



**THE MAN, THE STATE, AND HYPERMASCULINITY:
THE GENDERED REORDERING OF INTERNATIONAL
ORDER IN TRUMP'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY***

**ERKEK, DEVLET VE HİPERERKEKSİLİK: TRUMP'IN
ULUSAL GÜVENLİK STRATEJİSİ'NDE ULUSLARARASI
DÜZENİN TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYETLİ YENİDEN
DÜZENLENİŞİ**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how Donald Trump's hypermasculine presidential leadership reshaped the U.S.-led international order by centering hypermasculinity as a constitutive dimension of international order. While mainstream IR accounts explain transformations in U.S. foreign policy through shifts in power distribution, grand strategy, or leadership preferences, this article argues that such approaches neglect the gendered foundations through which U.S. primacy and hierarchical masculinities are constructed. Drawing on the concepts of gendered multilevel games, gendered leadership, and state hypermasculinity, it conceptualizes hypermasculinity as an interlocking governing rationality operating across multiple levels of analysis and across diplomatic, structural, spatial, and virtual dimensions of state power through presidential leadership. Focusing on Trump's leadership and a feminist reading of the 2025 U.S. National Security Strategy, it demonstrates how hypermasculine governing rationalities

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reorganize international politics through differentiated masculinities, particularly via diplomatic hypermasculinity operationalized through feminization, infantilization, coercive transactionalism, and demands for gratitude. The article concludes that presidential hypermasculinity under conditions of U.S. primacy tends to reproduce security dilemmas as masculinity dilemmas rather than generating durable stability.

Keywords: Hypermasculinity, Leadership, Trump Doctrine, U.S. Foreign Policy, Gender and Security.

ÖZ

Bu makale, hipererkeksiliği uluslararası düzenin kurucu bir boyutu olarak ele alarak Donald Trump'ın hipererkeksi başkanlık liderliğinin ABD öncülüğündeki uluslararası düzeni nasıl dönüştürdüğünü incelemektedir. Anaakım Uluslararası ilişkiler yazını bu dönüşümleri güç dengesi, büyük strateji ya da lider tercihleri üzerinden açıklarken, bu makale söz konusu yaklaşımların ABD hegemonyasının ve hiyerarşik erkeksiliklerin inşa edildiği toplumsal cinsiyet temellerini göz ardı ettiğini ileri sürmektedir. Cinsiyetlendirilmiş çok düzeyli oyunlar, cinsiyetlendirilmiş liderlik ve devlet hipererkeksiliği kavramlarından hareket eden çalışma, hipererkeksiliği başkanlık liderliği aracılığıyla devlet iktidarının diplomatik, yapısal, mekânsal ve sanal boyutlarında işleyen iç içe geçmiş bir yönetim mantığı olarak kavramsallaştırmaktadır. Trump'ın liderliğine ve 2025 ABD Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejisi'nin feminist okumasına odaklanan makale, hipererkeksi yönetim mantığının uluslararası ilişkileri farklılaşmış erkeksilikler üzerinden nasıl yeniden düzenlediğini; bunun özellikle kadınsılaştırma, küçümseme, çıkarıcı diplomasi ve minnet talepleri aracılığıyla işleyen diplomatik hipererkeksilik üzerinden nasıl hayata geçirildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Makale, ABD askeri üstünlüğü koşullarında başkanlık hipererkeksiliğinin kalıcı istikrar üretmek yerine güvenlik ikilemlerini erkeklik ikilemleri olarak yeniden üretme eğiliminde olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hipererkeklik, Liderlik, Trump Doktrini, ABD Dış Politikası, Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Güvenlik.

INTRODUCTION

International order has never been gender-neutral. Feminist IR scholarship has long demonstrated that the international system is structured through masculinist logics that privilege hierarchy, militarization, autonomy, and domination, while marginalizing political practices associated with care, restraint, interdependence, and diplomacy (Tickner, 1992; Enloe, 2000; Hooper, 2001). Within this literature, masculinity is understood not as a set of individual traits attached to male bodies or leaders, but as a constitutive social logic through which power, security, and legitimacy are defined and enacted in global politics. As Enloe (2000: 200) argues, understanding the international workings of masculinity is indispensable to making a feminist sense of international politics at the structural level. Moreover, feminist scholarship has demonstrated that gendered logics operate not only at the structural level but also through the state and presidential leadership, showing that masculinity is constitutive of international politics across multiple levels of analysis (Peterson, 1992; Parashar et al., 2018: 5; True, 2018; Parpart, 2018: 205).

Yet, despite decades of feminist IR scholarship, the gendered logics underpinning the transformation of international order remain systematically undertheorized in mainstream accounts, which continue to explain structural change primarily through shifts in the material distribution of power, U.S. grand strategy, or leaders' strategic preferences (Jervis 2009; Ikenberry et al. 2009; Renshon and Suedfeld, 2020). Although Foreign Policy Analysis has long recognized the importance of political leaders in shaping foreign policy outcomes (Jervis, 1994; Hermann et al., 2001; Byman and Pollack, 2001; Jervis, 2013), leadership is typically analyzed through strategic preferences, cognitive traits, or decision-making styles rather than as a gendered political practice. Consequently, mainstream approaches have left insufficiently examined the gendered foundations through which leadership, state power, and international order are mutually constituted. This omission becomes particularly consequential when hypermasculinity is understood as a governing rationality that operates simultaneously across domestic, state, and international arenas, blurring conventional distinctions between the private and the public, the domestic and the international (Hooper, 1999: 489; Aggestam and True, 2021; Aggestam et al., 2024: 124; Lassman, 2025).

This article argues that the transformation of the U.S.-led liberal international order under Trump cannot be adequately understood without centering hypermasculinity as a constitutive dimension of structural reordering and change. Feminist scholarship demonstrates that hypermasculinity becomes particularly salient under perceived conditions of vulnerability, status anxiety, and hegemonic decline (Ling, 2000: 281; Agathangelou and Ling, 2004: 519; Maruska,

2010: 239; McIntosh et al., 2025: 384–387). Following the 2008 financial crisis, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the relative diffusion of global power, U.S. leadership increasingly confronted perceptions of overstretch, economic decline, and weakened international authority. While earlier administrations largely attempted to manage these pressures through retrenchment, multilateralism, and burden sharing, Trump interpreted them through a hypermasculine logic that framed the liberal international order itself as evidence of exploitation by allies, competitors, migrants, and global elites. Although existing feminist scholarship has addressed U.S. hypermasculinity across different historical periods and administrations (Nayak, 2006; Maruska, 2010; Stachowitsch, 2012; Eroukhmanoff, 2017; McIntosh and Hughes, 2025), Trump's second term and the NSS remain understudied.

This article addresses that gap by conceptualizing hypermasculinity not merely as a presidential characteristic limited to the individual level but as a crisis-oriented governing rationality through which insecurity is simultaneously managed and reproduced across individual, state, and structural levels. Building on Sjoberg's (2012) argument that gender hierarchy is a structural feature of the international system that shapes unit function, capabilities distribution, and political processes among states, it argues that hypermasculinity is the specific crisis-driven form through which that gender hierarchy is activated and institutionalized under conditions of U.S. primacy, its perceived decline and hypermasculine presidential leadership. In this sense, based on feminist scholarship, it reinstates that Waltz's foundational problematic of *Man, the State, and War* (2001) is a problem of *Man, the State, and Hypermasculinity*.

