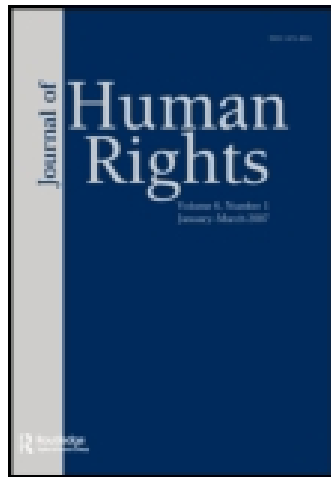


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Journal of Human Rights

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjhr20>

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Published online: 03 Sep 2014.



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To cite this article: Michael J. Bosia (2014) Strange Fruit: Homophobia, the State, and the Politics of LGBT Rights and Capabilities, Journal of Human Rights, 13:3, 256-273, DOI: [10.1080/14754835.2014.919217](https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2014.919217)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2014.919217>

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Strange Fruit: Homophobia, the State, and the Politics of LGBT Rights and Capabilities

MICHAEL J. BOSIA

A tide of oppression against sexual minorities disturbs current theories explaining the globalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights. But unlike the turn in race theory exploring rights as an outgrowth of marginalization, research on LGBT rights still focuses on structural changes or the influence of Western LGBT forms. This article argues that a powerful new and globalizing state homophobia is a convenient tool for state actors threatened by structural adjustment mandates from above and demands for greater opportunity from below. In such contexts, state actors and allies import ready-made LGBT identities as bogeymen, but in an unintended consequence, organizing among sexual minorities refracts those identities in transformative ways. From research in France, Uganda, and Egypt, this article concludes that some contexts, where the state targets LGBT rights claims as hostile, are better served through a politics of social and political capabilities over rights and identities to allow space for sexual minorities to develop.

It is animalistic, and it cannot be right. I want to show you these pictures.¹
—Reverend Martin Ssempe

[I]f you really want to see what I am talking about. . . look at the pictures.²
—US Senator Jesse Helms

When I arrived in Cairo, I received an unsigned e-mail purportedly from lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) activists asking me to meet a guide at a downtown café. I was familiar with the popular locale on a bustling square but concerned because the meeting would be on Friday afternoon when even secular central Cairo shuts down

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for prayer. Indeed, one US LGBT rights activist had been detained in Egypt, and social networking always brings risk as sexual minorities are entrapped online by security officials across a number of countries where same-sex relationships are illegal. Just weeks before, a Ugandan refugee told me her family had spied on her online activity.

In the end, I met with a welcoming group of activists, mostly women, sitting outside a shisha bar. As we spoke open secrets in a Cairene alley, they were relaxed, so overtly gay or lesbian to Western eyes but unremarkable where notions of sexual minorities are quite different. Indeed, their ease illustrates the challenge for state homophobia: If a people are to be criminalized and persecuted, security personnel and the public must know whom to target; hence, the late US Senator Jesse Helms' obsession with the photography of gay artist Robert Mapplethorpe and Ugandan preacher Martin Ssempe's images of men engaged in sexual conduct—not quite a fetish, but certainly a common tactic—also reflected in the media frenzy over the Queen Boat prosecutions in Egypt and graphic exposés in the red press of Uganda. Even where homosexuality is well known, as in France, the threat it poses needs amplification, as opponents did during the debate over marriage by depicting gay men as a menace to the nation because they would bypass existing law to procure surrogate mothers (and so foreign babies) outside France.³

While the experiences of sexual minorities in Kampala, Cairo, and Paris might point to a convergence around a similar set of human rights, I argue that these examples show a prior convergence around an innovative, modular, and so easily importable state homophobia driving both an LGBT sensibility among sexual minorities and the human rights discourse that arises from this sensibility. Contesting other explanations for the globalization of LGBT human rights, I find such approaches undervalue the role of state homophobia in both the constitution of identities and the adoption of a rights framework through which sexual minorities increasingly engage in politics and contestation. Much research neglects the role of the state in articulating either a “gay peril” or a “normal sexuality” against and through which sexual minority politics is then organized. I suggest the ubiquity of the state initiative, recognizing the specificity of the challenge as state action reflects domestic politics. Shifting our focus to the work of the state enables us to examine global LGBT rights discourse as the strange fruit produced by state homophobia. This leads me to emphasize instead social capabilities over state-granted rights in sexual minority organizing.

Sociosexual Transformation and the Convergence Hypothesis

While the evidence for the universalization of dominant US-style LGBT identities and rights is mixed, I further contest the notion that there is a human rights framework suitable for the politics of sexual minorities everywhere. Doing so discards the *telos*, suggesting not only that sexual minorities and LGBT communities will be interchangeably identical but also that someday convergence toward a LGBT human rights agenda will mean the liberation of sexual minorities everywhere. Approaches that emphasize the local origins of global forms as well as the localization of the global when adopted beyond its sources (Santos 2006) point out that similar-sounding politics can in fact encase different sensibilities, arguments, and values. As well, my research points to the precarity of sexual rights, as state homophobia is increasingly modular and so broadly diffused, innovative, and persistent in response to specific challenges state actors face. In short, liberation and repression occur within various global and local processes.

