RELIGIOUS CONSERVATISM ON THE GLOBAL STAGE: THREATS AND CHALLENGES FOR LGBTI RIGHTS

November 2018

GPP
Global Philanthropy Project

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PRESENTATION

Dear Colleagues,

It is our pleasure to share with you a fascinating and alarming report on the rise of religious conservatisms and the threats such movements pose to feminist and LGBTI movements worldwide. For funders concerned with sexual and reproductive rights and sexual orientation and gender identity rights, this report should function as a wake-up call.

The Global Philanthropy Project commissioned this research with a sense of urgency. Members of the GPP have witnessed the increasingly politicized use of religion in multiple fora – from U.N. debates on human rights to local battles over textbooks. Many of us observed a backlash to the movements we fund and the organizations we support. At the same time, some GPP members were engaged with progressive faith organizing and/or worked closely with women's rights, feminist and LGBTI movements. GPP itself had sponsored research on closing civic space[1] and had been an active participant in European donor discussions about reaching the "moveable middle" and supporting LGBTI and feminist communities in reclaiming the concept of "family values." Each of us connected to this phenomenon in different ways, and yet we were unable to collectively name and understand it.

This report is the largest and most comprehensive study to date of the way that religious conservatism is currently operating around the world. It presents the tactics, discourse, funding patterns, and institutional and organizational actors, and includes case studies focused on Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa. More than that, the report explains how religious opposition to sexuality and gender equality has been transformed in the past two decades by the establishment of large, well-funded NGOs. A direct response to the U.N. Conferences in Cairo and Beijing in the mid-1990s, these NGOs are mostly but not exclusively based in the US and are founded in Evangelical Protestantism, Catholic, and Mormon faiths. Working alongside political actors such as the Russian Federation or the OIC as well as religious institutions, these NGOs have adopted collective mobilization and the secular language of human rights as winning strategies. They engage in interreligious alliances and host international conferences to build grassroots support. They claim to "protect the family" and use the empty construct of "gender ideology" to attack feminism and LGBTI equality.

With a perspective that is simultaneously global, regional, and national, the authors describe and analyze a phenomenon that is characterized by a politicized use of conservative religious ideology but is also complex, varied and endlessly adaptive. This report connects the dots between different movements and geographies, illuminating key themes and providing a theoretical framework for understanding – understanding that will be essential to an effective philanthropic response.

This report is based on extensive research and documentation and presents clear and compelling analysis. This letter is our call to action. We call on fellow funders to act. We need funders of sexual and reproductive rights and health, women's movements and feminism, defenders of secular democracy and civic space – we need all of us to come together to develop a shared response. We need our institutions to have clarity of purpose and we need to understand these threats as part of a global phenomenon that is not only dangerous but ascendant. Now is the time to break down our funding siloes and engage in the conversations, strategy development, and funding strategies that will prevent the loss of equality and the rollback of rights. The opposition has united across different denominations, national borders, and ideologies. It is long past time for us to unite too.

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1 *The Perfect Storm: The Closing Space for LGBT Civil Society in Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Kenya, and Hungary.* Global Philanthropy Project, 2016. https://globalphilanthropyproject.org/2016/04/22/perfectstormreport/

INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, the religious landscape underwent a series of changes throughout the world. Whether due to migrations or the strategic policies of religious institutions, some religions have modified their range of influence. These movements rekindle debates about the geopolitical influence of religion on societies in general, and on sexual politics specifically.[2]

One of the consequences of these geographical shifts in the global religious map has been the spread of conservative, faith-based interpretations of the body and sexuality. For example, the rise of Protestant churches in Latin America, an area historically monopolized by Catholicism, is driving an increasingly politicized Pentecostal evangelical conservatism.[3] In sub-Saharan Africa, the strength acquired by Catholics and Evangelicals has given legitimacy and political capital to pastors and bishops, many of whom do not hesitate to use their investiture to denounce sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) as imperialist impositions contrary to African faith and traditions, or to organize attacks against LGBTI communities.[4] In Europe, traditional Catholic conservatism has enhanced its impact through the alliance with certain Muslim sectors that reinforce a conservative vision of sexuality. In different countries, parts of the Muslim communities formed umbrella organizations that bring together a wide variety of institutions and organizations based on Islam, such as the Muslim Council of Britain, the French Council of the Muslim Faith, the Muslim Council of Sweden, among others. Many of these have spoken out against certain sexual and reproductive rights and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) rights during political debates.