Building on recent feminist IR scholarship on gendered leadership (Aggestam and True, 2021) and state hypermasculinity (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026), this article advances three interrelated arguments. First, it argues that presidential hypermasculinity under U.S. primacy is not merely a personal or domestic attribute but a systemically consequential international practice due to the US's system-maker role since the end of World War II and preponderance of power since the end of the Cold War (Mastanduno, 2009). Drawing on Aggestam and True's (2021) concept of gendered multilevel games, it demonstrates that Trump's leadership hypermasculinity functions as the key operational site through which hypermasculine state rationalities of the US are articulated, personalized, and institutionalized across domestic and international arenas simultaneously. Second, building on Joshi and Tanyag's (2026) concept of state hypermasculinity, defined as an organizing logic to a range of interlocking state practices and processes that manifest as threat response to real, imagined, or conjured crises across diplomatic, structural, spatial, and virtual dimensions of state power, the article demonstrates how U.S. presidential hypermasculinity defined by Donald

Trump is embedded within state institutions, security practices, and geopolitical imaginaries themselves.

Third, the article demonstrates that Trump's hypermasculine leadership reorganizes international order through differentiated masculinities structured around feminization, infantilization, coercive transactionalism, and gratitude politics. Gratitude politics, as conceptualized in this article, refers to the hypermasculine practice through which the hegemonic leadership demands that subordinated states publicly acknowledge their dependence, indebtedness, and inferior position as a condition of continued protection, aid, or partnership, thereby transforming recognition into a performative marker of hierarchy rather than voluntary reciprocity among sovereign equals. Within this framework, demands for gratitude and recognition function as hypermasculine disciplinary practices through which allies, rivals, and subordinated actors are hierarchically ordered amid perceived U.S. decline and hegemonic anxiety. U.S. hypermasculine presidential leadership, therefore, tends to reproduce insecurity by transforming geopolitical competition into antagonistic, crisis-oriented ordering practices rather than generating durable stability, thereby rendering the study of hypermasculinity indispensable for understanding the future of the liberal international order.

The article's methodology is elaborated in the following section; briefly, it applies a feminist discourse-analytic lens to the NSS under Trump's leadership to examine how hypermasculine governing rationalities reorganize key geopolitical relationships through differentiated hierarchies of masculinity. The article proceeds in four steps. The first section develops the theoretical framework by combining Aggestam and True's (2021) concepts of gendered leadership and gendered multilevel games with Joshi and Tanyag's (2026) concept of state hypermasculinity. Building on these approaches, it conceptualizes hypermasculinity as a presidential, state, and structural governing rationality operating across diplomatic, structural, spatial, and virtual dimensions of state power, while situating presidential leadership as the key operational site through which broader hypermasculine state rationalities are articulated and institutionalized. The second section analyzes Trump's hypermasculine leadership across both presidential terms as a situated response to perceived U.S. decline, status erosion, and hegemonic anxiety. It demonstrates how hypermasculinity became increasingly institutionalized across the diplomatic, structural, spatial, and virtual dimensions of state power throughout both administrations. The third section reads the NSS as a discursive and institutional site through which hypermasculinized national identity collapses the domestic–international divide and redefines U.S. primacy through Trump's gendered, civilizational, hierarchical, and coercive approach to international politics. Focusing on Europe and NATO, China, and the Western Hemisphere, the

empirical analysis examines how Trump's diplomatic hypermasculinity hierarchically organizes these geopolitical, economic, and security relationships through differentiated masculinities. The article concludes that the man, the state, and hypermasculinity operate as interlocked governing logics, and that Trump's hypermasculine leadership, empowered by U.S. preponderance, tends to reproduce security dilemmas as crises of hypermasculinity rather than generating durable stability.

1. METHODOLOGY

Building on feminist IR scholarship arguing that “the international system is structured through gender hierarchies,” the analysis assumes that states are positioned within the current international order not only according to the distribution of material capabilities but also according to the gendered meanings attached to those capabilities (Sjoberg, 2012: 4–14). Despite its relative decline in power, the United States remains the principal architect of the post–World War II liberal international order and the system's preponderant power. Consequently, how its presidential leadership interprets, performs, and seeks to exercise this structural position constitutes a particularly consequential site of analysis. Following Stachowitsch's (2012: 309–317) conceptualization of national security strategy documents as sites where foreign policy orientations, military reforms, and gender regimes are negotiated simultaneously, this article treats the NSS as a discursive and institutional arena through which gendered representations of the American Self and its Others are constructed and positioned within a hierarchical gender order. This relational and hierarchical framework informs the article's analytical and methodological approach. As the official articulation of national security priorities under a given administration, the NSS provides an important window into how presidential understandings of power, hierarchy, and international order are reflected in a broader strategic vision.

Read through a feminist theory-informed interpretive discourse-analytic lens, the NSS produced under Donald Trump is approached not as a neutral statement of strategic priorities but as a site where American presidential and state-level hypermasculinities construct gendered and hierarchically ordered representations of international order. The analysis, therefore, examines how Trump's NSS constructs U.S. authority at the apex of this gendered hierarchy while simultaneously positioning Europe, China, and the Western Hemisphere within differentiated relations of dependence, rivalry, and subordination, thereby producing differentiated masculinities ranging from feminized and infantilized dependents to rival masculinities. In doing so, the analysis attends to representations through which the United States is constructed as economically, militarily, culturally, and civilizationally strong, sovereign, protective, authoritative, and capable of leadership and order-making, characteristics that are

commonly associated with hypermasculine performances of power in feminist IR scholarship. It simultaneously examines representations of other actors associated with dependence, vulnerability, correction, discipline, cultural decline, and reliance on external support, characteristics that feminist IR scholarship has frequently associated with subordinate masculinities and gendered positions within hierarchical international orders. Rather than treating Europe, China, and the Western Hemisphere as standalone case studies, the article examines how Trump's NSS positions and orders these geopolitical regions within a gendered hierarchy of international order through recurring logics of alignment, dependency, rivalry, and subordination.

The analysis conceptualizes U.S. hypermasculinity, as represented in the NSS, as a relational and hierarchical form of ordering in which the more actors are portrayed as dependent upon U.S. protection, resources, leadership, or recognition, the more subordinate their position becomes within the NSS's gendered hierarchy, while actors represented as autonomous challengers are interpreted as rival masculinities. These categories are identified through close reading of the NSS, with particular attention to recurring representational logics, word choice, and Self/Other hierarchies. Rather than treating particular words as explicit indicators of emasculation and feminization, infantilization, or gratitude politics, and without seeking to establish causal relationships or measure hypermasculinity through keyword frequencies, the analysis examines hierarchical and relational positioning by identifying three discursive markers used to position other states and regions vis-à-vis the United States. Emasculation and feminization are identified when actors are represented as dependent upon U.S. military protection, economic resources, strategic guidance, or diplomatic intervention. Infantilization is identified when actors are portrayed as lacking autonomous agency and requiring U.S. oversight, correction, or discipline. Gratitude politics is identified when past or present U.S. security commitments, alliance obligations, economic contributions, or historical sacrifices are framed as creating obligations of recognition, reciprocity, repayment, or public acknowledgment from other actors. Together, these categories provide the methodological basis for interpreting hierarchical and gendered representations of international order in the NSS.

2. HYPERMASCULINITY GOVERNING LOGIC: PRESIDENTIAL, STATE, AND STRUCTURAL LEVELS

The concept of hypermasculinity was coined by Ashis Nandy to capture a reactionary form of masculinity emerging in response to domination, vulnerability, and perceived emasculation (Agathangelou and Ling, 2004: 519). Agathangelou and Ling (2004: 519) argue that hypermasculinity arises when agents of hegemonic masculinity feel threatened or undermined, thereby inflating

or exaggerating traditional masculine authority. This formulation establishes an analytical distinction between hegemonic masculinity, understood as a historically normalized configuration of masculine authority (Connell, 2020), and hypermasculinity, conceptualized as its crisis-driven hardening under perceived conditions of instability and decline. To understand this distinction fully, it is necessary to situate it within Connell's broader relational framework. Connell (2020: 77–81) situates masculinities within relational hierarchies of dominance and subordination, distinguishing hegemonic, subordinated, complicit, and marginalized masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity occupies the apex of this hierarchy through culturally legitimized authority sustained primarily through consent rather than continuous coercion. Hypermasculinity, in this framework, emerges when this consent-based dominance is perceived as fragile or threatened. Nayak (2006: 43) further defines hypermasculinity as the sensationalistic endorsement of rigid gender roles, militarized reactions, and an obsession with order, power, and control. Hypermasculinity should therefore not be understood simply as an intensified form of masculinity, but as a crisis-driven governing logic activated when dominant masculinities perceive themselves as vulnerable, displaced, or destabilized (Ling, 2000: 279; Maruska, 2010: 238–239).