This challenges a “sexual modernization theory” (Bosia and Weiss 2013) popular among scholars and activists, even if it is sometimes subtle. In a sense, they argue those

in the lead have ways to reach back to those who are behind—reflecting structural imperatives pushing the former (Altman 2002) or even highlighting the resistances and exclusions among the latter (Massad 2007; Puar 2007). While much current research often unconsciously echoes improbable theories about history marching toward an inevitable conclusion, other scholars discredit an evolutionary approach to sexuality or elaborate the significant obstacles in its path (Binnie 2004; Hoad 2006; Broqua 2013). In addition, sociosexual modernization theories are methodologically limited in selecting as an object of research only part of the complex realities of sexual identity transformations; the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) activist as empowered global actor networked locally overshadows dominant actors from the state and civil society whose own approaches to sexual identity are consequential and in transformation. This literature instead reduces the state to constraint on the articulation of LGBT identities or depicts postcolonial tensions between the powerful states of the North Atlantic and those of their former colonial empires, and not between sexual minorities and their own proximate state actors as such. Finally, while processes of capitalist development and neoliberal globalization have garnered significant attention as stimulant for sexual identities, I reject the universal application of these theories as sufficient explanation across a wide range of contexts, arguing that the economic forces faced by sexual minorities and their human rights advocates act equally as well on and through state actors and their allies or proxies.

My primary purpose, then, is to focus on how economic and social change in the development of sexuality are mediated by a globalized homophobia localized by state actors, their allies, and proxies (Bosia and Weiss 2013). Undertheorized and rarely invoked in the study of sexuality, these politically charged, modular, and readily available practices and rhetorics of oppression are converging toward a caricature of LGBT identity spread by social elites across the globe faster than actual LGBT identified people. In the West, the idea of the homosexual as social scourge was born in science in the nineteenth century, adopted in politics and then contested by the newly created homosexual in an ongoing process of accusation and contestation culminating in the convergence toward (a variety of) LGBT identities. In the same period outside the West, sexual minorities were part of larger indigenous populations subject to colonial systems that already saw (and see) the totality of the colonized as sexually and racially suspect—or desirable (Hoad 2006; Epprecht 2008). And just like the colonizer, the colonized has been defined and targeted through medical, scientific, and security imperatives (Fanon 1994), but the sexuality of the colonized has been separate from and subordinate to the idea of the homosexual in the West, even as both the metropolitan homosexual and the colonized were each peripheral but necessary to the colonial state.

That is, until now. US LGBT identities rooted in the medicalization of sexuality are today everywhere a frequent trope for political action and political contestation, regardless of the presence of such LGBT identities in situ, demonstrating that a modular notion of the gay bogeyman often precedes or arrives simultaneously with positive Western representations of an LGBT experience. In fact, state homophobia gives birth fully formed to the LGBT menace, then imposes it on sexual minorities to identify and ostracize traitors within, and as a result compels sexual minorities not only to respond in the state's terms but to think through them as well.

“Outing” the State

To consider the state is to lift the curtain on a set of openly engaged actors with their own interests in and motivations for repression and violence against sexual minorities.

While some scholars theorize the state as such in the study of sexual identities (Canady 2011; Lee 2011), Paternotte et al. (2013) argue that often this key social actor is relegated to the background, invisible or rarely invoked as research emphasizes the desires of economic, religious, or political forces written as outside of the state and so having no real need of that state except to extract from it the necessary tools to pursue their own interests (Paternotte et al. 2013). So the state, more often by implication, might be the handmaiden of economic change, a necessary instrument of heteronormativity, one facet of regulatory machinery controlling sociosexual expression, or an apparatus of militarized capitalist empire that wrests loyalty through the manipulation of gender, race, and sexuality.

It is true, of course, that the state has been taken by capital, religion, landed aristocracies, multinational corporations, various military-industrial-imperial complexes, and even gay and lesbian activists—often, as theorists of homonationalism (Puar 2007) could contend, all at the same time. This means that the state can serve others in the provision of enticements in the form of the rights of citizenship such as marriage, in its practices of surveillance that occupy our experience of self, and in its punishments that cast out (or more accurately, produce and display) the transgressor. Scholars also have argued that the state is a check on the globalization of LGBT identities and politics in the US form (Adam et al. 1999), and so they seem to embrace the role of the state as actor. However, such a view of the state sees constraint, with LGBT movements or communities subject to the rhetorical or legal power of state actors in ways that prevent them from adopting a certain set of aspirations or goals, but with little ability to influence or shape the state. These approaches all see homophobia deployed by state actors, their allies, or proxies as provocations to and not productive of sexual identities.

While all these are important variables in the development of contemporary LGBT identities, in my analysis, the state also is more than either a tool or constraint. It has its own interests and needs that shape the choices of state actors, their relationships with allies and opponents, and the use of proxies who act in their stead, and it produces broad social opportunities and possibilities. The state has interactions and dependencies that are local and others that are global, a complex web of intersections that fuse and divide loyalties and conflate its limits and its capacities. A strong state such as France trains its own agents in special schools, acculturates them in bureaucracies and sends them out to manage the core sectors of both the public and private economy. It also faces political parties competing for influence within the state, as well as autonomous labor, right wing, immigrants' rights, and LGBT movements that contest or seek to extract state authority for their cause. The French state is an international actor, subject to the interests of other states—within the European Union, for example, or among its allies in Africa—and exercising sovereignty against some states it considers “frenemies” like the United States. While there is international capital, both internal and external to every state (Winters 2011), which challenges even those as strong as France as capital is needed to fuel the economic growth used to satisfy the state's constituencies, the French state is also a military industrial organization in its own right. Its productive authority gives moral meaning to its raw interest in population management and capitalist production outside the needs of markets, which has led to the regulation of marriage and birth as well as agriculture and urbanization.

