, 2017).

Regarding Twitter data, relational data can be processed to connect narratives between Twitter accounts (Pramono, 2023). In this case, the form of relational data is a Twitter conversation among Indonesia's netizens as a primary source and a literature review as a secondary source for data interpretation. Twitter data is collected after Russia employs its military forces in Ukraine. To be precise, the data collection process is operated from the end of February 2022 to March 31, 2022. After that, data interpretation is operated to give another perspective from existing theories and concepts about gender. From these keywords, we crawled 6280 Twitter content. To ensure the data relevance in Putin's masculinity context, we cleansed the data by erasing data that does not contain Putin's masculinity context and choosing data that only discusses the masculinity context. After the cleaning part was done, we got 642 Twitter interaction data that will be processed for Network Analysis and Data Interpretation.

## **The Genealogy of Indonesia Gender Relations**

The linkage between colonialism and gender construction lies beneath the notion of "exotic" and masculine adventure (Enloe, 2014). As it also serves as an underlying characteristic of masculinities. To become masculine by colonial standards, a man must subdue and abuse colonized women. Moreover, vice versa, the male colonized must protect and hinder abuse towards his women to maintain his masculinity (Alloula, 1986). In this sense, women are seen as subduable objects, which they are attributed to domestic references such as a worker, sex symbols, and nurturers, which have been verified as crucial to the entire colonial undertaking (Enloe, 2014). Taking the perspective of masculinity, one might abruptly say that the majority of masculinity of the oppressed was sustained by the female's ability to position themselves in the face of colonial rule.

In this sense, the colonial system plays a determining factor in constructing how gender relations happened. There are two contrasting relations between colonization and masculinities dominating different cultural realms. The eastern realm, where most



colonization occurred, tends to have a more dominating sense of masculinity (Connell, 2005). As Connell (2005) later scrutinized, those colonial masculinities gravitate around dominating those who lack masculine characteristics, such as female and colonized subjects. It contrasts with the Western realm, where the colonizer primarily resides, where the masculine manifested in distinguishing males and others through personal expression. It then manifested in the Dutch colonialization around the 1600-1945s, which constructed Indonesian gender relations.

The Dutch colonial government actively shaped gender relations by juxtaposing the native chief and the Dutch administration by differentiating the clothes (Gouda, 2007). The Dutch administration applies a European-style uniform resembling the army and covering the entire body. In contrast, the native chief was forced to wear traditional clothes. Apart from the differentiation, The Dutch colonial administration threw propaganda by regularly disseminating a comparative picture of both, along with a degrading message on how effeminate the native chief was compared to the Dutch officer. The propaganda aims to belittle the native leader and appraise the Dutch officer as the ideal type of masculinity to read between the lines. Thus, it is safe to argue that the Dutch colonial era played a significant role in formatting gender roles in Indonesia, where the masculine were deemed superior to the feminine (Prianti, 2019).

The stratified gender relations between masculine and feminine later settled for the next hundreds of years. Although it was a byproduct of colonialism, the modern era after independence in 1945 cannot seem to decolonize the incommensurate gender relations fully (Chi & Pabyantara, 2022). The predominant narrative of superior masculinities endures the age of the first two Indonesian presidents, Sukarno and Suharto. In the Sukarno era, the newly independent society praised the alpha male leader and his image as a wealthy polygamy practitioner icon (Van Wichelsen, 2009). He successfully glints as a Javanese alpha male leader with an elegant approach toward women. In the Soekarno era, there were two significant points of view on how women interact with masculinities. One entwined the masculine persona, which Sukarno delivered as the highest nation leader; the other was opposing.

