Power, Politics, and 'Vietnamese Brides'

Ying Xue*
Schohool of English Education, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, 510006, Guangdong, China
School of School of humanity and education, Guangxi Polytechnic of Construction , Nanning 530000, Guangxi, China
xueying@mail.gdufs.edu.cn

Cao Liang
School of School of humanity and education, Guangxi Polytechnic of Construction , Nanning 530000, Guangxi, China
caoliangecnusaias@126.com

Abstract: Mass media has recently attracted public attention to 'Vietnamese brides,' a large group of female immigrants in China whose situation is both unique and clearly gendered. Still, that media attention has *not* been accompanied *either* by a clear definition *or* by clear understandings of why bridal immigration exists between Vietnam and China and is unidirectional. The inherited wisdom is that the immigration of Vietnamese brides to China is related to the Chinese economic boom and the widening development gap between China and Vietnam, but this article argues that these inherited accounts are incomplete without paying attention to the various power relations involved in Vietnamese 'bridal' immigration to China from interstate power between China and Vietnam to power politics within marriages.
Keywords: 'Vietnamese Brides', Power, Immigration, Gender, Feminism, Patriarchy

1. INTRODUCTION

CNN reporters Pamela Boykoff and Alexandra Field (Boykoff & Alexandra, 2016) introduced many readers on the internet to aw woman named Lan. They related part of her story: 'When I woke up I didn't know that I was in China.' Lan remembers the night that changed her whole life. While preparing for university along the border in northern Vietnam, a friend she met online asked her to a group dinner. When she was tired and wanted to go home, the people asked her to stay and talk and have a drink. Next thing she knew, she had been smuggled across the border to China. 'At that time, I wanted to leave,' says Lan. 'There were other girls there in the car but there was people to guard us.' (Boykoff & Alexandra, 2016) Unfortunately, Lan's story is not unique. For example, Eugene Chow (Chow, 2017) relates that "doctors at a hospital in Zushou were alarmed by a pregnant 12-year-old Vietnamese girl. The authorities were alerted and police discovered that she was a victim of human trafficking. She had been

kidnapped, taken to China, and sold to a 35-year-old man for $4,400." Amidst this trafficking but less noticed, there are marriage migrants who move from Vietnam to China voluntarily, in search of economic benefit or running from issues in their lives at home (Davin, 2007). There are some Vietnamese women who "willingly get married and move to China for love or economic reasons" (Chow, 2017). This wide variety of voluntary migrants, trafficked women, and trafficked children are often all classified with the same label – 'Vietnamese Brides' – even though they are in very different situations. This grouping is both intellectually and politically problematic. Further, though sociologists, legal scholars, and public policy analysts have researched this issue, very little concrete information about how many women are involved and the dynamics around them is available. Very little attention has been paid to this issue from a perspective interested in International Relations. Along those lines, this article explores the proliferation of 'Vietnamese Brides' in China, but looks to do so more reflectively than some news articles and policy statements that rely on conflating different groups and providing narrow accounts. It uses lenses that focus both on International Relations and on gender, paying attention to interstate and interpersonal relations. It begins by discussing the problems with definitions of 'Vietnamese Brides' in the media and in scholarly work. The second section talks about the origins of 'Vietnamese Brides' as a phenomenon in China(Kibria, 1990). The third section engages the difficulties of force, economic inequality, and other issues that so-called 'Vietnamese Brides' face in China. A fourth section lays out the theoretical relationship between power, politics, and the 'Vietnamese Bride' situation and applies that framework. The article concludes by outlining the ways that this exploration of 'Vietnamese Brides' might have implications for marriage migration more generally.

2. DEFINITIONS OF 'VIETNAMESE BRIDES'

In this article, 'Vietnamese brides' defines to illegal female immigrants who move from Vietnam to China and get married in China. Some of them migrate voluntarily looking to improve their living conditions by marriage. Others are victims of human trafficking who either never decided to move to China *or* decided to move to China agreeing to terms significantly different than those terms in which they found themselves upon arrival. Whether they came to China voluntarily or not, many 'Vietnamese Brides' lack citizenship or registered residence and have a wide variety of

vulnerabilities. In the spirit of looking to understand the wide variety of women who get grouped as 'Vietnamese Brides,' this article proposes that they be understood as three different groups, with different situations, different challenges, and different mechanisms to address them. The three distinct groups that I understand as a part of this conglomeration of 'Vietnamese Brides' are women in arranged marriages, women in border marriages, and women in mercenary marriages. The remainder of this section lays out these three categories.