These new religious "waves" do not imply univocal ways of interpreting sexuality through faith-based matrices. Within each religion there are different ways of understanding the bodies and sexual and reproductive practices. Just as changes in religiosity globally have rearticulated conservative ways of thinking about sexuality, they have also allowed the rise of pluralistic ways of understanding the confluence between religion and sexuality. New political actors who link religion and sexuality from inclusive points of view interrupt the traditional idea of religion as inevitably conservative.

The different ways of articulating religion and sexuality allow multiple ways of understanding the relationship between religion and social change linked to sexuality. On the one hand, conservative actors usually seek to maintain a status quo or to return to a patriarchal order that delegitimizes sexual and gender expressions that are dissenting from cisgender heterosexuality. On the other hand, pluralistic views of religion tend to ally with some feminist and LGBTI demands for generating transformations that open opportunities for diverse bodies, sexual practices, and desires.

This report explores those relationships between religion and sexuality. Specifically, this document aims to understand the impact of religious conservatisms on SRR and SOGI rights, and especially on LGBTI people.

OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY, AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This work systematizes and analyzes some key dimensions of the impact of religious conservatisms on SRR and SOGI rights. We describe and analyze the main strategies, funding sources, discourses, and actors that oppose these rights, focusing on a global level, but also on a local one. To achieve this objective, four types of secondary sources were used: a) documents from the international human rights system; b) reports of human rights, LGBTI, and feminist organizations specialized in research on religious conservatism; c) academic articles published in scientific journals; and d) specialized press notes. Additionally, we consulted two specialists on the specific situation of the impact of religious conservatisms in Africa and Eastern Europe: Kapya Kaoma and Gordan Bosanac. Two brief reports these specialists wrote on this issue are included in this work as case studies focused on specific areas, along with a report on Latin America.

This report is divided into three sections. The first analytically describes the main conservative strategies, discourses, funding sources, and actors that oppose SOGI rights at the global level. Section 2 presents three case studies in order to describe the particularities of the main actors, strategies, and networks of religious conservatisms in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

One of the challenges that arises when analyzing the activism opposed to feminist and LGBTI agendas is to establish a conceptual category that allows us to delimit this phenomenon and capture the main characteristics in a way that is inclusive of the different elements that compose it. Academic and activist literature have proposed various analytical concepts to name these actors. However, a single concept has not been agreed upon. Rather, different analyses have generated a wide variety of approaches and categories that highlight different dimensions that constitute activism opposed to feminist and LGBTI agendas, each of which highlights certain specific aspects and minimizes others.

2 Corrêa, Sonia, Petchesky, Rosalind, and Parker, Richard (2008). *Sexuality, Health and Human Rights*. Oxon/New York: Routledge.

3 Cid, Ignacio (2017). *Evangélicos y política: breve ensayo de sociología comparada*. http://estudiosevangelicos.org/evangelicos-y-politica-breve-ensayo-de-sociologia-comparada/ ; Campos Machado, Maria das Dores (2012). "Religião, cultura e política". *Religião e Sociedade*, 32 (2): 29-56.

4 Kaoma, Kapya John (2012). *Colonizing African Values: How the U.S. Christian Right is Transforming Sexual Politics in Africa*. Somerville: Political Research Associates; Gunda, Masiiwa Ragies (2017). *Silent no Longer! Narratives of engagement between LGBTI groups and the churches in southern Africa*. Johannesburg: The Other Foundation.

Concepts such as religious fundamentalisms, anti-rights movement, religious conservatism, neo-conservatism, and religious right, among others, are used both in academia and by activists to denominate opponents of SRR and SOGI rights. Each of these terms emphasizes specific aspects that others minimize. But they also have limits that make them susceptible to criticism. For example, one of the advantages of the concept of "religious fundamentalisms" is its ability to emphasize that the opposition phenomenon is centrally linked by dogmatic and intransigent interpretations of the sacred texts, and by their intention to build a political order based on religion. But, on the other hand, the concept has been used in the West—especially from right-wing actors—specifically to refer to Islam. Thus, from certain perspectives, it operates as a concept that produces a specific stigma that associates the entire Muslim world with intransigence and violence.

For this reason, we think that the explanatory power of the concepts is not necessarily related to the precision and accuracy with which they describe the phenomenon. In certain contexts, some concepts allow us to describe, capture, and highlight dimensions of the phenomenon of obstruction of SRR and SOGI rights that make sense. But the political and analytical effects of these same concepts can be radically different in other contexts. We think that there is no concept that has a universal explanatory and analytical capacity. No concept is neutral and objective. Its effectiveness is situated and radically political.