Postcolonial feminist IR scholarship further demonstrates that hypermasculinity operates as a compensatory response to underlying vulnerability and anxiety about status loss within masculinized political orders shaped by historical relations of domination (Ling, 2000: 279; Maruska, 2010: 238–239; McIntosh et al., 2025: 384–387). Weber (2018) describes this dynamic through the notion of recurrent “hysteria”, capturing how hypermasculine reactions manifest as explosive and repetitive overreactions to perceived threats to masculine authority, while Maruska (2010) conceptualizes it as a “crisis of masculinity” that becomes particularly salient during moments of crisis, war, or perceived decline when established hierarchies of authority appear fragile. Ling (2000: 279, 281, 283) further traces this dynamic historically through the concept of subaltern hypermasculinity, defined as a historically produced response to racialized emasculation generated by colonial domination, occupation, and exploitation. In such contexts, hegemonic masculinity hardens into hypermasculinity by privileging coercion, militarized and racialized responses, executive control, and exclusionary nationalism over restraint, diplomacy, or multilateralism, rendering crisis itself politically productive through the legitimization of stronger borders, coercive diplomacy, militarization of markets, executive centralization, and anti-gender politics (Ling, 2000; Stachowitsch, 2015; Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 3–4; Agius, 2022).

Crucially, this relationship is mutually constitutive: hypermasculinity does not merely respond to crisis but actively reproduces it, generating perpetual cycles of insecurity, competition, and antagonism (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 4).

Reinterpreting Maruska's (2010: 248) argument that "hegemonic masculinity is international politics and international politics is hegemonic masculinity", under conditions of crisis, hypermasculinity increasingly structures international politics insofar as core concepts such as power, rationality, security, and sovereignty remain saturated with hypermasculinized assumptions (Tickner, 1992; Hooper, 2001: 44).

Feminist IR scholarship has further demonstrated that hypermasculinity is reproduced through discursive practices of emasculation, feminization, infantilization, and racialization. Emasculation refers to the uncoding of subjects as men, and feminization to their recoding as women, both of which function as key mechanisms in the production of subordinate masculinities at the state level (Weber, 2018: 151; Hutchings, 2018: 395; Hooper, 2001: 71; Stachowitsch, 2015: 372). Feminization devalues practices associated with soft power, diplomacy, and international law while legitimizing coercive responses and reproducing hierarchies among states. As Nayak (2006: 43) demonstrates, these dynamics operate through infantilization (the representation of political actors as helpless, backward, and in need of discipline), demonization and dehumanization (the erasure of agency through racialized and gendered stigmatization), and sexual commodification (the objectification of bodies within militarized and moral economies), rendering coercive interventions politically and morally intelligible while constructing the feminized and racialized Other as constitutive of hypermasculine state identity. Joshi and Tanyang (2026: 4) highlight that hypermasculinity is associated with colonialism's "civilizing mission," "war-mongering," and "territory-grabbing," feminizing the colonial Other. Remarkably, the demands for gratitude function as a hypermasculine hierarchical practice through which subordinated states are made to publicly acknowledge their emasculation, dependence, feminization, and infantilization, thereby performing and reproducing their subordinate position within the hypermasculine hegemon's international order.

The question, then, is how this structural logic of hypermasculinity is activated, personalized, and institutionalized within concrete foreign policy practice. Foreign Policy Analysis provides a natural entry point here: as Hudson (2005: 1) emphasizes, foreign policy outcomes are ultimately produced by human decision-makers, rendering leaders' perceptions, interpretations, and choices central. Yet, despite this sustained attention to individual agency, FPA has long examined leaders through gender-selective (Jessop, 2004) and an implicitly masculinized conception of political agency, marginalizing the role of masculinities and gendered subjectivities within foreign policy decision-making (Hooper, 1999: 489; Byman and Pollack, 2001). For instance, Hermann's (2003) well-established Leadership Trait Analysis framework, while analytically sophisticated, remains gender-selective, theorizing leadership through traits such

as need for power and distrust of others without examining how these traits are constituted through gendered logics of authority and dominance. Building on Fletcher's (2004) argument that "doing gender, doing power, and doing leadership are frequently linked," Aggestam and True (2020: 150; 2021: 388–389) argue that FPA has insufficiently theorized gendered leadership as the key analytical mechanism through which gendered dynamics between the state and structural levels are mediated and operationalized. It is here that their concept of "gendered multilevel games" becomes analytically indispensable, demonstrating how political leaders function as the key site through which hypermasculine logics operating across domestic, international, and transnational arenas are mobilized, legitimized, and translated into specific foreign policy repertoires (Aggestam and True, 2021: 387–393).

Moreover, building on Putnam's (1988) two-level games framework, Aggestam and True (2021: 387–388) demonstrate that leaders do not merely respond to pre-given structural pressures but actively mobilize pro- and anti-gender norms across multiple arenas to consolidate authority, define national interest, and legitimize specific foreign policy repertoires. Leadership, therefore, constitutes a gendered practice involving gendered behaviour, symbolism, and interaction (Aggestam and True, 2021: 391). Crucially, their framework demonstrates that leadership operates through multiple gendered configurations rather than a singular masculinity, identifying variations, including hypermasculine revisionist leadership, normative gendered nation-branding, compassionate leadership, and contested leadership over pro- and anti-gender norms (Aggestam and True, 2021: 394–403). As Aggestam and True (2021) argue, hypermasculine revisionist leadership is characterized by antagonistic statecraft, the rejection of multilateralism, the personalization of diplomacy, and populist national restoration narratives structured around perceived decline, humiliation, and emasculation. It is important to note that these variations demonstrate that hypermasculinity constitutes one possible configuration of gendered leadership under specific historical, geopolitical, and individual conditions rather than a universal feature of political authority, where leaders' personal gendered beliefs, cognitive frameworks, and identity performances shape which configuration of masculinity is enacted and institutionalized in foreign policy practice.

Similarly, Joshi and Tanyag (2026) argue that hypermasculinity should be understood as a systemic and institutional governing logic rather than merely a personal style or misogynistic disposition, conceptualizing "state hypermasculinity" as "an organizing logic to a range of interlocking state practices and processes that manifest as threat response to real, imagined, or conjured crises" (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 2). This formulation is analytically significant because it shifts the focus from why particular leaders embody hypermasculinity toward the conditions through which leaders are afforded autonomy to

reconfigure state practices across multiple dimensions of governance and international order. Hypermasculine leaders matter not simply because of their personas or misogynistic and anti-feminist proclivities but because of their role as agents of state hypermasculinity, activating or hastening hypermasculine state transformations through their commanding ability to instrumentally produce and project threats and crises that legitimize the expansion of executive power and coercive state practices (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 2). Their framework nonetheless converges with Aggestam and True's argument that leadership, institutions, and structures are mutually constitutive rather than analytically separable domains, extending feminist Foreign Policy Analysis beyond leader-centric explanations by foregrounding the institutionalization of hypermasculine logics within state practices, security structures, and international ordering processes themselves (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 2; Aggestam and True, 2021: 392–393).