However, state homophobia is not just a facet of strong states; quite the opposite. As a tactic and modular tool kit today, it more likely emerges in the context of crisis (Bosia 2013). In fact, the association of state homophobia with crisis calls greater attention to how processes of development that uproot and transform social and political contexts actually spur state homophobia rather than provide opportunity for LGBT organizing—an

interpretation of the role of capitalist development that stands in contrast to the one usually summoned to explain the emergence of LGBT identities.

Somewhere Over the Rainbow: States, Convergence, and LGBT Human Rights Revisited

My approach to the globalization of LGBT identities is predicated on five interventions related to a hypothesis of convergence around human rights. First, convergence itself is best applied to state homophobia, though significant local differences remain related to variations in state capacity and governing coalitions, challenges to the state, as well as culture and history. These differences shape possible responses among sexual minorities, so that universal LGBT identities adapted from a US model by either state actors or sexual minorities are always somewhere over the rainbow. In Mubarak's Egypt, a diverse and disaggregated state united only in a desire to retain power and its penetration of society is just articulating a purposeful homophobia clearly defining the LGBT menace, enabling the informants I met in Cairo to remain for now clandestine in public. But Museveni's Uganda deploys a fully formed LGBT menace, imported by US evangelicals (Kaoma 2013) to cohere competing interests within an intensely politicized terrain against sexual minorities now negotiating in Westernized terms.

Second, like race and gender, in no case is the consolidation of LGBT identities merely the result of the actions of sexual minorities themselves, or even global conversations among activists. Instead, we should consider how racial identities develop within an historical formation that accumulates imposition and contention among oppressors and among the oppressed as well as between oppressors and the oppressed in ways that empower state actors to shape the possibilities for response (Marx 1998). Third, this move requires us to examine the originating force of state homophobia, and to what degree states choose homophobic practices and rhetorics absent or out of proportion to demands from sexual minorities. Where sexual minorities are not or are only weakly organized, in fact, the choice for state actors, their allies, and proxies might be to do nothing, as Sirleaf Johnson promised in Liberia.⁴ Instead, we often see what Weiss calls an "anticipatory countermovement" (2013) that precedes sexual minority political organizing. This phenomenon compels us to ask, absent the need to treat any actual "symptoms" of alleged homosexual infection, why states succumb to a political Munchausen Syndrome by proxy?

Fourth, globalization, technology, migration, war, and HIV change the experiences of sociosexual expression in consequential ways, including through changes in homophobia. If we just consider the Internet in Kampala as influential in the display of LGBT subjects, for example, we see both trends at work. There, Queer Youth Uganda explained to me that they were unfamiliar with the word "queer" until they discovered it as something potential allies and funders called themselves across the Internet. But before Queer Youth Uganda was formed, state actors, their allies, and proxies already had trolled an Internet loaded with homophobic characterizations of a "gay agenda" and LGBT experiences to use in producing a gay menace.

Finally, I assume "state" to be a sequence of more or less aggregated actors, inclusive of those who animate state institutions, their social allies who join in the collection and allocation of state resources, as well as proxies who enforce state authority outside official institutions. I use *state* to define such a constellation—not *regime*—to avoid the implication that state homophobia is hegemonic or in any way unreflexive, rather than purposefully imposed by identifiable actors. At the same time, state homophobia is not limited to *policy* as regulatory framework, or even the debates over the adoption or repeal of such policies.

State homophobia is the set of practices and rhetorics about homosexuality used by social actors to defend, to solidify, or to contest state authority, and while state homophobia might be visibly similar, globalized, and modular in its characterization of an LGBT menace, the deployment of it as practice and rhetoric can vary.

Capitalism, Globalizations, and LGBT Human Rights

Much of the literature on the globalization of LGBT rights and identities starts with structural or social processes that transform sexual identities. Generally, these theories can be classified in how they prioritize capitalist market economies or the social and cultural processes of globalization. In either case, globalizing practices that enable the work of transnational networks of LGBT, human rights, and health activists and advocates are considered sufficient to explain what the research assumes to be a global convergence of LGBT identities and politics.

Indebted to the work of activist-scholar John D'Emilio (1993), political economy approaches argue that the capitalist transition from household production of goods to wage labor breaks familial bonds, enabling sexual minorities to live independently and to forego the economic necessity of marriage and procreation; economic and social change also spur the urbanization that thrust these now liberal individuals into creative opportunities for connections and relationships along new lines of intimacy (Adam 1985). D'Emilio describes American capitalism as patriarchal, with the nuclear family appropriated for the procreation of wage labor if not for the maintenance of family security, so that a heterosexual ideology took root at the market's core. Later scholars extend this analysis to the broad transformations brought about by neoliberal globalization (Altman 2002; Jackson 2009). From a different position, research addresses the cultural or overtly political aspects of globalization, calling attention to the influence of US cultural forms and of the West more generally through new technologies, media, and emerging patterns of consumption (Binnie 2004; Martel 2013). Some follow the work of Keck and Sikkink (1998) to consider a global civil society inclusive of LGBT networks, HIV/AIDS advocates and activists, and human-rights- or health-care-oriented nongovernmental organizations (NGOs; Altman 2000; Grewal and Kaplan 2001; Dehesa 2007; Seckinelgin 2009).