Considering the above, we made two methodological decisions regarding terminology in this research. On the one hand, throughout the report we chose to predominantly use the concept "religious conservatism." Although it has several limitations, this concept highlights two important aspects of the actors opposed to SRR and SOGI rights. In the first place, beyond the various ways in which religions support patriarchy and heteronormativity, the concept of religious conservatisms allows us to highlight the political use of religion to limit the advance of the rights defended by LGBTI and feminist movements. Second, this political impact of religions aims to preserve a sexual order that is considered threatened by the local and transnational influences of these two movements. Many of the actions mobilized by religious activism are reactions to the demands for changes that question the legality and legitimacy of the dominant patriarchal and heteronormative system, an order that is still strongly based on religious narratives. Undoubtedly, the term "conservative" is ambiguous and unclear, but it allows us to emphasize an ideological aspect of religious activism contrary to SRR and SOGI rights: the attempt to maintain and protect a sexual order that is considered threatened.[5] Therefore, we use the term "religious conservatisms" as an umbrella concept that allows us to capture these two dimensions that seem dominant within the majority of the activism that opposes the demands and rights mobilized by feminisms and LGBTI organizations. In addition, we believe that it minimizes some problems and stigmas associated with other concepts.

The second methodological decision that we made was to respect different terminologies chosen by the experts that collaborate on this research. We know that the concept of religious conservatisms has limitations, and that its meanings and political effects vary from one context to another. We do not believe that it is possible to resolve these tensions, but it is important to mention them explicitly to think about other categories and adapt their meanings and uses locally. In addition to choosing a specific umbrella concept, we believe that it is essential to respect local uses of the language.

5 Vaggione, Juan Marco (2010). "Prólogo. El activismo religioso conservador en América Latina." In Vaggione, Juan Marco (comp.). *El activismo religioso conservador en Latinoamérica*. Córdoba: Ferreyra, pp. 9-18.

SECTION I.
RELIGIOUS CONSERVATISMS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

A diverse scenario of conservative religious actors, together with strategies and discourses that confront SRR and SOGI rights, exists worldwide. However, in the last 20 years, strategies and discourses that oppose them are emerging and adapting to different contexts. In several ways, religious conservatisms have gained a transnational character that, despite their local singularities, shows a transversal dimension. This section will describe analytically the main conservative actions and actors that oppose SRR and SOGI rights, focusing on how those sectors act against LGBTI mobilizations and specifically against the community's rights and agendas.

The section has three parts. The first one will introduce the principal dimensions that constitute religious conservatisms' strategies and the key discourses being mobilized globally to attack SOGI rights. Without exhausting a thorough description of the global setting, this first part will show some general features and discourses of religious conservatisms.

The second part will describe the main sources of funding for religious conservatism. Although the information that exists on this issue is scarce and fragmented, this section connects data from different sources to delineate some general tendencies of conservative funding.

Finally, the third part will analyze the main international conservative actors, considering three levels: religious institutions, political actors, and civil society. Methodologically, we stressed the analysis of the actors that have a strong presence in international human rights settings, specifically, the United Nations (U.N.). The U.N. is a particularly relevant area because it is where the principles and instruments that later on are implemented nationally through laws and public policies are discussed. Hence, the impact in that area has global and local repercussions, working as a sounding board. Additionally, taking the U.N. as the unit of analysis allows an evaluation of different religious conservative actors that converge there: from religious institutions such as the Holy See, to political organisms (states and intergovernmental organizations), and the civil society. A focus on this international human rights arena enables a general and complex analysis of the global actions of religious conservatisms and the latest geopolitical moves.

1. STRATEGIES AND KEY DISCOURSES

Religious conservatisms appeal to diverse strategies and discourses in their opposition to SOGI rights. Far from remaining static, they vary from context to context. To progressive sectors, one of the principal concerns is precisely how flexible religious conservatisms have become. This complexity represents an analytical challenge. Nevertheless, it is possible to recover certain transversal tendencies regarding their practices and discourses globally.

Taking these tendencies into account, we will analyze some general features of conservative religious strategies, using dichotomies as an analytical tool. Conservative actors have combined religious and secular actions, separatists' discourses with interreligious alliances, and clerical and civilian actors, among others. These dichotomies must be read as complexities that enable religious conservatisms to diversify their tactics and amplify their fields of action and impact. Far from being weaknesses, they are ways in which conservative actors have strived to articulate and complement actions that are contradictory at first sight.

