RESEARCH ARTICLE

TRANSFORMING FOREIGN POLICY: WOMEN AND SOFT POWER IN MULTICULTURAL WORLD[1]

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ABSTRACT

The multicultural atmosphere of the 21st century forces the states and individuals to gain different experiences. In this process, which is developing in parallel with technological innovations, foreign policy issues have had to fall out of the traditional framework. In fact, this situation has revealed the need to change foreign policy instruments and tools. "Soft power" is one of the preferred methods in the changing structure of foreign policy in contemporary multicultural world. "Soft power" was used by Joseph Nye in the 1980s and refers to a country's ability to convince others to do what it wants without force or coercion. Although the majority of foreign policy makers and implementers today are men, most of the issues on the foreign policy agenda are directly related to women. Women are the first and most affected by critical foreign policy issues such as migration, climate change, war, conflict, water, and energy. At the same time, women, with their productive and reproductive identities, are one of the most effective actors who have innate soft power. The purpose of this study is to shed light on the importance of women's participation in foreign policy processes in a changing and transforming multicultural world and the empowerment of women in the context of the use of soft power.

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Introduction

Centuries have passed since the individual began to become active in politics. However, this process is not yet complete. With the French Revolution, humanity has reached an important milestone, but the participation of women in this process is not yet fully recognizable. "Freedom of thought and expression", a fundamental human right, cannot be exercised in most countries, neither by men nor by women. Despite this negative image, it is a fact that respect for and observance of human rights has an impact that contributes to the global prestige of states. Especially in the course of globalization, there have been developments that will result not only in the spread of goods and technologies but also of human rights and some cultural standards. For example, the developing flow of information has made many different societies familiar with each other, and all societies have become aware of different standards. However, while globalization creates "networks of interdependence", it does not create societies with the same universal standards. For example, 1/3 of Africans have no telephone. More than half of the world's population cannot use the internet. The gap between rich and poor has widened. In short, globalization has not created a community with equal members throughout. On the other hand, we can see that crops such as potatoes, tomatoes, and corn and viruses such as HIV and Covid-19 are spreading worldwide. Global climate change has also spread fairly evenly around the world. This type of globalization is called environmental globalization. Another form of globalization is "military globalization". The First and Second World Wars and then the Cold War created a network in which military resources could be used on a global scale and through interconnected alliances. Today, the fight against terrorism has emerged as a global problem. Another form of globalization is "social globalization" which refers to the spread of people, ideas, and cultures. All kinds of displacement, from business travel to student exchanges, from irregular migration to tourism, contribute to social globalization (Nye & Welch, 2021, p.402-405). Nowadays, when states, societies, and individuals are transitioning to a new order at global, regional, and local levels, the issue of multiculturalism comes to the fore with new dimensions (Sanili Aydin, 2023, p.13). Women shed a light on new dimensions of multiculturalism with the soft power that they hold.

Considering all these evolutions and developments, the aim of this paper is to put emphasize on the importance of women's participation in foreign policy processes in a changing and transforming world and the empowerment of women in the context of the use of soft power.

Goal of Transformation: Becoming a Legitimate Member of the International Community

In political globalization, which is a branch of social globalization, the widespread constitutional regulations, the increase in the number of democratized states, and the development of international rules and organizations are noteworthy. The global spread of political ideas contributes to the development of the idea of international society. As constructivist theorists argue, abolitionism in the 19th century, anti-colonialism after the Second World War, and environmental and feminist movements today have profoundly affected world politics. Although states have not disappeared in the process of globalization, they are careful to carry out policies by taking into account transnational thought movements while determining their policies and trying to develop soft power elements.

Although there is an "anarchic" society image among states due to the absence of a central government, as Bull emphasizes, there are also common interests and rules among states. Therefore, it is possible to talk about an international society (Nardin, 2012,p. 385). In one aspect, the concept of international society describes the criteria of states suitable for global harmony. It becomes difficult or even impossible for states that do not meet this criterion to participate in international networks. Developments after the bipolar system have brought about an understanding of "world domestic politics" that emphasizes the concepts of "human rights" and "security" (Habermas, 2012,p. 33-35). Thus, developing trends began to find a place in international agreements over time.

Do these rules cover general principles that states agree to comply with or general goals that they have to achieve? The question has brought about two different theoretical discussions. One of these two approaches, the "pluralistic approach", claims that international states should be accepted as members of the international community if they comply with some general rules. According to Rawls, one of the leading scholars of the pluralist approach, political, economic, and cultural differences between nations are acceptable as long as they do not pose a problem for the global