Certainly, cultural and political patterns are not distinct (for example, see Pecheny 2012–2013); like cultural forms embedded in economic processes and markets that come with neoliberal globalization, politics is inflected with both the economization of social life and questions of power inherent in neocolonial disequilibriums. Moreover, political forms use the same technologies to easily carry the same symbols and rhetoric as cultural ones, especially with the politics of LGBT rights interlinked with the culture of LGBT identity. However difficult it is to disentangle political from cultural, the differences in settings and purposes suggest that we can expect processes and the extent of the dispersal of LGBT identities to relate to the form such dispersal takes. For example, global political networks compel sexual minorities to speak in terms of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) rights and identities, but rainbow flags, movies, Internet sites, or tourist-focused gay bars as objects or sites of consumption require no such political commitment.

At the same time, real cultural and political globalization is imbedded in person-to-person exchange (Manalansan 2003). My research, for example, addresses migration in the influence of New York's LGBT community on two French journalists in the 1980s and early 1990s (Bosia 2009). After a decade of inadequate response from the French government to AIDS, these journalists were inspired by ACT UP: one at the founding of the movement

in 1987 who returned to Paris with an arsenal of US symbols and tactics to start Act Up Paris in 1989; the other returning later to become president of the group. Like many (but not all) of the leading activists in France, they maintain extensive social connections on both sides of the Atlantic. More recently, an unlikely kind of underground railroad for sexual minorities links Kampala and Paris, where one Ugandan expat lives most of the year (author's interview, March 2013). Such exchanges also flow through short duration lesbian and gay tourism, if problematically so (Puar 2001; Murray 2007).

In political terms, global NGOs and UN agencies working on HIV/AIDS and human rights have been credited with the globalization of US- or European-style LGBT identities and rights, eventually producing a "boomerang" effect as emerging claimants seek global allies to provoke domestic responses (Keck and Sikkink 1998). In the development of UN initiatives to combat AIDS, for example, research began with the need to "de-stigmatize" sexuality in response to the threat to life posed by the new disease, which impelled institutions to focus on the human rights of those living with HIV or at risk of transmission (Altman 2000, 2008). Sometimes, it was the blindness of the state to sexual minorities that provided the cover for activist mobilizing transnationally (Weiss 2006). Similarly, Pecheny (2012–2013) situated LGBT human rights in a new lingua franca in Latin America within authoritarian withdrawal and neoliberal advance. While much scholarship like this does interrogate such structural shifts as the kind of "background conditions" making diffusion possible (Sikkink 2011), fundamental changes can be undertheorized. This is particularly true with regard to the role of the state as an LGBT innovator through the introduction of gay-baiting, overlooked when foregrounding networks, policies, or actions (Holzhacker 2013), or a-historicized when LGBT activists displace state actors, allies, and proxies at the causal center (Massad 2007).

Finally, new media and cyberglobalization are the least studied aspects of the dispersion of LGBT culture. As some note, new technology has profoundly changed the scale and space of interactions, enabling sexual minorities to connect from a much wider range of locations to a greater wealth of information, and in the process the Internet is becoming a primary site for social or political engagement around sexuality (Martel 2013). But with a few exceptions (Mittra 2010), research on globalization and sociosexual expression tends to view new technologies as media outcomes without any ethnography of use.

The Critique of LGBT Human Rights Discourse

Western notions of sexual identity and rights, either as conceived in place or theorized as modular and diffused, bring with them a dangerous imbrication of neocolonial relationships and structural inequalities. Increasingly, scholarship views the imposition of such identities as an expression of domination, though research only rarely provides adequate treatment for the forms of state homophobia through which the post and neocolonial state acts against both LGBT rights-holders and sexual minorities generally. We see this clearly in work that explores commercial and human rights networks as compulsory, exclusionary, and impositional—all accurate depictions in many contexts but negligent of the reasons for the state response other than it being against Western provocations, and negligent of the variety of emerging transnational relationships, including those that are more regional rather than those emanating from the West.

Research on tourism, for example, demonstrates the significant limitations on the ability of LGBT people to carry egalitarian identities and a canon of rights outside the West (and often even within the West), complicated by interconnection of sexual and economic motives, and the tensions between sexuality, race, and class (Cantu 2002) as well

as the loaded interplay of race and sexuality for LGBT migrants in the Anglo-American context (Manalansan 2003). Many gay tourists seek out new travel experiences and cultural connections not to replicate a familiar model of sociosexual experience, but in fact, to do quite the opposite, reinforcing racial and cultural hierarchies of colonial subjugation (Alexander 2005; Murray 2007). Indeed, Western tourists invoke orientalist imaginaries to celebrate a supposed nascent character in local sexuality, where the racial and colonial subject becomes the object of a fetish for the exotic (Puar 2001; Massad 2007), and tourist spaces can be walled off from local residents so that their participation in them is not free and open as shared patterns of consumption but instead embedded in service to the tourist as labor (Murray 2007).