Afterward, this part will briefly describe some of the arguments and key concepts that are usual to conservative oppositions to SOGI rights. Despite dissimilarities in impact that depend on local contexts, there are arguments used transversally within the religious conservative field.

1.1. RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVE STRATEGIES: FIVE KEY DICHOTOMIES

a) First Dichotomy: Interreligious / Exclusive

Actors from various religions and denominations form the conservative religious field: Catholics, Evangelicals, Mormons, Muslims, Hindis, etc. **Even though religions have borders that separate them, religious conservatisms have been able to dissolve those borders, at least from a strategic and contingent approach. Organized opposition to SRR and SOGI rights is articulated at different levels, and one of them includes interreligious negotiations and configurations, both nationally and transnationally.** In the 1990s, that dialogue became clear when the Holy See made a strategic alliance with countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to act against the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (ICPD) in 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.[6] From that moment, a series of interreligious alliances at national and transnational levels became active in moments of politicization of sexual agendas. In 2013, for example, before the discussion of same-sex marriage

6 Vuola, Elina (2002). "Remaking Universals?" *Theory Culture & Society*, 19 (1): 175-195.

began in France, conservative religious opposition acted in a coordinated way. This alliance was materialized for instance in a letter written jointly by the Episcopal Conference of France, the Great Rabbi, and the French Council of the Muslim Faith.[7]

However, the existence of interreligious alliances does not necessarily mean that exclusive forces are not a factor within religious conservatisms. **Especially through religious institutions and leaders, conservatisms keep appealing to imaginaries that establish certain religions and cultures' superiority.** This is the case, for example, when the idea of a confessional nation is claimed as an opposition to SRR and SOGI rights. The idea that these rights are threats to a nation's religious cultural identity is still part of the conservative discursive repertoire. In Latin America, for example, (and also in some European countries) that argument is strongly supported by Catholic conservative activism. The appeal to a "Catholic nation," and the subsequent defense of a social and political order regarding historical Catholic values, keeps working in some contexts as a cultural essentialization that positions the Catholic Church as a natural political and cultural leader. In an analogue way, conservative Muslim actors mobilize similar ideas internationally. The OIC, for instance, at its Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, claimed the superiority of the Muslim civilization compared to any other culture and religion: "Reaffirming the civilizing and historical role of the Islamic Ummah which God made the best nation that has given mankind a universal and well-balanced civilization."[8] In India, in recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the public expression of religiosity within local communities as an expression of identity. Orange and green flags divide religious communities more and more intensely. Feminist organizations in India attribute this change to religious conservative leaders, "who are seeking to assert their identity by demanding that communities give an intense performance of religiosity and a visible display of rituals that were not popular in the past. Both of these are a drain on meager resources—the opportunity cost of which is huge—and promote values of conservatism, extremism and 'othering' of different groups."[9]

b) Second Dichotomy: Clerical/Civil[10]

In general terms, activism that opposes SRR and SOGI rights is crossed by worldviews and beliefs based on faith. It is logical that certain churches and religious institutions play a central role in promoting ideas and strategies oriented to restricting those rights. However, **conservative religious activism cannot be reduced to the actions of a few religious leaders or hierarchies. On the contrary, several actors are part of that activism. Although the Catholic Church hierarchy, evangelical pastors, Muslim and Hindu leaders, etc. represent authority figures in this field, these voices concur with different civil society actors that operate as satellites in a coordinated way with clerical authorities.** Academic, parliamentary, and judicial actors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), among others, have converged in this activism.[11] These actors form a network with religious leaders that functions against SOGI rights.

The establishment of NGOs has been one of the most relevant tools of religious conservatisms in the last decades.[12] NGOs can be considered as networks of freely associated citizens that lack state authority and seek to achieve a good that they define as common or public.[13] With this objective, religious conservatisms have formed several NGOs whose agendas are aligned with the sexual politics defended by leaders of religious institutions. Nevertheless, they present themselves publicly as defenders of interests that go beyond religion. Therefore, this NGO-ization[14] process is a consequence of a collective mobilization strategy that enables them to legitimate their participation, accomplishing a better penetration in political, legal, and international institutions.[15] NGOs such as C-Fam, Alliance Defending Freedom, and Human Life International, among others, have gained visibility in the last decades as a consequence of their intense work against SRR and SOGI rights locally and internationally.