order and do not conflict with generally accepted values. These principles adopted by contemporary international law are listed as respecting each other's political sovereignty and territorial integrity, complying with agreements and the law of war, and participating in global cooperation for the solution of global problems and a just world. Rawls stated that it is unnecessary to consider the ideological preferences of states outside this framework. One of the harshest criticisms of this approach was brought by Allen Buchanan. Buchanan said that if liberal principles are valid in the domestic political processes of states, these principles should also be applied in the international arena. Additionally, Buchanan notes that otherwise it would be unethical (Nardin, 2012,p. 385-386). With this approach, Buchanan displayed an attitude close to the "solidarity" approach. Solidarists say that legitimate members of the international community should cooperate towards common goals. Thus, we can say that solidarists have stricter criteria than "pluralists" in order to accept members of the international community as legitimate. The process of globalization, by its nature, has a character that gradually approaches from pluralism to solidarity. It is a result of this that global networks develop collaborative and collaborative working principles. As Deutsch stated in his "security community" approach, cooperation between different societies will develop in parallel with the increase in mutual trust. This approach emphasizes the effect of establishing an environment of trust between different societies in ensuring peace (Dedeoglu, 2004, p.1). It is clear that under these conditions, no bonus will be given to different tendencies. Otherwise, all areas of positive interaction, especially the functioning of the economy, may be damaged. Increasing the mutual trust of different societies develops with the increase of all kinds of relations (commercial, social, sports, etc.) between them. The globalization process has created such a platform for the whole world. This platform will also reveal communities that begin to resemble each other as mutual interactions develop. On the other hand, the new security perception is not discussed in a dimension where only inter-state relations and military balances are discussed. The human rights dimension of security must also be taken into consideration. In this context, security is a human rights issue (Dedeoglu, 2004,p. 20). In this context, one of the conditions for being a legitimate player in the global system has emerged as the capacity to embrace values such as human rights and democracy. States also take into account such capacities of the states with which they interact.

The process of globalization has not completely eliminated different cultures. However, over time, the process is moving towards creating a hybrid culture consisting of cultures influenced by each other all over the world. The increase in multi-identity social structures due to increasing migration with push and pull factors

constitutes the multicultural dimension of globalization (Sanili Aydin, 2023,p. 34-36). Although the concept of cultural imperialism is associated with the imposition of the culture of a dominant society on a weak society, the result is that the "culture of nothing" becomes dominant (Ritzer, 2020,p. 292). Despite everything, western culture, which is the strong side, puts its weight on the more vulnerable cultures and reflects western values. However, there are also processes in which global powers adapt to local elements and the local becomes stronger. The global effects of some local elements cannot be ignored. The Bollywood film industry and the global recognition of Al Jazzire Television are examples of this situation. This process is called "glocalization" (Heywood, 2013, p. 192).

Women and Soft Power in the Multicultural World

While democracy and human rights are presented as the utopia of a globalizing world, "women" is one of the most frequently mentioned issues in this regard. It is common to see "women" at the top of the list of global disadvantages.

Judith Butler, one of the feminist theorists, defining democracy, has emphasized that democracy is not monophonic when. According to Butler, the melodies of democracy should be discordant and unpredictable: "So life can be allowed. Otherwise, life will be hindered" (Aybakan Saliya, 2017,p. 203). However, the global world is woven with strong networks that do not allow such separation. While life is built with the strong rules of the economy, the possibility of stretching these walls is low. However, human rights and democracy still continue to exist as soft power elements that provide prestige for the communities that embrace them.

Joseph Nye has stated that the steps a government takes to strengthen human rights and democracy directly affect its soft power, drawing attention that the steps taken in this direction during the periods of Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton gave the USA soft power. Nye has also argued that a government's attitudes and collaborations for the development of human rights and democracy will increase sympathy for that state (Nye, 2011,p. 21-22).

On the other hand, democratic processes are not only activities carried out by the state. The impact of civil movements, especially transnational social movements, in the globalization process is very important. For example, actions such as women's

movements, environmental movements, and peace movements have attracted global attention. These movements are global and have had an impact because they find support from outside their countries and because of their nature, they have spread over a wide area that cannot be reduced by borders. For example, the issues focused on by the United Nations conferences held after the 1992 Rio Earth Summit were related to the issues highlighted at the mentioned summit. In these conferences, gender inequality, population control, environmental problems, human rights, and social development were addressed. Among transnational social movements, environmental and women's issues have been the ones that have had the most impact and attracted attention. This situation is a development that is compatible with both post-materialist and "new politics" understanding (Heywood, 2013,p. 193-195). New politics trusts social movements and their discourses more than the bureaucracy and elected politicians (Heywood, 2013,p.195). Therefore, it has become inevitable to take into account movements that have global repercussions. Even if states are not willing to meet the demands of entering the system in this way, they have to appear willing. Among the global social and political movements, the "women's movement" is quite remarkable. This movement is not only observed in Europe and the USA. For example, in China, women strive for their rights, their participation in employment, their roles in production and politics, and general equality. Women played an important role in the fight against apartheid in South Africa. After apartheid, it is possible to see South African women intensively struggling in education, health, working life, and social issues. In another region, Latin America, the struggles of Peruvian women expressing their desire to participate more in social life have also made a strong impact. In 1992, women's objections blocked the bill that would force working women in Russia to work from home, and this bill was not passed by the Russian Parliament. Although women's movements follow movements in other countries and carry out their actions in cooperation from time to time, the globalization process has led to the integration of the women's movement on a global scale (Giddens, 2013,p. 524).