Research that points to the overwhelming power of US culture (Altman 2002; Massad 2007) as an explanation for the global dispersion of similar ideas faces two challenges. First, LGBT cultural forms such as portrayals in film and television remain few and far between,⁵ still often included as deleterious shorthand. As of yet, there is little evidence that characters like Bette, Ennis, or Jack travel well or at least in the ways their creators intended outside North America and Europe, as Western characters also provide an easy foreign shorthand. Indeed, portrayals of LGBT characters that seem positive in the West, like those in the films *Fire* and *The Wedding Banquet*, provoked outrage (Kapur 2000) or reinforced prevailing wisdom (Chiang 1998) in ways that more closely parallel state homophobia than LGBT rights. The films considered by Kapur and Chiang—despite their reception in Western LGBT circles—are further evidence that many of the contexts where “foreign exchange” serves as a vector for ideas about sexuality are regional or diasporic, which might accurately reflect, for example, different sociosexual models of life that predate or coincide with Stonewall (Chao 2010).

Second, the role of the Internet in the globalization of LGBT human rights (Martel 2013), though much heralded, is ambiguous and complicatedly imbedded in structural inequalities. Certainly, in Uganda, Egypt, and France, cybercommunities are a primary mechanism for the dispersal of cultural forms with US roots. Organizations with a social media presence of any kind use a remarkably familiar semiotics and relay the same global news and events, and social media provide an important tool for internal organization, passing information about local events and warning about police raids and looming threats. However, access to the Internet is restricted economically and technically in locations like Uganda and Egypt in ways that just do not exist in France. The City of Paris provides public Wi-Fi hotspots, as do cafes for the price of a coffee, while in Kampala, Wi-Fi is limited to expensive restaurants and cafes designed for foreign agents and their local business partners or at offices of local organizations or activists. Social media is widely engaged over mobile phones with speeds and facility not designed to serve US- or European-based websites other than social networks like Facebook and Twitter. As well, cultural globalization no longer includes easy content access, with significant regional restrictions designed to protect intellectual property and profitability. And new media, even as it is rich in symbols, is also textual, especially on phones, which means that linguistic barriers reinforce linkages between globally dispersed sites and historic language families, and texting shorthand used on Facebook and Twitter are locally specific. Finally, and as I have noted, it is more or less common for the security state to police Internet activity, especially targeting sexual minorities.

Rights themselves have inconsistent journeys. Europe as a region has seen the most significant integration of LGBT human rights into transnational institutions, benefiting from both direct people-to-people human rights work and the efforts of intergovernmental institutions in Europe to change rights in the process of ascension of new states to European

Union membership (Holzhacker 2013). But European Union member states unanimously acquiesced to an exception to such rights demanded by Polish leaders as part of the last round of treaty negotiations (O'Dwyer 2013), and the EU has done little to stop a nationalist government in member-state Hungary from turning back the clock on LGBT human rights. Though the reform of marriage laws might look impressive given the rapid embrace in diverse contexts, we see this in only a handful of countries and, at the same time, marriage rights neither top the LGBT human rights agenda internationally nor anywhere produce the end of official condemnations for alternative gender or sexual experiences. Even when global activists and advocates developed the broader Yogyakarta Principles, they enumerated rights predicated on the assumption that all people have a gender and a sexual orientation (Waites 2009), so that Yogyakarta negates the experiences of sexual minorities in contexts where a gendered system differentiates sexual acts without reference to sexual orientation, or where greater knowledge of LGBT identities from the West have unsettled a gendered system without resolving on a dual system of gender and sexual orientation.

These inequalities inform a scholarly turn interrogating the postcolonial menace in the global LGBT human rights agenda itself. As probably the most prominent of these authors, Massad argues that a "Gay International" of NGOs and academics is promoting the universal imposition of a Western sexual binary—"inciting" state actors in Muslim societies to reject the very identities dispersed by the West before sexual minorities embrace them *in situ* (Massad 2007). Others see state restrictions often responding to US tourism, not articulated claims from local communities (Puar 2001). In Egypt, one of the most notorious recent examples of state homophobia was the arrest and prosecution of men taken during gay night at a Cairo tourist club called the Queen Boat. As well, Puar indicates how tourism can enforce postcolonial tensions in which sexual minorities become entangled, when, for example, well-to-do gay men appeal to the former imperial metropole to secure previously subject territory from local state actors described as homophobic and therefore backward (2001). Similarly, studies like those of Duggan and Puar problematize LGBT rights not just because of their unforeseen effects on non-Western sexual minorities but because advocates work in conjunction with a US imperial state to reorder domestic notions of race in service to a neocolonial war on terror (Duggan 2003; Puar 2007).

The practical result is that once common possibilities for sexual expression and intimacy between men have been closed down as policing and moral panic ensnare a kind of unintentional homosexual, but analytically the imbrication of sexuality with neocolonial power structures can elide and distort a truly more complicated LGBT experience. Massad, for example, sees a powerful global movement born exactly when US gay men were terrorized by AIDS, when they turned inward to ward off death and to combat a homophobic right-wing coalition at the center of the state that became invigorated with the pandemic (Bosia and Weiss 2013). As well, the conflation of global LGBT efforts with a US imperial order—especially one in the wake of the war on terror—seems imprecise given the use of both Muslim and gay bogeymen by the Bush Administration to secure a majority in the 2002 and 2004 elections. Granted, this work describes aspirations within US LGBT organizing and not a state-society alliance that could not exist (that is, not until the Obama Administration); nevertheless, such analysis, including those focusing on LGBT tourism, often generalize from a well-connected segment of the gay white male community, one with ample disposable income, emerging largely at the end of the 1990s with successful AIDS treatments. In any case, it is often overlooked that the state remains at least a central force in articulating a gay menace, whether it is against Western impositions or merely inspirations.