The 1965 coup by the Indonesian Communist Party marked the abrupt transition from Soekarno to Soeharto. Soeharto, who ruled for 32 years, successfully imposed a hegemonic masculinity logic where the men perpetuated gender inequality and later took advantage of unjust relations (Connell, 1987). The regime adopted the *bapakism* ideology, which originated from *Bapak* means father in Indonesian. It is a doctrine that stipulates colonial masculinity at the center of social and political interaction. *Bapak* is enacted as a man who serves as a family leader, business leader, town leader, and nation-state leader. The God-righteous quality of *Bapak* is God-given wisdom, self-control, and mastery of emotion (Nilan, 2009). He articulates the masculinities by governing his gestures closely with a calm, smiley, and passive attitude. He perceived masculinity as the glory of *Akal*, rationality, and self-control over emotions (Peletz, 1995). His long regime period officiated the perspective of masculinities and helped shape the socialization of superior masculinities nationwide.



The superior masculinities prevailed until arguably the recent era. A leader in Indonesia is still associated with masculine traits, such as the glorification of *Akal*, as it was in the Soeharto era. Therefore, dominant masculinities' social value still serves as a concealed paradigm in Indonesia nowadays. It then provides a structure where the narratives can be translated into tweet posts. In the next session, we presented a series of data regarding two predominant narratives of netizens' response to the Russian invasion. We believe that the pro-Russia narrative is a product of the long history of gender and colonialism affiliation in Indonesia.

### The Posture of Netizen Response

For acquiring contextual data about Putin's masculinity from the Twitter conversation, we employ some keywords for data acquisition, as follows:

Table 1. Data Acquisition Keywords

Keywords (In Indonesia)	Keywords (English Translation)	Context
Putin Tegas	Putin Assertiveness	Putin is a man and a firm leader in leading his troops and firm in making every decision in his policy.
Putin Kuat	Putin Strong	Putin was a man and a strong leader in forming his troops and strong enough to make his opponents look weak.
Putin Maskulin	Putin Masculine	Putin is a masculine man, and all the points of view that shape his figure from a gender perspective.
Putin Suami	Putin Husband	Putin is a man who is dashing and able to protect his wife. (people make an analogy that Russia seems to be the husband of Ukraine)
Putin Keren	Putin Cool	Putin is a man who looks fantastic with all the sophistication of his resources and technology.
Putin Cerdas	Putin Intelligence	Putin is intelligent in formulating strategies and considering the next steps for his opponent's response.
Putin Sesama Jenis (pernikahan)	Putin LGBT	Putin's policy towards LGBT
Putin Islam	Putin Islam	Everything related to the keyword Islam or all statements that relate it to the context of Islam (from a religious point of view).
Putin Palestina	Putin Palestine	Everything related to the keyword Palestine or all statements relating to the context of Palestine (from a religious point of view).
Putin Maco	Putin Macho	Putin is a physically fit and strong man (looking at the physical context of Putin).
Putin Seksi	Putin Sexy	Putin is a physically fit and strong man (looking at the physical context of Putin).



Putin Beruang	Putin Bear	Putin is a person whose strength exceeds the bear (the strongest animal symbol in Russia).
Putin Telanjang Dada	Putin Topless (Flexing Chest)	Putin is physically fit and strong (looking at the physical context of Putin and their response to his Picture topless riding a horse in Serbia).
Putin Kekar	Putin Hefty	Putin is a physically fit and strong man (looking at the physical context of Putin).
Putin Kekar	Putin Hefty (Javanese)	Putin is a physically fit and strong man (looking at the physical context of Putin).
Putin Bugar	Putin Fitness	Putin is a physically fit and strong man (looking at the physical context of Putin).
Putin Nyali	Putin Courage	Putin was a man with great courage in facing all challenges and enemies in front of his eyes without fear
Putin Laki laki	Putin Man	Putin is a masculine man, and all the points of view shape his figure from a gender perspective.
Putin ukhuwah	Putin's Islamic Spirit	Putin is an actor that has an Islamic spirit
Putin umat	Putin Ummat (Indonesian)	Putin as an actor that supports Islam in global conflict
Putin ummat	Putin Ummat	Putin as an actor that supports Islam in global conflict
Putin Chechnya	Putin Cechen (Indonesian)	Tweets related to Putin and all information related to the Chechen war
Putin Chechen	Putin Cechen (English)	Putin and all information about his position and relevance in the war over the Cech in the past.