2.1 Women in Arranged Marriages

Some of the women who are frequently classified as 'Vietnamese' brides are people who migrate for arranged marriages. Their marriages to Chinese men may be arranged by their parents, their community elders, or by female friends from Vietnam who have already married men in China. Cham (Châm, 2015) interviewed women who either personally looked for, or had others look for, arranged cross-border marriages, driven either by poverty, by the inability to find a husband in Vietnam, or by widowers' need to have care for their children. Many arranged marriages occur without weddings, and (therefore) without legal sanction of the woman's residence or her status as a wife. These arranged marriages do not bring luxury – the women who engage in them often work hard at a subsistence level for most of their lives. At the same time, many women in these marriages reported not only being involved in arranged, cross-border marriages but also being happy with the choices that they made. There is some evidence that women in cross-border arranged marriages were a substantial percentage of 'Vietnamese Brides' *before*, but that this category is becoming less and less significant. In China, arranged marriage more generally was popular before the beginning of the 21st century, but continues, if less frequently . Arranged marriages between Chinese men and Vietnamese women continue, especially in rural places along the border (Châm, 2015), but do not constitute the majority of situations where women become 'Vietnamese Brides.'

2.2 Women in Border Marriages

Most of the Vietnamese women who come to China to be married come from close to the China-Vietnam border and are in a category that this article identifies as border marriage. There is a long tradition of marriages of people living near the borders across the border because of geographic proximity. Those cross-border marriages on the China-Vietnam border are

overwhelmingly unidirectional, where Chinese men marry Vietnamese women and the couples reside in China. According to statistics, in recent years, in villages of China southwest border, the percentage of marriage between two countries is at least 10% and at most 50%. If blood is dated back to three previous generations, almost 100% families on the Chinese side of the border are connected with Vietnamese families by marriage, including a considerable amount of Vietnamese brides (including women abducted and trafficked to China (Zhou, 2002). Stories of trafficking and abduction are prevalent in these border marriages, starting after the Sino-France War and continuing to present day. Weng Weiwei (Weiwei, 2015) describes the history: After 'Sino-France War', though the border of Guangxi and Vietnam was sharp clear, people along the border still related each other by marriage as before. Because of border management, it takes more to get married for people across the border. In this case, traffickers would take the advantage to abduct and traffic Vietnamese women, about which men who married these women have no idea, as a result, disputes often arise from marriage. Many Vietnamese women are lured to China under false pretenses like the promise of high-end jobs and a better lifestyle, only to find themselves enslaved or sold to be involuntarily married to strangers. Some of these involuntary cross-border marriages are simply one-off or disorganized trafficking efforts, while others fall into the third category I will outline in this article: mercenary marriages.

2.3 Women in Mercenary Marriages

Trafficked women are often sold by marriage agencies in the Chinese market, and these agencies are increasingly popular. Though many of them function in many different ways, there are some broad themes that unite them (Yates & Cai, 2018). Mercenary marriages *can* be voluntary – where candidates for marriage register, prepare materials, wait to be selected, negotiate with the prospective husband, sign a contract, receive a visit in Vietnam, and then move to China. But those steps can be short-circuited in a wide variety of ways for the pursuit of profit. For example, Vietnamese women can be offered false membership information. This not only affects their agency in the selection of marriages but also the women's opportunities for legal formalities like citizenship and legal marriage certification. Defrauding potential Vietnamese brides is a significant problem, both for the women who are defrauded and for the stability of rural areas in China.

2.4 Seeing the 'Vietnamese Bride'

Trafficked and/or defrauded 'Vietnamese brides' *become* the stereotypical 'Vietnamese bride'. Like at the beginning of this article, the stories of the women who are abducted or trafficked often become the dominant narrative, while the women who migrate voluntarily are either lumped in with trafficked women and/or ignored fully. Mercenary marriages get more attention than either voluntary or arranged marriages, and trafficked mercenary marriages become the center of attention. Headlines then typify 'Vietnamese brides' as trafficked, in 'fraud marriages', and looking to 'escape from marriage.' Indeed, mercenary marriages based solely on money, leading to such problems as instability, lack of trust, and frailty of marriage. But border marriages are the majority of 'Vietnamese Brides.' These distinctions among sorts of 'Vietnamese Brides' are, therefore, important. But thinking about what this group has in common is important too. I find five elements: 1) the women are Vietnamese; 2) they are married to Chinese men; 3) they are living in China; 4) they are either in arranged marriages, border marriages, or mercenary marriages; 5) those voluntarily in China moved there looking to change their living environment and improve their living conditions.