Outside the United States as well, the global interventions of LGBT activists can be surprisingly different from those common in scholarship. Act Up Paris, for example (Bosia 2009), interceded on behalf of Cameroonian and Cambodian women sex workers subjected to experimental treatments under the auspices of the Gates Foundation and a Western pharmaceutical company and to prevent the mistreatment of those with HIV in Uganda enticed into an experimental regimen. These activists imposed their bodies at Paris airports to block the deportation from France of undocumented immigrants with HIV. Even when they advocate on issues of global LGBT human rights, it has been more often to demand that their own government extend a right to exile (which they have won) or to condemn the French state for its neocolonial relationships with dictators. One of the most famous incidents in francophone activism was when a president of Act Up Paris, now the general editor of a French language LGBT news website, shouted down a government minister live on national television because a young woman with HIV was being dragged to the airport on an expulsion order. He concluded, “C’est quoi, ce pays de merde?”⁶ (author’s interview, July 2008).

The State and Global Homophobia

Clearly, a variety of structural forces propels and inhibits global LGBT identification and the universal elaboration of LGBT human rights. While I do not dispute the importance of such factors in a complicated story of transformational sociosexual possibilities, the evidence does not indicate that they are individually or even collectively sufficient and are more often mutually contradictory and sometimes inconsistent. By emphasizing the role of oppression in the development of a LGBT identities and politics, I take a step *backward* to explain why and when state actors, their allies, and proxies turn to homophobia as a tool for securing authority. This step enables me to see LGBT identities and human rights as a *reaction* to specific provocations where economic, cultural, and political forces transform the challenges and opportunities facing the state as well as those facing sexual minorities.

Though the transition from household production to wage labor creates the opportunity for new sexual identities, as does the global diffusion of new ideas, it is more profoundly the intervention of the state as an autonomous actor that produces the possibility of LGBT specificity. Even D’Emilio must rely on WWII to jumpstart community, when the comparatively slower pace of economic change gave way to the massive transformation required by the state, uprooting young men and women, moving them out of the intimate family environments with which they were familiar (and constrained), segregating them by gender, and then tossing them back on less-than-familiar shores at war’s end (D’Emilio 1993). Similarly, Johnson finds that the state’s interventions at the time of the New Deal began a transformation of homosexuality through employment within emerging bureaucracies, changes that are themselves transformed by the subsequent expulsion of lesbian and gay men from the government labor force and a concomitant police and medical repression of homosexuality as one productive part of the broad consolidation of the national security state after WWII (Johnson 2004).

Materialist accounts of sociosexual expression, then, overlook the “double movement” that includes the necessary reaction to capitalism’s commodification of labor and other factors of production (Polanyi 1957). While capitalism needs the state to act in overturning the traditional forms of production—states do so for their own reasons—this proves disruptive because of the illogic of capitalism itself—labor (like children) cannot be produced for sale as a commodity. The subsequent crises engendered by commodification again require the state’s intervention, this time to protect society from capitalism itself. This process

extended new markets around the world in the colonial empires of the nineteenth century but protected states and societies by limiting and regulating markets within the contours of those empires prior to WWII and within national and regional markets after the war. The same process is at work in family policy for national and not market needs, or moral policing as part of the state's security apparatus.

Moreover, state and social actors benefit from hindsight, so the development of capitalist markets proceeds in waves that reflect different processes of development and state intervention for those countries that develop later (Gershenkron 1962). While the United States and Britain experience the rough trauma at the foundations of capitalism, late developers like France, Germany, and Japan, for example, launch state-centered projects of capitalist development not only fully aware of the risks and opportunities but also highly conscious of lagging behind their *military* competition as *states*. So we should expect that different periods of economic change produce different opportunities for the transformation of sexuality. This means that capitalism (and sexuality), however pleasing it is to theorize as above the state, became at most a companion to state initiatives as a tool necessary to strengthen the state itself, useful to fend off external enemies but productive at the same time of domestic possibilities and contradictions.

In France, social stability in the Third Republic was a reaction to the massive military defeat of 1870, requiring a balance between the state's management of the population and of industrialization in ways that placed a primacy on sexuality and family protection and immigration policy for military and economic ends (Geva 2013). The natalist state, increasingly centered on the preservation of the rural peasantry and colonial expansion, imported much of the labor needed for development, and the kinds of social dislocations seen in US capitalism were largely dampened until after WWII and never as pronounced. However, sodomy—a practice long tolerated by the aristocratic families of Europe because it need not interfere with procreation—was redefined as homosexuality, a social disease threatening the procreative capacity of the family and thus national security. Criminalized in some cases under Vichy, with these laws affirmed after the Liberation (Idier 2013), homosexuality was codified until 1982 as a question of national survival within a sociosexual rhetoric that is still animated in the content of state homophobia and so the self-conceptualization of LGBT people as well. Even recent opposition to marriage equality in France is embedded in discourses of procreation and cultural danger posed to national security by the threat of a declining European birthrate and the presence of an allegedly unassimilated domestic population with origins in the former colonies.