In certain contexts, the establishment of a heterogeneous activism between clerical and civilian fields allows religious conservatisms to weaken historical tensions among some religious leaders and to prioritize civilian strategies articulated against LGBTI and feminist agendas. In large parts of Latin America, for example in countries where states continue to provide institutional privileges to the Catholic Church, one of the main tension points is the demand made by evangelical sectors in favor of religious equality. When state actors debate laws and policies about sexuality at the domestic level, those tensions fade because Catholic and evangelical leaders prioritize the construction of a common opposition. However, once public debates are over, tensions reappear.[16] On the contrary, at the level of civil society organizations, when prioritizing agendas of opposition to SRR, these organizations avoid historical existing conflicts among religious leaders. NGOs' activists, no matter

7 See:https://religionfactor.net/2013/05/24/religion-and-gay-marriage-opposition-in-france-2/

8 See:http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/FMRpdfs/Human-Rights/cairo.pdf

9 Bhattacharjya, Manjima (2013). *Resisting Fundamentalism. Feminist Responses from India*. New York: America Jewish World Service.

10 Lacking a more precise concept, we use the term "clerical" in a flexible way, referring to religious leaders, including in those religions that do not have a rigid hierarchical structure.

11 Morán Faúndes, José Manuel and Peñas Defago, María Angélica (2016). "Strategies of Self-Proclaimed Pro-Life Groups in Argentina. Effect of New Religious Actors on Sexual Policies." *Latin American Perspectives*, 43 (3): 144-162.

12 Vaggione, Juan Marco (2005). "Reactive Politicization and Religious Dissidence: The Political Mutations of the Religious." *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 31, Num. 2: 165-188; Mujica, Jaris (2007). *Economía Política del Cuerpo. La reestructuración de los grupos conservadores y el biopoder*, Lima: PROMSEX; González Ruiz, Edgar (2006). *Cruces y Sombras. Perfiles del Conservadurismo en América Latina*, Colectiva por el Derecho a Decidir, San José de Costa Rica.

13 Berger, Julia (2003). "Religious Non-Governmental Organizations: An Exploratory Analysis." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 14 (1): 15-39.

14 Vaggione, Juan Marco (2005). "Reactive Politicization and Religious Dissidence: The Political Mutations of the Religious." *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 31, Num. 2: 165-188.

15 Morán Faúndes, José Manuel and Peñas Defago, María Angélica (2016). "Strategies of Self-Proclaimed Pro-Life Groups in Argentina. Effect of New Religious Actors on Sexual Policies." *Latin American Perspectives*, 43 (3): 144-162.

16 Jones, Daniel and Cunial, Santiago (2012). "Derrota parlamentaria y reposicionamiento político de actores religiosos: el rechazo de la federación Alianza Cristiana de Iglesias Evangélicas de la República Argentina (ACIERA) a la ley de matrimonio igualitario." *Sociedad y Religión*, Vol. 22, Num. 37: 85-122.

the religion they come from, strive to escape those conflicts.[17]

Civil society stands as a particularly strategic dimension for religious conservatisms to articulate alliances and networks. Two types of actions have become relevant to build networks: on the one hand, the planning of local and international meetings among conservative organizations. The conferences organized by the Spanish Federation of Pro-Life Associations are an example. From 2003, this organization has planned meetings and conferences in Zaragoza, Mexico City, Lima, etc. with the objective of creating bonds between conservative NGOs from Spain and Latin America. On the other hand, in several parts of the world, national, regional, and international conservative NGOs have been creating federations and organizations that group them. An important initiative of this kind was the creation of the World Congress of Families in 1997, "uniting leaders worldwide in defense of family, faith and freedom."[18] At the local level, another example is the Spanish Forum of Families, created in 1999 with the goal of becoming an association of associations. [19] Likewise, the European organization One of Us, created in 2013, gathers conservative organizations of 24 countries of the European Union with the aim to create a civilian common caucus against SRR in general.[20]