Source: Processed by author

We use two algorithms to explore how many interaction clusters are created from the network and what is an influential narration in the network: modularity class and weighted degree or degree centrality. The modularity class algorithm finds cluster interaction created by actor interaction in the network. Modularity measures the density of links inside communities compared to links between communities (Blondel et al., 2008). Degree Centrality counts the number of relationships or relationships owned by actors with other actors. The actor with the most relationships or having the highest degree will become the center of a network and greatly influence the network (Umadevi, 2013). Based on these two algorithms, two insights are found that explain Contra-West and Pro-Islam narratives among actors' interaction in the network.

### **Insight of Two Narratives: Contra-West and Pro-Islam**

Here is the resume of insight from the network. Population means the number of actors in each modularity. As mentioned above, the Weighted Degree algorithm decides which narration is dominant in each cluster.



Table 2. List of Narratives

Population	Narration
36.44%	Putin's Courage and Intelligence Against the Status Quo (West)
8.24%	Association of Putin as a pro-Islam actor & compares Ukraine and Palestine
6.12%	Support for Putin with Islamic Narrative
5.32%	Siding with Muslims & courage against the Westol;
3.99%	Counter attitude towards Putin with Islamic narrative
3.46%	Putin's rivalry with the West
3.46%	The debate about Putin in the Ukraine war from an Islamic perspective
3.19%	NATO's incompetence against Putin
3.19%	Putin's Courage in the Economy
3.19%	Support for Putin with Islamic Narrative
1.33%	Putin's firmness and courage against NATO and the US
1.06%	Comparing Putin's actions in Ukraine with Israel's actions in Palestine
1.06%	Insinuating Putin from the family side

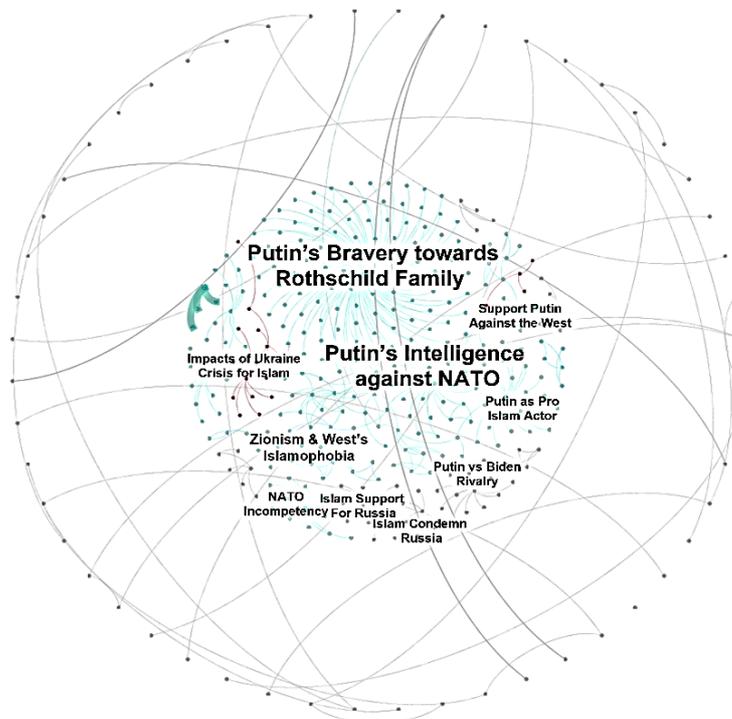
Source: Processed by author

The table above shows netizens' responses to Putin's masculinity are divided into two contexts. Islamic context as much as 27.39%, and Putin's bravery toward the West as much as 49.74%.