In this century, neoliberal globalization exploits and reinforces the relative weakness of all states facing a similar policy kit of structural adjustment and market reform. However, state actors do more than just acquiesce. First, state actors come to structural adjustment in response to different challenges or crises—neoliberalism is the economic cure all for whatever ails—with different sets of social allies and proxies and different sociopolitical institutions. Second, all state actors position themselves precariously between a potential crisis animated by global economic actors who they might rebuke, on one hand, and a potential crisis in the form of constituencies they will dislocate with change, on the other. The state, then, can retain a role in deciding on how to implement reforms, in part deploying both its material and rhetorical resources to minimize challenge but with a rearview mirror in hand to weigh choice and action through historic experience. This is the space that state homophobia occupies for what we might call sociosexual late developers; as state actors, their allies and proxies borrow gay and lesbian identity from where it already has taken hold to create bogeyman they use to challenge global elites or to ward off internal dissent.

In Egypt, the years after the 1952 revolution empowered the military and security apparatus as an autonomous guardian, a “deep state” inside the state with its own interests and objectives. Even as the Mubarak years brought greater integration in the global economy and a more diverse set of state and economic institutions, the military-security apparatus maintained its independence vis-à-vis the bureaucracy, the courts, Mubarak’s political party, and a growing private sector. As well as being the largest single recipient of US aid with direct ties to the US military-industrial complex, the Egyptian military developed a network of business enterprises in the days of state-directed industrialization, extending its tentacles deep into civil society, doling out vast resources to retired officers, and strongly resisting neoliberal reforms even as they were buffeted by change (Marshall and Stacher 2012). With mandatory service as well as its network of businesses like bakeries providing subsidized bread (Cook 2011), the military extended its reach into every family through both its social and economic functions and the ideological commitment to the production of new generations of “nation builders” (Ryzova 2004–2005). Finally, the military reinforces its legitimacy as state guardian with an anticolonial ideology borrowing heavily from nineteenth-century British notions of sexual morality and gender but rejecting as Western those who deviate from this official morality (Walsh-Haines 2012).

Like France, Egypt demonstrates how the transformative capacity of industrialization and free markets are mediated, in this case by the military and security state, and over time normalized and transgressive sexuality and gender become key tools of statecraft. As the apparatus of the state is increasingly disaggregated and pressured by Western interests, buoying the nuclear family also means associating moral deviance with colonial, Western, or Jewish specters amidst the swirl of change and crisis (Walsh-Haines 2012; Pratt 2007). With this framework, we can better explain the trial of 52 men on debauchery charges in a national security court after their arrest at a club that catered to gay tourists. In the midst of a series of economic reforms and significant victories for the Muslim Brotherhood, the state manufactured a foreign menace in the bodies of gay men who cavorted with the state’s Western enemies (El-Menyawi 2006; Pratt 2007; Bosia 2013), a process that suppressed for more than a decade even small-scale efforts among sexual minorities in Egypt to identify *politically* and in pursuit of a human rights agenda.

In Uganda, a Museveni dictatorship dressed in democratic drag has held power for 30 years, strategically positioned in an unstable and resource-rich region, by balancing a variety of factional and international pressures. After the violent disruptions of the Idi Amin years, which included the expulsion of more than 74,000 Ugandans of South Asian descent, followed by the AIDS pandemic, and civil wars in Rwanda and the Congo across the border, Uganda under Museveni entered the twenty-first century as a regional partner to Western allies and a model of AIDS prevention planning. But the economy remains unstable, dependent on a variety of commodity crops (Jones and Gibbon 2011) and timber and is beholden to international lenders, NGOs, and foreign aid (Kono and Montinola 2012). Under Museveni’s long rule, a broad political patronage system became imbedded in the economy and in governance, infiltrating structural adjustment (Green 2011), land reform and expropriation (Grainger and Geary 2011), and privatization programs, even as the state successfully implemented a significant reduction in public sector employment demanded by global actors (Kjaer 2004).

With neoliberal globalization for many and the distribution of largess at the center of the state to maintain the support of key constituencies, the dictatorship became increasingly reliant on the network of evangelical Christians providing direct aid and the AIDS relief initiatives that began with the Bush Administration (Kaoma 2013; Bosia 2013). However,

corruption and neoliberal forms are provocative in a country where self-interested financial gain runs against a morality centered on exchange and reciprocity embedded in family and community life (Sadgrove et al. 2012), and the discovery of oil has unleashed a growing schism among elites. The result has been widespread finger pointing, with state actors, their allies, and proxies producing new identities by defining moral decline in sociosexual terms, importing wholesale US evangelical notions of the gay peril, and by blaming the country's troubles on the infiltration of such gay men and lesbians from the West. In response, newly identified gay men and lesbians have brought canonic LGBT rights to Uganda as defense against Western-inspired homophobia.

Capabilities Beyond the State

By way of conclusion, I want to shift attention away from an emphasis on the state and human rights to suggest we respond to globalizing state homophobia from the bottom up, focusing on “the expansion of the ‘capabilities’ of a person to lead the kind of lives they value—and have reason to value” (Sen 1999: 18). I do not want to imply that state oppression or even neglect can continue; criminalization, prosecution, and disregard are not feasible options, especially given a pandemic. But, like El-Menyawi (2006), I see how an LGBT rights discourse brings greater danger from the state in the new global context. To table such rhetoric, then, is to draw on what El-Menyawi (2006: 46) calls “activism from the closet,” setting aside rights based on sexual *identity* in favor of those based on bodily autonomy, including an end to prosecution and intimidation, protections for all citizens equally, and the provision of necessary capabilities in terms of health care, security, and intimacy.