3. EXPLORING THE ORIGINS OF 'VIETNAMESE BRIDES'

Origins of "Vietnamese brides" phenomenon are complicated both historically and sociologically. Both arranged marriages and border marriages have a long history, while trafficking is, if not new, increasingly severe, and mercenary marriages are increasingly popular for Vietnamese women as there becomes a larger gap between China and Vietnam economically. The price of marriage in rural areas in China incentivizes Chinese men to have an interest in 'Vietnamese Brides,' especially given that they often share a wide variety of values with their potential brides. All of these incentives are also situated in an international atmosphere where 'foreign brides' are an increasing trend. Each of these factors are discussed briefly below.

3.1 Geographical Adjacency and Historical Factors

The border between China and Vietnam is 2449 kilometers long. More than 20 ethnic groups live along that border. These groups have intermarried for a long time because of their similar languages and cultures – their marriages pre-date the establishment of the border. What is now

China and what is now Vietnam have been in a vassal relationship for almost 1000 years, and Chinese influence in Vietnam shows in the persistence of these marriages. Government attempts at intervention in these cross-border marriages have been futile, and the marriages continue. Along the border, more than half of the families have a history of transnational borders, and there are currently approximately 1.2 million Vietnamese brides (Grillot & Ishii, 2016)These transnational marriages are more subject to traditional values than feudal laws, free from any laws and regulations, which immediately contributes to the large number and long history of "Vietnamese brides" involved in border marriages.

3.2 The Shared Values of Marriage and Family

Chinese discussions about marriage and family values are often implicated in, and cannot be understood without, discussions of the principles of Confucianism. Confucian culture both places a high value on family and sees the family as the structure which maintains social orders both in the home and outside of it. Family roles like father, son, mother, daughter, husband, and wife have some rigidity, and serve as the foundation of the ways that social order is understood and operated. Given the long history of the relationship between the place that is now China and the place that is now Vietnam, many of these Confucian understandings both of the importance of family and of how family works are replicated in Vietnam. Like in China, women in contemporary Vietnamese families do the majority of the care work in households – as high as 78%.(Grillot & Ishii, 2016) Women's respect for their husbands is highly valued, especially in their support for their husbands' daily lives and professional careers. Chinese men seeking brides often share these normative understandings of what a wife should be, which contributes to the increasing popularity of 'Vietnamese brides' as an option for those men.

3.3 Economic Gap between Two Countries

Property and class have always been involved in marriage decisions. The amount of property that people own has often determined who, and how, they marry; men's lack of property has often been a major barrier to, if not the biggest barrier to, their ability to get married. This is not locally unique – in 18th and 19th century Europe, men of lower classes were more likely either to marry late or not to marry at all. Almost a third of peasants, workers, vendors, and craftsmen were married after the age of 31, while very few farmers and no landlords were married that late. (Blanchard, 2003)

In Vietnam, years of war and political instability devasted the economy. Vietnam was late to enact economic reforms, especially compared to China. In China, then, there have been significantly better living conditions in general than those in Vietnam. In China, the status of women has also increased faster than it has in Vietnam as well. Women in China have moved to cities in large number. This has two effects. First, it incentivizes Vietnamese women to look towards China as a place to improve their living situations. Second, it impacts the situation of Chinese men looking to find female marriage partner. Increasing female labor moving from rural areas to urban areas in China means that single males in rural areas have a difficult time finding partners, a problem that has been increasing in China in recent decades. This incentivizes rural Chinese men to look to Vietnam and elsewhere for brides.