The picture below is the data visualization using Gephi Software and Frunchman Reingold Layout to drill down the data. The visualization depicts the distribution of narratives in the network. Color differentiation shows the actor's attitude or sentiment toward Putin. The blue color represents supportiveness and admiration towards Putin. The red color represents the contrary. In the beginning, we got the data about the actors' activities. Then, we transformed the actors with the narratives they were discussing and put them in the visualization. The label appearing in visualization is based on the influential narration in each cluster. The bigger label means the narrative is influential in the network.



Picture 1. Social Network Analysis



Source: Processed by the author using Gephi software

Based on the picture, Putin's bravery toward the Rothschild family and his intelligence against NATO are dominant narratives in the network. Few narratives have a supporting context for Putin, such as Putin's association as a pro-Islam person, Islamophobia in the West, and NATO's incompetency in competing with Putin. However, this network also contains a contrary context for Putin. The community of this narrative is not as massive as the positive narrative. The network criticizes the impact of the Ukraine crisis on Ukraine's Muslims. Also, there is a debate in the Islamic context about the Muslims that support Russia in the competition with the West and Putin as a war criminal from the Muslim perspective.

In the case of Putin's courage against the Status Quo (West), an actor with the username @Yo2thok becomes the most influential actor who brings this information to his network. Several tweets from this user can be categorized as positive commendation on Putin's assertiveness in defending Russian foreign policy and offensive geopolitical strategy on Donbas/ East Ukraine, tactical movement in minimizing NATO's with EU and US-backed pressure, and positive sentiment on Russia's ability defending the less-powerful country in Eastern Europe hemisphere. Moreover, a correlation between Putin's tactical movement and @Yo2thok tweet is found with the association of Putin's image with acts of courage compared with the conservative Muslim situation in Indonesia.



*Russian President, Vladimir Putin suggests the youth generation read Al-Qur'an, Bible, and Torah. He believes those scriptures can give the world direction to become better. Do you agree? It is different from the Wakanda state (refer to Indonesia), where the Islamic community is not solid because of radical and intolerant propaganda.<sup>1</sup>*

The tweet above implies that the Indonesian government tends to be permissive regarding radicalism. The user above juxtaposes Putin's arguably courageous behavior to counter Islamic radicalism and Indonesia's permissive traits to radicalism. Moreover, it then constructs an implicit feminization by framing that the Indonesian government cannot match Putin's strong response to radicalism. Another response from @Mentimoen framed that Putin better supports the Islamic cause in Palestine than the Indonesian government. Below, the tweet also constructs two sides of the rope by coupling the US and Russia dispute.

*This war (Russia-Ukraine War) actually is a war between Russia and the US, also Putin vs. Biden. Zelensky and Ukraine citizens are just the US's proxy. The US empowers allies to donate weapons for Ukraine citizens, but the ending is the Ukraine citizen's sacrificing.*

The content interprets the Russia and Ukraine war as a proxy of Russia and US competition. The actor thinks that the US has utilized Ukraine for its interest. Moreover, the actor believes the US supports their alliances (Ukraine and Israel) by managing public opinion. Information fabrication is operated to support the US agenda in global politics. @Mentimoen also implies a similarity between the Israel-Palestine war and the Russia-Ukraine in each tweet. The equalizing is in the proxy war context between the US and Russia. He also equates Israel's war strategy against Hamas with Russia's strategy in the Invasion of Ukraine. He stated that Russia imitates Israel's war strategy.

The content above frames the similarity of the Russia-Ukraine war with the Israel-Palestine war, emphasizing the Islamic-related narrative. On the other hand, a counter-narrative initiated by @Hasmibaktiar condemns Putin's attack on Ukraine by implying that it is a war between the West and Russia in essence.

*(Responding to a Muslim theology's video) Ukraine preacher urges Muslim people, specifically in Syria, not to be involved in a crime with Putin in killing Ukraine people. Ukraine's Muslims are an unspreadable element among Ukraine citizens. Sadaqat, yaa Sheik (prayer), religious person for sure will reject killing.*

The narrative tends to see Muslim people who have become victims of this war of the West versus Russia. Both parties have done inappropriate actions toward Muslim people

<sup>1</sup> The tweets quoted here are originally in Indonesian. We translated them to English using expression as close as to the original text.



in the world. He also persisted that Palestinians has undergone similar attack for decades and framed the West as a scapegoat instead.