Such an approach reflects that the globalization of state homophobia has brought with it an increasingly uniform gay peril, but sociosexual development is not similarly consistent. The result is that there remains a difference between condemnations of practices, identities, and political claims, even as states come to render those differences irrelevant. So in Egypt and Uganda, sexual minorities similarly face arrest, blackmail, social disclosure, and targeted vigilante violence. In Egypt, however, legal prohibition has only recently evolved from targeting receptive sex as a banned act to criminalizing both partners as proscribed individuals (Human Rights Watch 2004). And while it was a nineteenth-century French doctor who claimed that homosexual identity was visible in the body, it is Egyptian authorities today who routinely perform forced anal exams looking for such evidence (Long 2004). Some contenders for power in the aftermath of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution used specific LGBT rights claims to instill fear (Bosia and Weiss 2013), but importantly the “gay peril” remains largely disconnected from the idea of rights. In Uganda, even while LGBT identity is still in the process of being *proven* as social fact through the homophobia of state actors and their allies, it is increasingly LGBT rights that are coming under attack along with the organizations that promote such rights. Museveni, who once denied the existence of LGBT people in Uganda, now acknowledges their presence though he criminalized the promotion of their rights, and so any invocation of rights only provides fodder for the state.

This problematizes our understanding of intervention. At best, a discourse of rights that implies a sexual or gender identity at least risks irrelevance when argued before authorities who see no such identities and runs the risk of outpacing even the social development of sexual minorities on the ground. At worst, such discourse is being construed as treason. Meanwhile, criminalization, robust policing, and social exposure and ostracism continue unabated. At the same time, homocolonial triangulations situate sexual minorities subject to such oppression between their national governments and Western LGBT rights advocates

(Rahman 2014), with the latter actually doing little to provide the kinds of substantive resources needed to address real dangers. Indeed, the claim to LGBT rights cannot stop the profound corruption that encourages arrest and blackmail as a source of income for the police; it provides no direct assistance in terms of medical care or prevention services for a population facing HIV but lacking government services. Those facing death threats and the fear of arrest or violence because of their activism remain without access to mental health services even with universal rights, and rights provide no tools for Internet security or self-defense in the face of violence; transgender men and women would still have no access to counseling services or any level of treatment given the largely indifferent provision of health care.

Substantive freedoms move out from the political to the fundamentals that facilitate decision making and empowerment—economic and social access, transparency, and security. For transgender women like Beyoncé who founded Transgender Rights Uganda, for example, the suppression of criminalization would improve legal security, but, without the provision of education and economic opportunity outside of sex work, tangible security is impossible. Even resources to fight blackmail or to pay ransom when necessary provide tangible improvement, as does the recent effort by the Tactical Technology Collective to distribute information about cybersecurity to LGBT communities at risk.⁷ Such efforts are not new; Act Up Paris launched initiatives to develop networks across Africa in the 1990s, providing resources and support alongside the broad communities of people with HIV making demands upon international and domestic actors (Bosia 2009).

Capabilities also suggest that bodily autonomy or empowerment extends directly from the demands of women, including sexual freedoms that are constitutive of autonomy (Budhiraja et al. 2010). By standing with women, we begin to develop wider coalitions that can produce pressures for change not based on individuated LGBT rights but in the denial of individual bodies to criminal and social prohibition. One model is that of La Via Campesina, the international peasants movement, which has instituted global self-governing structures that require equal representation of women at every level of decision making, and, as a result, women's empowerment and bodily security have become key components of the struggle for community sovereignty and autonomy (Desmarais 2007). This in fact is the approach pursued by self-identified LGBT activists at Bedayaa in Cairo and transgender activists in Kampala, as they are often shunned by local human rights activists.

It is not just material capabilities following Sen's approach that are new; it is also an emphasis, where appropriate, on the choice in how to live and what values to hold that requires the recognition that US-style LGBT identities or rights are neither necessary nor universal. While the globalization of homophobia might make such political and social constructions inevitable and irreversible, an emphasis on capabilities provides substantive aid for whatever choice remains possible, a form of freedom over their own destiny for sexual minorities to find new means of organizing and new ways to experience their intimate lives. If it is not possible to organize fully outside the concept of homosexuality, then, capabilities that provide real freedom to self-identify reflect that actual diversity of social organization and substantive claims that sexual minorities have been making on the ground as even they are cognizant of the LGBT rights framework and social organizing (Broqua 2013). In this way, we might avoid the strange fruit of state homophobia, which calls forth an LGBT rights agenda that inadvertently acts in collusion with oppression to preclude the creative opportunity once at the center of queer politics.

Funding

Some research in Paris, Kampala, and Uganda from which this article in part draws was supported by an expense defrayment grant from the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs of Saint Michael's College, Colchester, Vermont, and a Small Research Grant from the American Political Science Association.

Notes

1. Quoted from "Me, when I am me" (2010).
2. See Helms (1989).
3. French law still restricts medically assisted reproduction to heterosexual married couples and bans surrogacy.
4. Sirleaf promised to veto laws on homosexuality. See *The Guardian* (2012).
5. See the GLAAD Studio Responsibility Index for US-made films (GLAAD 2014).
6. "What is this shitty country?"
7. See Tactical Technology Collective (2013).

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