Presidential leadership functions as the key operational mechanism through which “state hypermasculinity” is translated into concrete governing practices across four interrelated dimensions of state power (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 4-7). As they argue, these dimensions are mutually reinforcing rather than discrete, embedding hypermasculinity within state institutions, security practices, foreign policy doctrines, and geopolitical imaginaries themselves. First, structural hypermasculinity reorganizes political institutions around militarization, securitization, and executive centralization. Second, spatial hypermasculinity operates through border fortification, territorial competition, and exclusionary constructions of national belonging. Third, virtual hypermasculinity normalizes digitally mediated performances of antagonism, humiliation, and masculine domination across political space (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 4-7).

Fourth, and most centrally for this article's analysis, diplomatic hypermasculinity privileges coercive sovereignty, transactionalism, strong-arm bargaining, and antagonistic statecraft, and it is through this dimension that hypermasculine state logics most visibly manifest in international relations. Hypermasculine leaders increasingly establish a “muscular equation” between themselves and the state, enabling them to personalize foreign policy authority while delegitimizing deliberation, institutional restraint, and multilateral norms (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 5). Diplomatic arenas consequently become sites of “masculinity contests” in which leaders engage in symbolic performances of dominance, humiliation, and toughness before domestic and international audiences (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 5). Echoing Aggestam and True's (2021: 394) discussion of “alpha male foreign policy,” hypermasculine diplomacy is characterized by strong-arm tactics, coercive bilateralism, anti-multilateralism, and transactional politics organized around rigid “us versus them” binaries. These diplomatic performances are not merely rhetorical: they are embedded within broader transformations of state power itself, operating in tandem with structural

changes that centralize executive authority, weaken institutional constraints, intensify securitization, and normalize militarized responses to constructed crises (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 5–6). Overall, these four dimensions reveal how hypermasculinity becomes institutionalized as a governing rationality embedded across multiple sites of state power, operating simultaneously through domestic institutions, geopolitical imaginaries, and international ordering practices.

In sum, leadership functions as the key operational site through which hypermasculinity at the structural and state levels is articulated, personalized, legitimized, and institutionalized within foreign policy and national security practice (Aggestam and True, 2021; True, 2018; Jessop, 2004). Hypermasculinity is predominantly enacted by actors occupying positions of political authority, whose masculinized visions of order, control, and responsibility come to structure international politics itself (Parpart, 2018: 205). The U.S. hypermasculinized leadership, in this sense, is not merely an individual attribute but a relational and institutional practice through which gendered power operates across domestic and international politics. This is particularly consequential given the U.S.'s structural military and economic primacy, as its presidential performances of hypermasculinity carry systemic implications for international peace and order. National security strategies constitute one of the clearest institutional sites through which U.S. presidential hypermasculinity reorganizes international relations based on hierarchies of masculinities (Stachowitsch, 2012: 308). For this reason, rather than reading the 2025 NSS merely as a reflection of Trump's personal worldview, the document is conceptualized as an institutional site through which hypermasculine state logics become normalized and operationalized across multiple domains of U.S. foreign policy through geopolitical hierarchies, coercive economic practices, securitized identity narratives, alliance conditionality, and differentiated masculinities (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 5–6). The following sections examine how the hypermasculinity dynamic became increasingly institutionalized across Trump's two presidential terms before turning to a feminist reading of the NSS that illustrates the hypermasculine reordering of international relations.

3. TRUMP'S HYPERMASCULINE PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP: FROM DOMESTIC RESTORATION TO INTERNATIONAL REORDERING (2017–2025)

U.S. hypermasculinity is not a Trump invention but a constitutive feature of U.S. foreign policy across administrations, albeit in different configurations (Weldes, 1999; Weber, 2018; Campbell, 1992; Nayak, 2006; Maruska, 2010; Stachowitsch, 2012; Niva, 2018). The United States consolidated its hegemonic masculinity during the early Cold War through discourses of masculine protection, nuclear primacy, and the feminization of communism as the constitutive Other of American identity (Albayrak Dönmez, 2024: 70). Cold War

foreign policy discourse did not merely respond to external threats but actively produced national identity through exclusion and boundary-making, disciplining internal others including homosexuals and communists while projecting the feminized communist danger outward (Campbell, 1992). This gendered security order repositioned women within the domestic sphere as guardians of family and consumerist capitalism in a civilizational struggle between freedom and communism (Enloe, 1993: 16), rendering hypermasculinity not only a security logic but a gendered identity-producing practice that naturalized U.S. hierarchy and coercive legitimacy within the Western alliance. This hypermasculinized mode of order-making did not recede with the end of the Cold War but was rearticulated under conditions of U.S. primacy, shifting across administrations in response to changing geopolitical pressures (Enloe, 1993; Wohlforth, 2009). Under Clinton, multilateralism and diplomacy were associated with more expansive gender equality measures; under Bush, hypermasculine security logics hardened in response to 9/11, framing gender equality as moral legitimation for militarized intervention; and under Obama, pro-gender equality norms were partially rehabilitated in both domestic politics and foreign policy discourse (Stachowitsch, 2012: 309–317).

Yet it should be noted that due to the military and economic primacy of the United States, even when pro-gender presidential masculinities lead the country, the underlying militarized foundations of U.S. global leadership persist through drone warfare, overseas bases, and strategic military balancing, rendering diplomatic hypermasculinity structurally intact even as its rhetorical register shifts toward multilateralism and liberal internationalism. For this reason, the masculinity configuration adopted by U.S. presidents matters enormously for international politics: given the structural hypermasculinity embedded in U.S. foreign policy, a president who operationalizes hypermasculine governing rationalities does not merely reflect personal disposition but activates and intensifies the full force of American state hypermasculinity across domestic and international arenas simultaneously. Drawing on Hermann's (1980) leadership trait analysis, Siniver and Featherstone (2020) characterize Trump as an expansionist leader marked by low cognitive complexity, mistrust, and strong in-group bias, traits closely aligned with hypermasculine leadership styles privileging dominance, antagonism, and the externalization of insecurity. Against this backdrop of structural continuity and leadership-mediated variation, Trump's hypermasculine presidential leadership represents the most aggressive intensification of U.S. hypermasculinity at a critical juncture in which U.S. hypermasculinity itself contests the liberal international order it once underwrote, activating its full governing force across domestic and international arenas by recasting multilateral norms, institutional restraint, and cooperative diplomacy as signs of weakness and feminization.

Emerging in a context marked by perceptions of U.S. decline, military overstretch, and growing status anxiety following the 2008 financial crisis, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the relative diffusion of global power and rise of China (Hill and Hurst, 2020), Trump constructed his political appeal around a hypermasculinized narrative of national restoration, presenting the United States as a weakened, exploited, and feminized power whose strength, authority, and global dominance had allegedly been undermined by liberal elites, multilateral commitments, migration, and progressive social transformation (Aggestam and True, 2021: 394; Jasmin and Hosen, 2025). Central to this hypermasculine leadership style was what Homolar and Scholz (2019: 344) conceptualize as “Trump-speak”, a populist crisis rhetoric that simultaneously constructed an imaginary crisis in America and positioned Trump as the only leader capable of restoring national greatness. Rather than responding to objective conditions of decline, “Trump-speak” actively manufactured ontological insecurity among the American public by placing voters in a loss frame, amplifying anxieties about cultural displacement, economic vulnerability, and demographic change, while offering hypermasculine restoration narratives as the pathway back to normalcy (Homolar and Scholz, 2019: 347, 356–357). The Make America Great Again slogan and the America First doctrine together encapsulated this hypermasculine project of national restoration, promising the recovery of masculine authority, dominance, and control to constituencies experiencing perceived cultural displacement and anxieties over the erosion of authentic American masculinity, threatened by migrants, liberal reformers, and the expanding political visibility of women, people of color, and other outsiders (McIntosh et al., 2025: 403; Eroukhmanoff, 2017: 2–3; Homolar and Scholz, 2019: 347; Deckman and Cassese, 2021: 279).