3.4 Popularization of "Foreign Brides" Over the Globe:

For female immigrant groups over the globe, transnational marriage a strategy for women to seek changes in their lives. This is especially the case for women from less developed countries around the world. While there are some unique factors about their situation, 'Vietnamese brides' are far from the only marriage migration phenomenon. Marriage migration is increasing in popularity, and spread widely over the globe. In fact, the number of foreign brides has reached 4% of transnational marriage population over the globe. There are five major destination routes of international female immigrants: the first is from Southeast Asia to Middle East and Far East rich in oil; the second is from East Europe to West Europe; the third is from Africa to West Europe; the fourth is from South America to North; the fifth is from South Asia to Europe. Table 1 shows the wide variety of foreign brides who migrate every year, and places the "Vietnamese Brides" in context. While there are specific and local pulls that can be analyzed uniquely for "Vietnamese Brides" in China, it is important to realize that the practice has many of the same origins as marriage migration more generally (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003).

Table 1(a): Global Migration Route of Foreign Brides

Countries of Emigration	**Countries of Immigration**
From Southeast Asia to Gulf Area	
Indonesia	Saudi Arabia
Sri Lanka	Saudi Arabia
The Philippines	Saudi Arabia
India	Saudi Arabia
Sri Lanka	Kuwait

Table 1(b): Global Migration Route of Foreign Brides

Countries of Emigration	**Countries of Immigration**
From Southeast Asia to Gulf Area	
Thailand	Saudi Arabia
From East Europe and Africa to West Europe	
Morocco	Italy
Ethiopia	Italy
Somalia	Greece
Morocco	Spain
Ethiopia	Greece
Nigeria	Italy
From South America, Central America to America and Canada	
Mexico	America
Central America	America
Central America	Canada
From south Asia to Europe	
The Philippines	Italy
The Philippines	Greece and Cyprus
Sri Lanka	Greece and Cyprus

4. LIVING THE 'VIETNAMESE BRIDE' EXPERIENCE IN CHINA

Both Vietnam and China reap benefits from Vietnamese brides' marriage. Whether women immigrate to work or for marriages, they tend to send remittances home, all across the globe. 'Vietnamese brides,' especially those who migrate voluntarily, are no exceptions. Remittances from 'Vietnamese brides' provide immediate relief to their families, promote family financial security, and provide support for food, housing, health care, education and savings. Remittances are a stable source of income for Vietnam, especially compared to other floating capital sources of income. As a result, they have a direct impact on Vietnam's ability to make international payments, finance national budget items, improve their credit ratings, and attract investments. Remittances play a structural role in the maintenance of economy and national security in Vietnam. (Zhou, 2002). China also reaps benefits from the 'Vietnamese bride' phenomena. Concerns about the generation of the 'family line' is important to Chinese men looking for marriage. 'Vietnamese brides' can fill a gap where there is unavailability of Chinese women for Chinese men's marriage. 'Vietnamese brides' also *work* in China and contribute to relieving rural labor deficiencies

in the Chinese economy. At the same time, these positive elements need to be understood in context of the difficulties that women experience and that their presence can cause. On the national level, 'Vietnamese brides' can be taxing for both Vietnam and China. For China, they can cause problems with social services administration, censuses, the distribution of jobs and economic benefits, as well as social structure and gender equality. When women leave China for Vietnam, Vietnam suffers losses in the workforce, struggles with issues of human trafficking, confronts sexual behavior that contravenes traditional norms, and struggles with navigating the legal implications of marriage migration. At the individual level, 'Vietnamese brides' can have unstable marriages, and become runaway brides. Because of the ways that the enter China, with questionable legality and even questionable agency, 'Vietnamese brides' often face legal status issues that prevent them from being able to make formal claims to their rights as wives or as workers and cause a variety of unsettling effects for the women involved. One of the unsettling effects is problems with self-identification (who am I and where do I belong?) and recognition from people in the place they end up living. Since bride-buyers belong to a disadvantaged group of people who are both poor and of low social class, bought brides inherit their new husbands' social and economic problems and issues. The bought brides come from a position of weakness and marry into a position of weakness, without foreseeable entry points into social, political, and economic affairs in China. They are therefore often unable to involve themselves politically even in policy issues that might benefit their situations. This is problematic not only for the women but also for China as a host country, where 'Vietnamese brides' do not develop the sense of loyalty or social obligation to their new country that they might if their situation were less precarious. In this sense, 'Vietnamese brides' are neither Chinese nor Vietnamese – where neither nation is clearly obligated to them, and they are not clearly obligated to either nation. This creates a wide variety of problems with the administration of medical services, birth control, social assistance, and civil assistance, as well as with the accurate counting of people in China. While it is possible for 'Vietnamese brides' to obtain legal residence status, the practicalities of their situations mean that they most often are not able to do so in practice. Chinese marriage law requires that Vietnamese women who are married to Chinese men return to Vietnam with a formal certification of marriage in order to get their marriage status legally approved, which will allow them to petition the Chinese embassy for identification, passports, Visas issued by the Chinese government, and legal residence permits. Many 'Vietnamese brides' do not