In the 21st century, states want to show that they are reliable members of the international community. A positive image creates a facilitating effect in participating in global networks. Although the positive image and prestige policies of states are not new, this effort has increased greatly today. Among the issues that cause positive reflections on the image of a state, the point reached in democracy and human rights is important (Nye, 2011, p.104-105). In this context, the progress made by states regarding women also has an impact on the image of the state. It is important for states to control and direct their global image. However, if this effort is not based on a real reference, it will not be successful. Because no matter how a state wants to present

itself regarding human rights and the status of women, it will not be able to create a perception that is far from the truth. Because developing technology has made it possible to receive information from every corner of the world. For this reason, Nye recommends that states consider the foreign press more than the domestic press in their public diplomacy efforts. Another sensitive issue is the necessity of sorting out the correct information among thousands of information. In today's world where real information and propaganda purposes are intertwined, not only state channels but also the information sources of civil society and scientific communities should be taken into consideration (Nye, 2011,p. 106). In such an atmosphere, the possibility of hiding any negativity regarding women's rights is greatly reduced. On the other hand, international organizations have opened for signature documents that will have increasingly clear outcomes on women's rights. For example, the Additional Optional Protocol, which provides a mechanism to monitor whether the states that are parties to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women have fulfilled their promises, entered into force on 22 December 2000 (Balkır, 2011,p. 111). As can be seen, the UN is addressing these problems with increasing determination. Thus, not only civil society but also the systems created by states increasingly bring women's issue to the agenda, creating a network effect. The network effect is an effect that increases the importance of a topic as the frequency with which it is brought up increases, just as the value of a product increases as its users increase. Thus, as the number of focuses on women's issues increases, the sensitivity shown to this issue will also increase. States can't ignore such an important issue in their soft power policies. While expressing that the women's issue should be addressed at the UN level, it should be noted that the historical movements experienced in the globalization process have a global impact, unlike previous periods (Hodgson, 2018,p. 336-337). For this reason, although the issue of women's rights is a subject that has been discussed extensively in Western literature, it can set the agenda all over the world. The women's issue not only creates a global agenda but also turns into a global value defended by large masses. Today, it can be seen clearly that global values combined with local values are adopted in different belief and tradition systems (Akay, 2010,p. 58).

Although the women's issue is taken into consideration globally and embraced as a common value, it is not possible to say that the problems are over. Women's rights are an organic part of the human rights. The frequent suspension of human rights on a global scale due to the "security" - "freedom" dilemma influences women as well. Increasing world population, decreasing agricultural lands and drinkable water resources, and fighting against ecological disasters and epidemic diseases make it

difficult to use resources to increase welfare and freedom. Conditions that enforce people to be content with less impose an economic level and system of freedom that is behind what was imagined. The level of disappointment felt by the masses will be parallel to the level of their reaction. This situation will create governments that are more oppressive and move away from democracy. The world has often seen such developments in African and Latin American states (Kolakowski, 1995,p. 392). This process, which is likely to turn in such a negative direction, will reveal states that gain and lose soft power on a global scale. The ability of states not to destroy "freedoms" in response to the expectation of "security" while managing these processes will also shape the level of their soft power. Because the issue of women's rights has become a global value. Even if these rights are not granted, women's rights have already opened as a front to be fought on a global scale.

Conclusion

Beginning to use the concept of "global politics" instead of international politics in the 21st century, it has become impossible to separate local and global issues. This process, in which economic networks are tightly connected to each other, creates an ever-growing pool of global values despite superstructural differences (religion, politics, culture, law). Especially today, when global cooperation is needed more than before, the necessity of finding common ground is obvious. The obligation in question is not for an ethical value but for the survival of the planet and people. Global problems such as global warming, epidemics and terrorism can be solved within an absolute security society.

Societies, where basic human rights are not practiced cannot be expected to be partners in the global solution. It is imperative to take into account first the existence of women, who constitute a historically disadvantaged group in this category. Because the ranks of states around the world on women's issues are listed between low and lower. It is possible to list quite a few shortcomings even for good examples.

If to look at the world as a unit consisting of individuals, not states in terms of human rights, the solutions can be produced on human rights and justice issues; However, if states are expected to produce solutions in this process, no concrete output can be achieved with many internal interventions (Viotti & Kauppi, 2014,p. 461). This approach is likely to attract many criticisms. Because it has content that

challenges the sovereignty of states. However, when the deadly effects of global crises become concrete, states do not show much resistance in acting in accordance with global trends. The best example of this situation was the compliance of states with the warnings of the WHO during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The US President Donald Trump's conflict with the WHO affected both the decrease in the US's soft power and Trump's loss in the November 3, 2020 elections.

The 21st century has caused states to develop different reflexes than previous centuries. States that contribute to the reduction of global problems by supporting this process are expected to increase their soft power on a global scale. In this context, states that prioritize women's rights and struggle with the problems arising in this regard on a global scale will gain global prestige and admiration. In addition, these states will rise as castles of global hope despite all global economic contractions.

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