Within the domestic arena, Trump’s hypermasculine leadership operated primarily through structural and virtual dimensions of state hypermasculinity (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 5–7). Structurally, Trump systematically used crisis logics to undermine existing institutional constraints and centralize executive power, conjuring border crises, framing Mexican immigrants as bad hombres posing sexual threats to American women and children, and mobilizing racialized masculinist logics that disciplined dissenting citizens as feminized and deviant others (Agius, 2022; Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 5–6). In his second term, structural hypermasculinity deepened through Trump’s invocation of the 1798 Alien Enemies Act to implement a militarized mass deportation campaign that defied multiple court orders, generating what legal scholars identify as a constitutional crisis through the deliberate disruption of checks and balances between the legislature, judiciary, and executive (Kettl, 2025). Virtually, Trump’s Make America Great Again online ecosystem, encompassing memes, AI-generated fakes, and algorithmically amplified content, constituted a digitally curated reality

of national restoration that erased material inequalities and political failures, while his tweet diplomacy normalized politics as a zero-sum arena of masculine competition (Smith and Higgins, 2020; Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 6–7). In his second term, virtual hypermasculinity deepened through the growing political influence of tech oligarchs such as Elon Musk, whose control over major digital platforms enabled new forms of state collusion with private tech companies to shape political narratives, amplify misogynistic and anti-gender content, and expand the reach of authoritarian political identity beyond domestic settings (Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 7). Together, these domestic dimensions of hypermasculinity operated through the feminization and racialization of internal others, constructing a hypermasculine national identity that simultaneously disciplined dissent at home and projected an aggressive masculine authority outward.

In the international arena, Trump's hypermasculine leadership operated primarily through diplomatic and spatial dimensions of state hypermasculinity. Diplomatically, Trump's foreign policy was marked by an extreme sensitivity to symbolism, where status, respect, and recognition functioned as the critical pillars of American diplomatic authority, rendering any perceived disrespect, burden-sharing failure, or insufficient deference a direct challenge to masculine national honor requiring coercive response (Aggestam and True, 2021: 394). This hypermasculine tendency helps explain Trump's dramatic shift toward bilateralism, reflecting a deep disbelief in multilateral diplomacy and international norms as an emasculating constraint on sovereign authority (Aggestam and True, 2021: 391, 395; Joshi and Tanyag, 2026: 6). During his first term, Trump withdrew the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the Iran nuclear deal, repeatedly framing multilateral commitments as constraints on U.S. sovereignty and emasculating impositions by global elites (White, 2022: 4; Renshon and Suedfeld, 2020). He imposed tariffs on close allies such as Canada, Mexico, and the European Union, escalated economic confrontation with China, and openly questioned NATO's value by conditioning alliance commitments on financial burden-sharing (Smith and Higgins, 2020: 8). Diplomatic forums became sites of explicit masculinity contests, most visibly at the 2018 North Korea-U.S. summit, where Trump and Kim Jong Un engaged in performative displays of dominance over nuclear capability, and at the 2018 G7 summit, where Trump publicly labeled Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meek and mild and dishonest and weak, attributions carrying implicit feminine connotations designed to subordinate an allied leader before domestic and international audiences (Aggestam and True, 2021: 394, 397).

As Joshi and Tanyag (2026: 5) argue, hypermasculine diplomacy establishes a muscular equation between the leader and the state, closing off deliberative politics and recasting international relations as a winner-takes-all contest of

masculine authority. Across both terms, transactionalism functioned as the defining governing logic of this hypermasculine diplomacy: rather than treating alliances, diplomacy, or international commitments as institutional or normative relationships, Trump approached them through what scholars describe as a masculinized “money-first prism” (Siniver and Featherstone, 2020: 71) or “commercial realism” (Schweller, 2026) centered on bargaining power, hierarchy, dominance, and fair share calculations, publicly shaming allies who failed to meet U.S. expectations and reducing complex geopolitical questions to coercive business-style transactions. As Schweller (2026) suggests, under the logic of what he terms commercial realism, Trump advocates that the United States should derive tangible benefits from the provision of global public goods or have little reason to continue providing them. In his reading of the Trump administration's posture, security commitments and military alliances are consequently reframed as contingent upon economic returns, transforming protection into a transactional exchange rather than an unconditional strategic obligation. U.S. alliances, as he underlines, appear increasingly tied to the purchase of American weapons, energy, and industrial products, reinforcing a hierarchical relationship in which continued protection is conditioned upon economic reciprocity and material contribution.

Spatially, Trump's abandonment of global climate commitments and vows to “drill, baby, drill” reflected what Daggett (2018: 37) conceptualizes as “petro-masculinity”, recasting climate policy as a feminist and globalist imposition on authentic American masculine identity. At the same time, the 2026 intervention in Venezuela and the capture of Nicolás Maduro under narco-terrorism charges, U.S. demands regarding Greenland on the grounds of national security concerns linked to Russian and Chinese activity in the Arctic, and Trump's tariff policies and repeated references to Canada as the “51st State” reflected a hypermasculine understanding of sovereignty grounded in dominance, coercion, and hierarchical control rather than sovereign equality among states (Olay, 2026; CNN, 2026a; 2026b; Boynton, 2026). Taken together, these policies can be read as attempts to reassert U.S. authority within its perceived sphere of influence through the hypermasculine projection of power across the Western Hemisphere and the Arctic.

In his second term, this transactional and hypermasculine diplomatic logic deepened into a systematic politics of gratitude, through which Trump demanded explicit acknowledgment of American generosity as an organizing principle of U.S. foreign relations. Building directly on Aggestam and True's (2021: 394) observation that status, respect, and recognition constitute the critical pillars of Trump's foreign policy authority, gratitude politics represents the hypermasculine institutionalization of these demands, operating through the feminization and infantilization of subordinate states and transforming recognition into a performative marker of hierarchy and obedience rather than voluntary reciprocity.

Trump complained that nobody has thanked him for sending millions in aid to help people suffering from starvation in Gaza (Washington Post, 2025), while simultaneously portraying himself as responsible for ending eight wars and restoring peace and stability in our world (White House, 2025: i).

This gratitude gap between the recognition Trump believed the United States and himself personally deserved and the appreciation he claimed it received structured his foreign policy posture across multiple bilateral relationships. It was most starkly illustrated in Vice President Vance's public criticism of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy for insufficient gratitude toward U.S. aid (CNBC, 2025), while Zelenskyy's subsequent public message thanking the U.S., Congress, and the American people underscored the coercive and subordinating character of the demand rather than any genuine notion of voluntary reciprocity (Fenbert, 2025). Similarly, despite being symbolically presented with a Nobel Peace Prize nomination by Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado, Trump continued to express resentment at not receiving the prize, accusing the Nobel Committee of political bias (Al Jazeera, 2026). Taken together, these episodes reveal how the politics of gratitude operated as a performative enactment of hypermasculine authority, reflecting a neo-colonial and imperial logic of hierarchy rather than negotiation among sovereign equals.

These interlocking domestic and international dimensions reveal how Trump's hypermasculine leadership operated across both arenas as an increasingly institutionalized governing rationality rather than merely a performative leadership style. In this sense, U.S. foreign policy has been shaped not only by structural imperatives but also through hypermasculine leadership choices and identity performances (Walker et al., 1999: 623; Snyder et al., 2009). Where Trump's first term normalized hypermasculinity as a mode of foreign policy conduct, his second term codified it as a durable organizing principle of the state, most systematically in the 2025 National Security Strategy, which institutionalized coercion, transactionalism, and hierarchical discipline through demands for gratitude as the foundational logic of U.S. hypermasculine primacy. The following sections analyze how this hypermasculine governing rationality is institutionalized across the NSS through differentiated constructions of Europe and NATO, China, and the Western Hemisphere.