In the case of Siding with Muslims and courage against the West, an actor with the username @mohtahid becomes the most influential actor who brings this information to his network.

*Putin is braver against the West and their allies alone. Besides, our uncle (refer to Jokowi) has no bravery against the cooking oil mafia. Putin and Jokowi are not equal.*

@mohtahid's narration compares Indonesia's government movement, which was considered not brave enough compared to Putin's decision-making and public policy. Putin is considered a brave man because of his courage to confront the West. Besides, as mentioned, Indonesia is still uncertain about its domestic problems, such as the cooking oil mafia problem.

### **The Romanticism of Putin's Masculinity**

In this section, we examine the predominant narrative of how the netizen delivers the message of Putin's courage to challenge the West in warfare. The notion was dominant in our dataset by 49,79% and 27,39%. Below, we find the details quite intriguing since it is divided into two: the articulation of Putin's bravery towards the West and how it is related to the Islamic political context. To present an interpretation of the notion, we employ a gender perspective to catch a glimpse of how masculinities are projected and perceived.

The details show 36,44% of tweets or modules related to Putin's bravery in challenging the Western status quo's power in Ukraine. Here, the West manifested in Rothschild and NATO. Thus, the first nodes stipulate Putin's bravery as a sign of masculinity prior to his dauntless to rock Rothschild and NATO, as we can notice from the @yo2thok below.

*The US & the West hate Putin. Are there any world leaders that are brave against Rothschild?*

Subsequently, approximately 8,24% of the dataset is associated with Putin as a pro-Islam leader, and 5,32% of tweets praise Putin's support for the Islamic agenda. There is a remnant of netizens' perception of the pro-Islamic agenda as a masculine gesture, as we can explore from the tweet from @kangprabuhuru below.

*Even Putin really respects Muslims, but in our country (Indonesia), fellow Muslims say they are radical.*

A similar nuance appears in the actor with no network influence. On the same pattern, @ZainalAbdiAlam4 asserts that Putin is eligible to be a lifetime Indonesian president.



*Not only do you deserve to be elected three for Indonesia, but you also have worthy of become president for a lifetime... It is all because of your love for Muslims.*

The first sentence mocked Joko Widodo's rumor of being nominated for President three times in a row, which is deemed against the current constitution. Nevertheless, Putin's perception as a pro-Islam leader still appears in this tweet. Even this actor hopes that Putin can lead Indonesia for a lifetime. Based on this tweet, there is a romanticism of Putin's persona as a masculine person who strives to protect Islam.

The mentioned data reveal how Indonesia's netizens perceive Putin's masculinity projection. Following gender and colonialism relations, we interpret the information cyclically. While Indonesia's netizens praised Putin for his bravery in waging war on Ukraine, the country they perceived as the West puppet, at the same time, they demonized the West for their masculinities articulation resembling domination. On one side, the 36,44% nodes of Putin's Courage and Intelligence Against the Status Quo illuminate the trace of deeming the West as colonial. The netizen firmly recognized the status quo, which refers to how the West presence in Ukraine was recognized as a form of colonialism. Thus, the narrative will follow. It is the nature of the colonial government always to try to dominate, abuse, and subdue the rest. The netizen then projected Rothschild and NATO's involvement in serving the Western colonial agenda toward Ukraine.

In addition, the second layer serves as the hub to connect the interpretation of colonialism and masculinities. In this sense, as Alloula (1986) scrutinized, groups of societies that underwent a series of colonization, like Indonesia, would like to perceive masculinities from the oppressed point of view. To maintain masculinity is to reject the domination of outsiders who came to conquer and take away freedom and independence. It also equips us with the cyclical point of view to comprehend the systematic thinking from where the predominant narrative emerges. Combining both serves as a basis for understanding the admiration narrative toward Putin. It links to Indonesian netizens' expectations of ideal types of leaders based on their masculinity. The full descriptions articulated around the colonial style of machismo, where masculinity positioned feminine actors as subordinates (Connell 2005). Thus, it depicts Putin as an ideal leader by projecting traditional masculinity values imposed by Indonesia's long-standing colonialism stage while simultaneously demonizing the West as colonial.