have legal marriages to begin with because of the expenses associated with marriage in China; even those who do cannot often afford the expenses of returning to Vietnam and spending a significant amount of time there. The inaccessibility of the legal system and husbands' untrust of their wives gone for such a long-time make the situation even more complicated. There are also a wide variety of reasons that women are unlikely to register their marriages above and beyond the economic hardships involved with navigating the process of registering their marriages. For couples in voluntary border marriages, both members of the couple are likely to come from the same ethnic group, even if one originally lived in China and the other originally lived in Vietnam. The inspiration for these marriages is often strong identification with the ethnic group – an identification that can be stronger than either partner's association with the state that they technically originate in. In looking for legitimacy for their marriages, then, couples in voluntary border marriages are more likely to look to their local conventions and cultural practices for the legitimacy of their marriages. They are less likely to pay attention to state sovereignty and national law, and less likely to know about or attempt to take advantage of any legal opportunities available to them. Even Vietnamese women who know to look for the protections of the law in China sometimes find themselves unable to navigate the practices in China, which are very different than the practices in Vietnam. This is further complicated by the fact that each state has specific policies that address foreign marriages, which also differ. The biggest difference, however, is that each state appears to require something that the other state will not provide. According to Vietnamese state policy, foreigners who marry Vietnamese women must submit a marriage certificate to a committee called the National Women Committee for Vietnam, which will inspect and approve that certificate to grant the marriage legitimacy. The Chinese state, however, does not issue marriage certificates to foreign brides unless they bring with them marriage certification from their home country. 'Vietnamese brides' in China, then, frequently cannot register their marriages in either state because they have difficulty meeting what appear to be contradictory requirements. Even when 'Vietnamese brides' can find work-arounds for these complex issues in theory, they are often too expensive to afford in practice. In sum, economic, social, political, cultural, and legal obstacles mean that most Vietnamese brides do not end up securing legal permanent resident status. The effects of this are wide-ranging, not only for the 'Vietnamese brides' but for their families. The children that are born to marriages of 'Vietnamese brides' – especially those who are sold or trafficked – face a

fair number of obstacles. One of the obstacles is that their mothers sometimes escape after giving birth to children, which leaves those children without mother figures early in their lives. Even if their mothers do stay with the family into which they were sold, however, their children are almost guaranteed to have several issues gaining access to state services to which they would be entitled if they had parents who were both Chinese citizens. This is where the difficulties with 'Vietnamese brides' obtaining legal status in China impact their children: women who do not have legal status struggle to be able to register their children for both education and health care – necessities that are key to children's successful development.

5. POWER, POLITICS, AND 'VIETNAMESE BRIDES'

If International Relations (IR) theory has paid attention to any concept over the course of its history, it has been to power. Seventy years ago, founding Realist IR scholar Hans Morgenthau (Morgenthau, 1973) described power as "a force which influences and controls people's behaviors and ideas." At the same time, both classical realists and neorealist seem to apply their understandings of power solely to the ways that states interact, rather than to sub-state actors or the interactions between states and sub-state actors. Feminist scholars, however (Blanchard, 2003; Sjoberg, 2013; Tickner, 1992), have made two key arguments: that politics below the state level matters both in its own right and to state politics, and that power is a key component not only of interstate politics but of global politics more generally. It is this approach that this article adopts: it analyzes the role of power both on macropolitical and micropolitical levels through gender lenses (Peterson & Runyan, 1993). For the purpose of theorizing 'Vietnamese brides,' three power relationships will be evaluated here: gendered power relations that affect 'Vietnamese brides', the power relationship between China and Vietnam, and the power of patriarchy in global politics.