4. THE 2025 NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: FROM HYPERMASCULINE IDENTITY TO HIERARCHICAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER

The NSS does not articulate national security solely through hypermasculinized geo-economic and geopolitical priorities. Rather, national security is constructed through the collapse of the internal–external divide, as

hypermasculinized national identity becomes both the object and instrument of security policy. Instead of treating security as a response to an external environment, the document frames it as a project of boundary-making in which gendered norms of belonging, competence, and moral order shape both domestic governance and international positioning. The hierarchical, exclusionary, and disciplinary logics through which the NSS secures the national subject at home are projected outward as structuring principles of international order, contributing to the rearticulation of U.S. hegemony through the translation of hypermasculine domestic identity into a national interest-oriented foreign policy. This logic is reflected in the Strategy's stated objective of ensuring that the United States remains the world's "strongest, richest, most powerful, and most successful country," possessing the world's "strongest economy and military," "world-beating innovation," unrivaled "soft power," and a "historic record of benefitting allies and partners," while simultaneously seeking greater freedom from a "network of international institutions" (The White House, 2025: 2–3).

The NSS reconstructs national and civilizational identity through a deeply hypermasculinized and exclusionary framework in which security is repeatedly tied to the restoration of a particular moral, cultural, and demographic order. National strength is framed as contingent upon rejecting what the NSS labels "radical gender ideology" and "woke lunacy" and "so-called 'DEI' initiatives" (The White House, 2025: i, 6), portrayed as "discriminatory and anti-competitive practices that degrade our institutions and hold us back" (The White House, 2025: 6). Within this hypermasculine framing, competence and merit are elevated as universal civilizational virtues yet discursively opposed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, thereby narrowing the boundaries of who can be recognized as a legitimate bearer of U.S. national authority and capability. Feminist, anti-discriminatory, and inclusion-oriented policies are recast not as political choices but as threats to institutional competence and national resilience, which is a move that works to naturalize a racialized, heteronormative, and hypermasculine conception of American identity.

The Strategy further links long-term security to the restoration and reinvigoration of American spiritual and cultural health, without which long-term security is impossible, and foregrounds the centrality of "strong, traditional families that raise healthy children to national survival" (The White House, 2025: 4). Security is thus extended into intimate and social spheres, where family structures, women's reproductive rights, and cultural norms are implicitly redefined as matters of strategic concern for national security. Rather than treating gender, family, and culture as domains of political contestation, the NSS naturalizes a heteronormative and hierarchical social order as a condition of security, reinforcing longstanding feminist critiques that women's bodies, reproductive labor, and social roles are routinely instrumentalized within

hypermasculinized projects of nation-state reproduction (Enloe, 1993; Stachowitsch, 2012: 308). This move is analytically significant because it suggests that the NSS does not merely reflect Trump's personal gender ideology but works to embed it as a governing rationality of the state, translating domestic hypermasculine identity politics into the foundational premises of national security strategy.

Building on this heteronormative and hierarchical construction of identity, the NSS redefines national security in ways that reshape both America's self-understanding of power and its relations with the international order. Security is no longer framed around liberal order maintenance, regime type, or democracy promotion, but around the preservation of American primacy through control over strategic dependencies and the extraction of returns on past investments in the form of gratitude and alignment. This hypermasculinized logic is particularly evident in the Strategy's stark formulation that "the choice all countries should face is whether they want to live in an American-led world of sovereign countries and free economies or in a parallel one in which they are influenced by countries on the other side of the world" (The White House, 2025: 18). Rather than signaling retrenchment, this binary can be read as reasserting the U.S. self-conception as the central ordering power of the international system, simultaneously vulnerable and indispensable a formulation that reproduces the crisis logic at the heart of hypermasculinity itself.

Liberal internationalism becomes less visible within the NSS. Concepts that once anchored U.S. grand strategy, such as regime type, democracy promotion, and the multilateralism of the liberal international order, no longer function as organizing principles. This logic is reflected in the NSS's broader critique of post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy, which dismisses earlier strategies as "laundry lists of wishes or desired end states" dependent upon a "permanent American domination of the entire world" and argues that American elites misjudged the public's willingness to continue carrying global burdens disconnected from the national interest (White House, 2025: 1-23). The Strategy instead insists that "the affairs of other countries are our concern only if their activities directly threaten our interests," recasting international commitments as conditional transactions rather than enduring obligations (The White House, 2025: 1). Within this framework, assistance, protection, and alliance commitments are no longer presented as responsibilities associated with US leadership but as investments that generate expectations of recognition, reciprocity, and repayment.

Rather than advancing a liberal internationalist vision, the NSS advances a hypermasculinized, pragmatist, and civilizational reading of world politics grounded in the primacy of U.S. national interest. This logic is particularly evident in the Middle East, where democracy promotion and nation-building are recast as

strategic errors and relations are reoriented toward transactional cooperation based on accepting the region, its leaders, and its nations “as they are” (The White House, 2025: 28), consolidating a mode of strongmen-to-strongmen diplomacy that privileges masculine authority over democratic legitimacy. The Strategy’s emphasis on the primacy of nations, affirming that “the world’s fundamental political unit is and will remain the nation-state” and expressing hostility toward “sovereignty-sapping incursions” by transnational organizations, further reinforces a hypermasculine logic of bounded sovereignty and zero-sum competition, justified as consistent with “the laws of nature and nature’s God” (The White House, 2025: 9). As multilateral commitments give way to a more unilateral and transactional conception of national interest, the NSS organizes its key geopolitical relationships, Europe and NATO, China, and the Western Hemisphere, into differentiated gendered hierarchies, to which the following sections now turn.

5. EUROPE AS A FEMINIZED EXTENDED SELF: NATO AND GRATITUDE POLITICS

The NSS constructs Europe not as an external Other but as a “sentimentally” valued extension of the American strategic self (The White House, 2025: 26). It emphasizes that “Europe remains strategically and culturally vital to the United States,” that transatlantic trade constitutes “one of the pillars of the global economy and of American prosperity,” and that abandoning Europe would be “self-defeating for what this strategy aims to achieve” (The White House, 2025: 26). Yet, this portrayal is accompanied by a parallel narrative of decline. Under the heading of “Promoting European Greatness,” Europe is represented as suffering from “cratering birthrates,” migration-driven social transformation, eroding national identities, and declining civilizational confidence, raising warnings that “the continent will be unrecognizable in 20 years or less” and face the risk of “civilizational erasure” (The White House, 2025: 25–26). Europe is thus positioned simultaneously as culturally intimate and economically indispensable, yet also as increasingly incapable of sustaining itself without American guidance, protection, and discipline.

Within this hypermasculinized security logic, demographic change and migration are recast as symptoms of “civilizational erasure” linked to Europe’s alleged loss of sovereignty and cultural self-confidence (The White House, 2025: 25). The NSS presents democratic backsliding and the rise of illiberal politics as “causes for great optimism” because liberal governance is portrayed as having weakened Europe’s “civilizational confidence” (The White House, 2025: 26). References to the “suppression of free speech and political opposition” construct a narrative of a silenced popular will constrained by ‘detached elites’ and “transnational institutions” (The White House, 2025: 10). Coupled with claims

that the European Union undermines sovereignty, the Strategy advances a civilizational and exclusionary narrative that privileges cultural homogeneity and demographic continuity. The insistence that Europe should “remain European” can be read as implicitly recasting pluralism, migration, and, by extension, commitments to minority rights and gender equality as sources of weakness, while privileging social norms associated with cultural homogeneity, continuity, and order as markers of strength and strategic reliability (The White House, 2025: 25).