The number perfectly fits Indonesia's hegemonic masculinity trajectory: the colonial superior uniformed chief, the alpha male, and the bapakism ideology. Thus, we conclude that the supporting narrative of Putin's bravery is derived from the imposed gender role, where society is compelled to glorify masculinity.

The Lowy Institute survey supports the finding. The Indonesian public tends to put more faith in the Indonesian Military Forces than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to defend Indonesia's strategic interests. The symbolism of the uniformed military plays a significant role in influencing public opinion in which they symbolize masculine traits



(Bland 2021). Hence, we apprehend that Indonesians choose to believe in a military approach rather than diplomatic actors the way the colonial system used to be.

### **Feminization of the Indonesia Government**

The third most extensive network revolves around the neutrality of the Indonesian government conversations. The narrative goes along with the Indonesian public statement to remain neutral in responding to this case (Antara News, 2022). The neutrality sparks criticism from the second node, where most accounts incorporate a consistent conventional Islamic narrative. Number-wise, 5,32% of the population perceived Putin's action as being in line with the Islamic agenda while continuing to criticize the Indonesian government for being neutral. Joko Widodo administration often takes a hit of criticism from Islamic pressure groups such as the 212 movement. The patterns continue to raise criticism of Indonesia's neutral traits in responding to the 2022 Russia invasion (JPNN, 2022).

The critics' formulation indicates that there has been a feminization of the Indonesian government in the face of Russia. We find a trace of mocking while comparing Joko Widodo and Putin's intelligence in response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine. The conversation deemed Putin brilliant, then put Joko Widodo at the end of another rope. A network of ten tweets using hashtags #RakyatDijeratPutinDiperalat (people are being ensnared, Putin is the scapegoat) are included. They praised Putin's appreciation gesture to Muslims and compared it with Joko Widodo's regime, which condescends them as radicals, and all are categorized in "Putin Islam" keywords. On that note, we interpret the feminizing process as praising Putin's machoism and belittling Joko Widodo's neutrality in responding to the Ukraine issue.

The belittlement had occurred long before the 2022 Russian invasion. In the 2019 Indonesia general election, the opposition raised political concerns that Indonesia needed a more assertive and decisive leader, followed by Putin's masculine depictions (Toriq, 2018). The same political representative also stated that Putin was an abbreviation of *Prabowo Untuk Indonesia* (Prabowo for Indonesia) to burst a campaign supporting Prabowo Subianto, Joko Widodo's arch-rival in the 2019 presidential election (Dalimunthe, 2018). During the invasion, the opposition also played Putin's masculinity card to formulate a political attack on the administration (Andini, 2022). Depart from that trajectory, we correlate that the support toward the feminization of the Indonesian government narrative derived from a long opposition argument. Thus, in this case, it transformed into social media articulations projecting real-world political occurrences.

Following that, the second narrative on this network revolves around urging the Indonesian government to take sides with Russia for masculine reasons such as intelligence, strong leadership, and strong military power. In this sense, the network set Indonesia on the feminine side, which needs a strong actor to define its values. Furthermore, it goes hand in hand with colonial gender roles where masculinity resembles domination (Elmhirst, 2007). At the same time, one might find The Lowy Institute survey once again illuminating. The survey provided numbers of Indonesia's most inspiring,



confident world leaders besides Joko Widodo. Saudi Arabia's Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, US President Joe Biden, Russia President Vladimir Putin, and Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (Bland 2021). The survey was conducted before the Russian invasion. Thus, we find its relevance in understanding the setting and context where the source of the narrative lies.