5.1 Gender and Power

Feminist IR work has not only pointed out the importance of power in global politics but has also problematized both how power is identified and who gets power. Feminist scholars have suggested that *both* understandings of power and distribution of power in global politics have been androcentric: masculine notions of power are privileged, and power is distributed to and recognized in both men and masculinized institutions

(Hooper, 2001). These theoretical understandings can be applied to the practices of both China and Vietnam generally, and to the ways that 'Vietnamese brides' are produced, created, and understood, both generally and specifically. Generally, like in many other situations around the world, the men who are the husbands of 'Vietnamese brides' navigate a patrilineal system with male dominance in family decision-making, and male rights to inherit property, perpetuate families, decide living arrangements, and govern families, formally or informally. 'Vietnamese brides' navigate that same system, where women are largely evaluated for their ability to reproduce, especially where that reproduction bears male heirs. Women and traits associated with femininity are devalued, leading to inequality and subjugation. Some specifics of the situation of 'Vietnamese brides' apply when translating this framework to the lives of women living in these migrant marriages. Undoubtedly, power in the marriage can be reflected in sexual division of labor as well as the division of public and private sphere. According to *The Global Gender Gap Report* in 2017, the gender gap of Vietnam ranked 69 in 144 countries worldwide. Gender inequality in Vietnam is an important part of constituting the world in which 'Vietnamese brides' engage in and live through their marriages. Particularly, gender norms in both China and Vietnam can be used to socialize women into a rigidly patriarchal understanding of what family is and how it works. Often, Vietnamese women – especially poor Vietnamese women – are taught that men establish not only the rules of the family but social norms more broadly. This means that 'Vietnamese brides' not only endure personal subordination but also pass on patriarchal understandings of how men and women relate in families to their male and female children. Patriarchal power within families also means that 'Vietnamese brides' are seen as moving from their born families to their married families. Married women are seen as belonging to their husbands' families – a relationship that is difficult on several levels. First, women being seen as the property of not only a man who may well be close to a stranger but also of their families means that women are essentially controlled by people who they do not know well. Second, women 'changing' families means that 'Vietnamese brides' are unlikely to be able to have contact with the families and homes that they grow up with, which means that they lack emotional support and a sense of history and/or self-identification. Third, women 'moving' to their husbands' families creates economic dependence, where their husbands are often their only source of and possibility for support, and therefore their only options (Li et al., 2006). Fourth, women's subordination to their husbands is amplified in marriages that are not

legally recognized. The illegality of their marriages does not disempower their husbands – quite the opposite. *De facto* marriages often involve the poorest of 'Vietnamese brides' – women who are least likely either to have a sense of their rights and least likely to be able to assert them. They also often involve Chinese men who are in some way or another down on their luck, and therefore have a sense that their status within society should be higher than it is. This combination means that the illegal marriages that 'Vietnamese brides' engage in are likely to reflect more, rather than less, gendered power inequality. The gendered power *in* the marriages of 'Vietnamese brides' reflects in their lives in many ways, including but not limited to the inability to earn income independently, the need to rely on their husbands for support, difficulty establishing and maintaining social connections, and experiencing domestic violence. If feminist theorizing *describes* gendered power impacting women's lives across global politics, 'Vietnamese brides' are living it everyday.

5.2 Interstate Power, Migration, and 'Vietnamese Brides'

Generally, power discrepancies between contiguous countries would have a significant impact on the flow of immigrants. 'Vietnamese brides' are no exception. Cline once created a formula that describes territorial size, population, economic capability, and military power for strategic purpose to assess power of a country (Xu, 2018) As Table 2 demonstrates, on this and any other indicator of 'hard' or 'soft' power, including but not limited to Security Council permanent membership, military expenditures, voting rights in the IMF, and the ability to attract foreign students, there are clear gaps between China and Vietnam.

Table 2: Power Contrast between Vietnam and China

	China	**Vietnam**
Population (Million)(2017)	1400	95.54
Territorial Area （Ten Thousand / Square Kilometers）	960	33.169
Permanent Member of UNSC	Yes	No
GDP (Million/Dollar) (2016)	11,199.145	205.276
Voting Power at IMF (%)(2017)	6.11	Less than 1.09
Military Expenditure (Trillion/Dollar) (2016)	1,431	110
The Number of Foreign Students (2015)	10,031	919