This civilizational disciplining is inseparable from the Strategy’s redefinition of NATO and Europe’s place within a U.S.-led security order. NATO is no longer articulated primarily as a multilateral institution grounded in collective restraint and mutual obligation but as a hierarchical security arrangement through which American leadership is asserted and dependence is managed. Anchored in the claim that “the United States will put our own interests first,” the Strategy declares that “the days of the United States propping up the entire world order like Atlas are over,” rejecting collective security as a shared obligation and recasting protection as something that must be “earned through compliance, capacity, and alignment” (The White House, 2025: 12). Burden sharing, therefore, becomes the organizing principle of alliance politics. Trump’s “Hague Commitment,” requiring NATO members to spend “5 percent of GDP on defense,” is elevated into a “new global standard,” transforming defense spending into a performative measure of loyalty and worthiness among “like-minded allies” (The White House, 2025: 12). Military expenditure is represented as functioning not merely as an indicator of capability but also as a performative acknowledgment of U.S. leadership within a hypermasculine alliance hierarchy.

Within this framework, Europe is portrayed as a politically fragmented, strategically vulnerable, and emasculated actor, increasingly incapable of autonomous geopolitical action without sustained American involvement (The White House, 2025: 25–26). Although European states are acknowledged as materially capable actors, the Strategy argues that “managing European relations with Russia,” especially over Ukraine and stabilizing the Eurasian security order, will require continued “U.S. diplomatic engagement and leverage” (The White House, 2025: 25). European security is therefore represented as contingent upon American arbitration rather than autonomous European agency. At the same time, the NSS emphasizes Europe’s continued dependency on external actors for both energy and security, particularly highlighting Germany’s vulnerabilities following the Ukraine war (The White House, 2025: 26). Simultaneously, the NSS expresses unease with Europe’s expanding economic ties beyond the transatlantic space, particularly China–EU relations and Germany’s deepening commercial links with China. Such relationships are framed not as expressions of strategic autonomy but as vulnerabilities and as implicitly ungrateful departures from the U.S.-centered economic and security architecture that has underwritten European

prosperity and stability. Gratitude politics thus operates here as a mechanism through which dependency is made visible, and alliance obligations are recast as expectations of recognition and repayment.

The logic of dependence extends beyond military burden sharing to the internal social composition and future identity trajectories of allied societies. Reflecting the exclusionary and racialized dimensions of Trump's hypermasculine nationalism, demographic change is explicitly framed in securitized terms as the Strategy warns that some NATO members may eventually become "majority non-European," raising doubts about whether they will continue to "view their place in the world, or their alliance with the US, in the same way as those who signed the NATO charter" (The White House, 2025: 27). NATO membership is accordingly framed not only as a matter of strategic alignment but also as contingent upon civilizational continuity. Migration-driven diversity is represented as a threat to alliance cohesion, while NATO enlargement is recast as a potential "civilizational risk" that could dilute discipline, unity, and shared identity (The White House, 2025: 27).

Within this hypermasculinized U.S.-led order, Europe and NATO are constructed simultaneously as an extended civilizational self and as dependent actors whose security, prosperity, and strategic relevance are represented as tied to American power. The NSS portrays NATO as increasingly reliant upon U.S. leadership, military capabilities, and financial contributions, while burden-sharing demands recast alliance participation as conditional upon continued recognition of American primacy. In this sense, NATO becomes incorporated into a hierarchical relationship structured through dependence and subordination, while Europe is positioned as an emasculated and a feminized dependent whose security and strategic autonomy are portrayed as contingent upon continued American protection and leadership. Europe's continued reliance on the U.S. security umbrella is further recoded as an obligation of gratitude, requiring recognition, compliance, and acknowledgment of American leadership rather than reciprocal partnership. Russia, by contrast, is implicitly positioned as a rival peer-masculinity whose geopolitical assertiveness reinforces Europe's representation as strategically vulnerable and dependent upon U.S. leadership (Ashwin and Utrata, 2020). Europe's liberal democratic identity is no longer celebrated as the normative foundation of the transatlantic partnership but is increasingly portrayed as a source of weakness. What appears to matter most is Europe's utility within a U.S.-centered order, measured by its economic, military, and ideological contribution to an international hierarchy organized around American leadership. What appears to matter most to the US under the Trump administration seems to be Europe's functional utility within a U.S.-centered order, measured by its willingness and ability to contribute economically, militarily, and ideologically to

a hypermasculine international architecture structured by hierarchy, dependency, and unequal authority.

6. CHINA AS THE UNGRATEFUL COMPETITOR IN A HYPERMASCULINIZED ECONOMIC AND SECURITY ORDER

China occupies a distinctive position in the NSS as a significant Other, whose rise is framed not only as strategically consequential but as central to a broader hypermasculinized reassessment of U.S. leadership and international order. The Strategy advances a revisionist reading of U.S.–China relations by rejecting the long-standing assumption that opening U.S. markets, encouraging American investment, and outsourcing manufacturing would facilitate China’s integration into the so-called rules-based international order (The White House, 2025: 19). Instead, it asserts that this expectation was fundamentally mistaken, insisting that this did not happen. China got rich and powerful, and used its wealth and power to its considerable advantage. Responsibility for this outcome is attributed to American elites who, over four successive administrations of both political parties, were either willing enablers of China’s strategy or in denial (The White House, 2025: 19). What began as a relationship between a mature, wealthy economy and one of the world’s poorest countries is thus recast as having produced a near-peer competitor, even as U.S. policy remained rooted in those past assumptions (The White House, 2025: 20). In this framing, the liberal international order can itself be read as retrospectively feminized, portrayed as an enabling structure that weakened the US and empowered a rival without producing political convergence, restraint, or alignment.

The portrayal of China in the NSS can therefore be read through a hypermasculine logic of recognition and ingratitude, as China’s rise is framed not merely as a material challenge but as a failure of reciprocity. The NSS underscores that trade relations have been and remain fundamentally unbalanced, noting that China adapted to U.S. tariffs after 2017 by strengthening its hold on supply chains, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, and by exporting indirectly through middlemen and Chinese-built factories in a dozen countries (The White House, 2025: 19). Despite extensive access to U.S. markets, technology, and supply chains, China is portrayed as refusing acknowledgment of U.S. leadership and instead strategically exploiting openness to consolidate its own position (The White House, 2025: 20). The Strategy explicitly targets predatory, state-directed subsidies, unfair trading practices, grand-scale intellectual property theft and industrial espionage, and threats against our supply chains that risk U.S. access to critical resources, including minerals and rare earth elements (The White House, 2025: 21). Tariffs and restrictions are justified as necessary to rebalance America’s economic relationship with China, prioritizing reciprocity and fairness to restore American economic independence, with the explicit aim of ensuring that trade is

balanced and focused on non-sensitive factors (The White House, 2025: 20). Economic discipline and tariff policy thus operate as a hypermasculinized correctives, designed to contain a rival depicted as benefiting from the system without demonstrating restraint or gratitude.

On this basis, economic relations with China are framed in increasingly securitized terms and reorganized through disciplinary hypermasculinist mechanisms, most notably tariffs and coercive pressure extended to third parties. This logic exceeds bilateral relations, encompassing China's interactions with third parties and the global economy. The NSS warns that Chinese state-led companies have recycled perhaps \$1.3 trillion of its trade surpluses into loans to its trading partners, embedding hidden costs in the form of dependency and leverage, while positioning the US and its allies as offering alternatives without the same kind of strings (The White House, 2025:18). Allies and partners are urged to align with U.S. efforts to prevent economies from becoming subordinate to any competing power, and to use their combined economic weight to counter China's influence (The White House, 2025: 21). With regard to China, the NSS can be read as positioning the United States as the central enforcer of a hypermasculinized economic order, one that seeks to restructure and hypermasculinized global trade and investment through tariffs, strategic inducements, coercive alignment, and control over markets, technologies, and supply chains rather than through liberal notions of mutual benefit and economic integration. Taken together, the NSS frames China as a beneficiary that rose through access to U.S. markets and technologies yet refused reciprocal alignment, restraint, and gratitude. In doing so, it portrays previous U.S. approaches to liberal economic engagement as permissive and strategically naïve, a representation that can be read as implicitly feminizing earlier approaches to international economic order.

7. THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE AS A HYPERMASCULINE SPHERE OF CONTROL

The NSS constructs the Western Hemisphere, particularly Latin America, as a differentiated yet hierarchically ordered space, framed not as a region of sovereign states but as a hypermasculinized sphere of control central to U.S. power projection, homeland security, and economic resilience. The explicit commitment to reassert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine, articulated through the so-called "Trump Corollary", and to "restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere" (The White House, 2025: 5) advances a vision of hemispheric order grounded in hierarchy rather than sovereign equality. This order is defined through dominance and exclusion, as the Strategy insists on "deny[ing] non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to position forces or other threatening capabilities, or to own or control strategically vital assets" (The White House,

2025: 15), casting the presence of China and Russia as illegitimate intrusions into an imagined U.S. hemispheric self. This vision is operationalized through the logic of “Enlist and Expand,” which positions Latin American states as subordinated security providers, tasked with controlling migration, stopping drug flows, neutralizing cartels, and producing tolerable stability, even beyond their own borders, to insulate the U.S. core from peripheral disorder (The White House, 2025: 16). Coercion is explicitly normalized as an instrument of order-making through “calls for a readjustment of our global military presence, expanded naval and coast guard control over sea lanes and migration routes, targeted deployments to secure the border and defeat cartels, including the use of lethal force, and expanded access in strategically important locations” (The White House, 2025: 16). In this framing, Latin America is recast as an extension of U.S. political, suggesting how a hypermasculine U.S. identity works to collapse the boundary between domestic and foreign policy and to legitimize continuous intervention, surveillance, and coercive governance within a feminized hemisphere constructed as the extended hypermasculine backyard of the US.

Economic relations in the hemisphere are hypermasculinized and subordinated to U.S. economic security through integrated political, economic, and military means. The NSS prioritizes commercial diplomacy, explicitly naming tariffs and reciprocal trade agreements as powerful tools, while instructing embassies and officials to help American companies compete and succeed (The White House, 2025: 18). Market access is rendered conditional, as the Strategy insists that “the terms of our agreements, especially with those countries that depend on us most and therefore over which we have the most leverage, must be sole-source contracts for our companies, and that the US should push out foreign companies that build infrastructure in the region” (The White House, 2025: 19). Engagement by Latin American governments with non-Hemispheric competitors is delegitimized as a security risk, framed as embedding hidden costs such as espionage, cybersecurity risks, and debt-traps (The White House, 2025: 18), thereby justifying U.S. pressure, inducement, and surveillance. Read together, the Western Hemisphere emerges as a zone of hypermasculine competition and as a politically subordinate periphery, economically extractive yet strategically indispensable, subsumed under U.S. hypermasculinity.

8. CONCLUSION

The future or demise of the liberal international order cannot be meaningfully assessed independently of the choices of the US as the system-making power that constructed the post-World War II liberal order through complex military and economic webs of interdependence. While mainstream/malestream IR scholarship has predominantly explained systemic change through shifts in the material distribution of power, U.S. grand strategy,

or leaders' strategic preferences, this article advances a feminist perspective that treats these levels of analysis as deeply interlocked rather than analytically separable. It argues, first, that international order is fundamentally masculine and that the distribution of masculinities shapes the nature and functioning of international politics; second, that gendered states produce gendered national identities and perform different masculinity roles; and third, that presidential masculinity constitutes the performative arena through which gendered state capacity is mobilized for strategic gendered privileging, marginalization, and exclusion. Accordingly, the article conceptualizes the man, the state, and the international system through the lens of masculinity.

From this perspective, the article argues that the post–Cold War debate over how the unipole should act was, at its core, a debate over the distribution of masculinities, U.S. masculinity, and presidential masculinity. International politics does not mechanically generate a fixed pattern of masculinity distribution; rather, U.S. primacy plays a significant role in shaping hegemonic masculinity within international politics, and the form that masculinity takes is mediated and defined by leadership and presidential masculinity performances, including hypermasculine ones. Under conditions of U.S. primacy, U.S. leadership is conceptualized not as an intervening variable but as a constitutive site where gendered power dynamics operate, translating hypermasculine structural dominance into governing logics that define security, threat, legitimacy, and hierarchy in the international order. Trump's hypermasculinity and the Make America Great Again (MAGA) project cannot be understood independently of the relative economic decline, status erosion, and anxieties in the US triggered in the post-2008 period, despite the persistence of military primacy. Likewise, Trump's gender ideology in the private and domestic realms cannot be separated from his foreign policy leadership. Reflecting this personal and domestic gender ideology, his foreign policy is defined as the enactment of a hypermasculine transactionalism in which authority, recognition, and hierarchy are organized through expectations of payment, compliance, and gratitude.

Trump's hypermasculine logic redefines international social, economic, political, and military relations as bilateral hypermasculine transactions. Having defined U.S. national identity as heterosexual, racialized, and family-oriented, Trump simultaneously demanded that European allies defend a narrowly defined civilizational identity against multiculturalism, gender equality, and liberal democratic norms, thereby extending domestic hypermasculine identity politics into the structuring of alliance relations and international order. As an extension of this hypermasculine foreign policy, demands for gratitude and burden sharing, alongside tariff diplomacy and economic coercion, functioned as hypermasculine tools that emasculated, feminized, and infantilized allies by framing them as dependent, ungrateful, and in need of discipline. States were hierarchically

positioned according to toughness, reliability, and willingness to comply: Europe was constructed as a feminized extended self, NATO as a gratitude-governed burden, China as an ungrateful free-riding competitor, Russia as a hypermasculine peer, and Latin America as a subordinate masculinity sphere rather than a community of sovereign states. This hypermasculine leadership logic was institutionalized in the NSS, which codifies coercion, unilateralism, and hierarchy as durable organizing principles of U.S. primacy, securitizes political economy and alliance relations through frames of strength, discipline, and gratitude, and defines legitimacy through coercive capacity and the ability to discipline others. Paradoxically, by seeking security through dominance, this hypermasculine recalibration of U.S. primacy tends to amplify threat perceptions and reproduce self-reinforcing security dilemmas as masculinity dilemmas, rather than generating durable stability for any actor.

Feminist scholarship has long warned that shifts in dominant forms of masculinity are not politically neutral. As Mellström (2016: 135) observes, “in these current times of masculinist political revival ... masculinity studies have a vital task of understanding, explaining and resisting such reactionary politics.” Similarly, Enloe (2008: 458) cautions that in the post–Cold War era, a militarized nationalist masculinity pushes aside a previously dominant urbane, diplomatic sort of masculinity, while aggressive corporate masculinities displace more restrained models of political and economic leadership. Although the U.S. self-understanding as an exemplar and defender of global democracy has long been marked by contradiction, it has nevertheless functioned as a core pillar of the liberal international order. Trump’s disregard for democratic norms, therefore, threatens not only specific policy commitments but the broader narrative of the liberal international order itself. In a similar vein, Aggestam et al. (2024: 128) argue that as the rule-based liberal order erodes, the rise of hypermasculine foreign policies, actors, and anti-gender norms increases the risk of gender backlash and regression toward traditional foreign policy, rendering pro-gender states’ policies fragile and vulnerable. In conclusion, *the Man, the State, and Hypermasculinity* operate as interlocked governing logics, and Trump’s hypermasculine leadership, exercised under U.S. military primacy, risks consolidating hypermasculinity as a dominant governing rationality, thereby shaping the future contours of global politics.

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