The data above strengthens our interpretation of social media networks in which the predominant public favors leaders who represent absolute monarchs rather than democratic values. The survey also includes Putin in the fourth position, from which we affirm that number-wise, Indonesians are indeed awestruck by the symbolization of a robust, effective, and assertive political leader. It matches with the social media finding where there is a meaningful conversation about the Indonesian government's insufficiency to respond to the Russian invasion firmly. Even before the invasion, Putin was already a popular leader among Indonesians, and the invasion confirmed the claim (BBC News Indonesia, 2022). Employing a gender and colonialism perspective, we observe the tendency to position Indonesia's response as feminine towards Russia's Invasion along this line. Russia is seen as the superior masculine, while Indonesia is deemed as the feminine.

The example of Russia's superior narratives and Indonesia's feminization appeared in the actor with the username @mohtahid. In the last part, @mohtahid also becomes the most influential actor who brings these narratives to his network.

*Putin is braver against the West and their allies alone. Besides, our uncle (refer to Jokowi) has no bravery against the cooking oil mafia. Putin and Jokowi are not equal.*

@mohtahid's narration contains a comparison of how Indonesia and Russia behave in handling a problem. With his bravery in fighting with the West alone, Putin is seen as a masculine and superior person. In the same tweet, Jokowi, Indonesia's President, is deemed not brave enough to handle the cooking oil mafia as a part of domestic issues. Here, we capture how the tweet domesticated Joko Widodo compared to Putin, who is considered brave enough to wage war against another state, while Jokowi was considered to have failed in dealing with the cooking oil issue (CNBC Indonesia, 2022).

Another example of Indonesia's feminization narratives comes from @Denis\_Hakkan. He criticizes one of Indonesia's political parties, advising the Indonesian government not to invite Putin to the G20 Summit. @Denis\_Hakkan also expresses that Indonesia is just a follower in global politics because they do not dare to take a stand. The critique typical of the Indonesian government is always related to domestic issues. @Dennis\_Hakkan connects his critique with Parlemt's advice to the executive. Meanwhile, @Mustopa54537 spoke in the same tone:

*Uncle Putin will lead all Indonesia region !! Only the fool makes noise about electing the current President for the third time!!*



Indonesia is trying to discuss the possibility of extending the Jokowi Presidency in the third period. @Mustopa54537 illustrated that extending the Presidency in the third period is good if Putin becomes Indonesia's President. He also implied that there are no intelligent people in Indonesia. This statement tries to perceive Putin as intelligent compared to the Indonesian government, which is only concerned with domestic issues like the extension of the Presidency period. At this time, Joko Widodo was accused of the intention to prolong his reign for the third time, which was considered against the constitution (Yahya & Maullana, 2022). We found a trace of unjust comparison between Putin's bravery to wage war against another country and Joko Widodo's failure to handle domestic issues. A consistent juxtaposition of Putin's presumably bravery and Joko Widodo's act of uncertainty in the Russian invasion indicates a presence of feminization in the Indonesian government by situating Joko Widodo as a leader who is occupied with domestic affairs.

## Conclusion

Right after the first attack launched in February 2022, the Indonesian netizen's response on Twitter was massive. Beneath that pile of responses, we decipher two dominant narratives the Indonesian netizens actively articulated. The first is praising Putin's machoism, and the second is feminizing the Indonesian government by mocking President Joko Widodo's administration. We conclude that both narratives emerged from a patriarchal point of view dating back to colonization, which shaped the Indonesian glorification of masculinities resembling domination. The long trajectory of hegemonic masculinity imposed by the colonial regime prevailed until the contemporary era of Indonesia. It then served as a basis for how society perceived gender relations, resulting in the dominant narrative that employs dominant masculinities to support Russia's invasion of Ukraine by focusing on Putin's masculinities. Nevertheless, we believe this argument might ignite an open discussion on how gender's perspective deciphers the foreign community's response toward particular foreign policy, primarily how the noise in social media reflects on what is happening in the societal sphere following specific foreign affairs.

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