All the indexes in table 2 show a power discrepancy between Vietnam and China. These power differences have several recognized and

recognizable effects on global politics, particularly on military relations, on trade, and in a variety of other areas. One of the less recognized effects, however, is migration generally and marriage migration specifically. I argue that the one-way flow of 'Vietnamese brides' is caused in part by, follows, and reproduces the power inequalities between China and Vietnam. There are some obvious motivators inherent in this power differential both for voluntary migrant women and for people who engage in trafficking and/or selling brides. Those factors include money to be spent on marriage, employment opportunities, better health care resources, better educational systems, and modern financial services. There are also some less obvious parts of the power differential that motivate both those who recruit and/or buy foreign brides and those who are in the industry of providing brides, including the existence of upward mobility in China, the ability for citizens to see the perceived superiority of China and the perceived inferiority of Vietnam, and the discourses of Chinese nationalism that come from the military expenditures and military power.

5.3 Patriarchy in Global Politics

Feminist work has characterized patriarchy as systemic in global politics, where gender is understood to be a key feature of the contemporary international system (Sjoberg, 2013). This work has made the argument that gender tropes, gendered associations of countries and traits, and gendered understandings of position in global politics affect states and their citizens in global politics. For the purposes of this analysis, one of the key features of analyzing the role of patriarchy in the international system is understanding the ways that more powerful states come to be associated with men and masculinities, while less powerful states come to be associated with women and femininities (Li, 2017) These associations themselves widen power discrepancies, given that masculinization is associated with honor and status, and feminization is associated with devalorization (Peterson, 2010). Not only does international system patriarchy itself widen power discrepancies, it also has an effect on how those power discrepancies manifest in the production and experiences of 'Vietnamese brides.' In the context of an international system patriarchy where Western countries are often associated with masculinity disproportionate to their power in international politics and non-Western countries are often feminized *despite* their power, China and Vietnam are uniquely positioned. Often the West (particularly the United States) characterize feminized others as feeble and in need of help and/or reform from the enlightened Wes (Li, 2017). Yet China finds itself in a hybrid

position – feminized by many in the West, but in a position to feminize states that are less powerful than it, which is a large and increasing proportion of the countries in the world. China's position as masculine-valorized compared to Vietnam's position as feminized-devalorizied shows not only in the existence of the phenomenon of 'Vietnamese brides,' but in the discarding way in which Vietnamese women are treated in China after they have engaged in marriage migration. International system patriarchy is also a source and reproducer of a number of the problems that 'Vietnamese brides' face in their daily lives. International system globalization has amplified what feminist theorists have characterized as the 'feminization of poverty.' In this trend, women have been living in more poverty recently than previously, and the power problems between men and women, masculinities and femininities have been exacerbated by increasing economic inequalities. Uneven power relations resulted from wealth gap between northern and southern countries accelerate increase of number of female immigrants like "Vietnamese brides". Under the international system of patriarchy, more than half worldwide transnational immigrants are female who support production and reproduction of global capital, but unfortunately, their contribution has not been acknowledged: they are not given equal opportunity and treatment as males in the labor market; in family, they take most of housework. At the bottom of international power pyramid, females in poverty have to immigrate by illegal marriage to powerful countries that are economically developed. Uneven power relations resulted from wealth gap between northern and southern countries accelerate increase of number of female immigrants like "Vietnamese brides". Under the international system of patriarchy, more than half worldwide transnational immigrants are female who support production and reproduction of global capital, but unfortunately, their contribution has not been acknowledged: they are not given equal opportunity and treatment as males in the labor market; in family, they take most of housework. At the bottom of international power pyramid, females in poverty have to immigrate by illegal marriage to powerful countries that are economically developed. Uneven power relations resulted from wealth gap between northern and southern countries accelerate increase of number of female immigrants like 'Vietnamese brides.' Under the international system of patriarchy, more than half worldwide transnational immigrants are female who support production and reproduction of global capital, but unfortunately, their contribution has not been acknowledged: they are not given equal opportunity and treatment as males in the labor market; in family, they take most of

housework. At the bottom of international power pyramid, females in poverty have to immigrate by illegal marriage to powerful countries that are economically developed.

6. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that historical contact between China and Vietnam, geographical adjacency of the two countries, and the alignment of the two countries' values and culture interactivity contribute to the existence of the 'Vietnamese brides.' If those dynamics receive significant attention in the existing literature, however, the element of power is understudied. This article has made the case that power is an important part of the story of 'Vietnamese brides' in China in a number of ways. Power gaps between countries are one important reason for female immigrants to go to powerful countries from weak ones in an international system of patriarchy. Uneven gender power relations between men and women bring conflicts and problems to those transnational marriages. For powerful countries, foreign brides represented by 'Vietnamese brides' offer free labor in household, production, and cheap labor in the market; while for weak countries, application fees for documents, travel expenses and foreign brides' remittances could help accumulate the original national capital. It is not hard to predict that disadvantaged groups like 'Vietnamese brides' are bound to suffer neglect and marginalization. As gender issues have drawn more and more attention under the background of globalization, flow of international capital offers men in poor areas channels to continue with patriarchal control when superiority of men in affluent countries are threatened by rising feminism. This article has made the argument that it is important to understand, classify, and trace the diverse origins of the phenomenon of 'Vietnamese brides,' where the women who are classified in this category live many different experiences, from voluntary migration marriage with someone that they knew to human trafficking. It has then made the argument that, within all these categories, it is important to know both how much power matters and how much that power is gendered. Understanding gendered power helps to understand 'Vietnamese brides,' and analyzing 'Vietnamese brides' lives helps to understand the complexities of gendered power, between people, between states, and in the international arena.

7. FUNDING

This work was supported by XXXXXX. (此处标注基金信息)

References

Blanchard, E. M. (2003). Gender, international relations, and the development of feminist security theory. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *28*(4), 1289-1312.

Boykoff, P., & Alexandra, F. (2016). Vietnamese Girls Smuggled into China and Sold as Child Brides.

Châm, N. T. P. (2015). Cross-Border Brides: Vietnamese Wives, Chinese Husbands in a Border-Area Fishing Village. *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, *3*(2), 413-441.

Chow, E. K. (2017). China's trafficked brides. *Tersedia dalam: https://thediplomat.com/2017/07/chinas-trafficked-brides/(Diakses pada 10 Desember 2018)*.

Davin, D. (2007). Marriage migration in China and East Asia. *Journal of Contemporary China*, *16*(50), 83-95.

Ehrenreich, B., & Hochschild, A. R. (2003). *Global woman: Nannies, maids and sex workers in the new economy*. Granta Books.

Grillot, C., & Ishii, S. K. (2016). Lives in Limbo: Unsuccessful Marriages in Sino-Vietnamese Borderlands. *Marriage Migration in Asia: Emerging Minorities at the Frontiers of Nation-States*, 153-174.

Hooper, C. (2001). *Manly states: Masculinities, international relations, and gender politics*. Columbia University Press.

Kibria, N. (1990). Power, patriarchy, and gender conflict in the Vietnamese immigrant community. *Gender & society*, *4*(1), 9-24.

Li, S., Jiang, Q., & Feldman, M. W. (2006). Gender discrimination and population development. *Social Sciences Academic Press*.

Li, Z. (2017). The feminism and gender violence of international relations theory. In *2016 2nd International Conference on Education, Social Science, Management and Sports (ICESSMS 2016)* (pp. 170-177). Atlantis Press.

Morgenthau, H. J. (1973). *Politics among nations*.

Peterson, V. S. (2010). Gendered identities, ideologies, and practices in the context of war and militarism. *Gender, war, and militarism: Feminist perspectives*, 17-29.

Peterson, V. S., & Runyan, A. S. (1993). *Global gender issues*. Westview Press Boulder, CO.

Sjoberg, L. (2013). *Gendering global conflict: Toward a feminist theory of war*. Columbia University Press.

Tickner, J. A. (1992). *Gender in international relations: Feminist perspectives on achieving global security*. Columbia University Press.

Weiwei, W. (2015). Analysis of Laws and Regulations on Brides in Southeast Asia. *Legality Vision*(26).

Xu, T. (2018). The Emergence of the 'Chinese School'?: The 'Sinicization'of International Relations Theory in China. *ICCS 11*(1), 23-45.

Yates, R. D., & Cai, D. (2018). Bibliography of Studies on Women and Gender in China since 2008. *Nan Nü*, *20*(1), 3-152.

Zhou, J. (2002). ZhongYue ZhongLao Kuaguo Minzu ji Qi Zuqun Guanxi Yanjiu [Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Lao Cross-border Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Relations]. Beijing: Minzu Chubanshe. In: Ethnic Press.