c) Third Dichotomy: Religious/Secular

Religion continues to be a central dimension of the discourses that oppose SRR and SOGI rights. Control over bodies is a key component that has historically characterized distinct religious traditions, putting sexuality as a crucial area of interest. Many of the conservative religious actors keep appealing to values and identities connected to specific religious worldviews, claiming they are being threatened by LGBTI agendas. Mentions of sacred texts such as the Bible, dogmas, or normative systems founded on religious precepts— such as the Sharia—are a core dimension of many of the arguments that conservative sectors mobilize in the public sphere against SRR and SOGI rights. In societies where religion continues to have a fundamental role in structuring everyday life, those discourses' impact increases. In India, for example, the debate over same-sex relationships was highly marked by the 2013 Supreme Court decision that overturned a 2009 High Court of Delhi decision that had decriminalized homosexuality as a consequence of the annulment of Section 377 of the Criminal Code.[21] After this Supreme Court adjudication that re-criminalized homosexual conducts, religious conservative actors issued statements from a clear religious standpoint supporting the Court. Among these, some leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party—an important conservative party that promotes a type of nationalism based on Hinduism—[22] justified the Court's decision appealing to Hindu traditions and Vedas' texts, and refuted interpretations that defend Hinduism as a tradition open to bodily and sexual diversity.[23] Despite this, in September 2018, the country's highest judicial body, the Supreme Court, considered the article of the 19th century criminal code that condemned sexual relations between people of the same sex unconstitutional.

Another example can be seen in certain contexts in sub-Saharan Africa, where religious conservatives associate the LGBTI agenda with secular ideas that put at risk a supposed African religious essence. A report by The Other Foundation puts it this way: "If LGBTI people are enemies of God, it follows that the 'homosexual agenda' is antireligious. Since this agenda is perceived as originating in the 'secular' West, equality and inclusion of LGBTI people are seen as part of a Western, or even a Satanic, plot to secularize Africa. Standing against LGBTI equality therefore becomes a way of protecting Africa's position as a bastion of faith in a secularizing world."[24]

Despite religious predominance, in the last decades conservatisms have developed a series of secular discourses articulating them with moral and religious arguments. The emergence of strategic secular expositions argued by religious conservative actors is more frequent in local and transnational political arenas.[25] **To traditional ideas linked to immorality and sinfulness, religious actors have added arguments based on two narratives: one of a scientific kind that puts emphasis on the language of bioethics and psychiatry, and a legal narrative that refers strongly to the language of human rights.** The arguments employed by these renewed narratives against nontraditional understandings of sexuality are multiple: the idea of homosexuality as pathology, the supposed inefficacy of condoms to prevent HIV, children's right to have a father and a mother instead of recognizing diverse families, the idea of the "imposition" that international human rights organizations are doing of SOGI rights over the right to self-determination, etc.[26]

17 Morán Faúndes, José Manuel and Peñas Defago, María Angélica (2016). "Strategies of Self-Proclaimed Pro-Life Groups in Argentina. Effect of New Religious Actors on Sexual Policies." *Latin American Perspectives*, 43 (3): 144-162.

18 See: http://www.worldcongressoffamilies.org/

19 See: https://www.forofamilia.org

20 Through "One of Us," conservative European NGOs presented a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), asking the European Union "to end the financing of activities which presuppose the destruction of human embryos, in particular in the areas of research, development aid and public health." See: https://oneofus.eu/about-us/initiative-explanation/

21 Section 377: "Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years and shall also be liable to fine."

22 Gillan, Michael (2002). "Refugees or infiltrators? The Bharatiya Janata Party and "illegal" migration from Bangladesh." *Asian Studies Review*, 26 (1), 73-95.

23 See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/indias-debate-can-hinduism-and-homosexuality-coexist/2015/07/08/3e124270-25a5-11e5-b621-b55e495e9b78_story.html?utm_term=.8700fed61020

24 Gunda, Masiiwa Ragies (2017). *Silent no Longer! Narratives of engagement between LGBTI groups and the churches in southern Africa*. Johannesburg: The Other Foundation, 21.

25 Vaggione, Juan Marco (2005). "Reactive Politicization and Religious Dissidence: The Political Mutations of the Religious." *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 31, Num. 2: 165-188.

26 Peñas Defago, María Angélica (2010). "Los estudios en bioética y la Iglesia Católica en los casos de Chile y Argentina." In Vaggione, Juan Marco (comp.), *El activismo religioso conservador en Latinoamérica*. Córdoba: Ferreyra, pp. 47-76; Irrazábal, Gabriela (2013). "La retaguardia bioética católica. ¿Diferenciaciones en el campo del conservadurismo religioso en Argentina?" in Vaggione, Juan Marco and Mujica, Jaris (comp.), *Conservadurismos, religión y política. Perspectivas de investigación en América Latina*. Córdoba: Ferreyra, 237-271; Siverino Bavio, Paula (2013). "Bioética y Derechos Humanos. La bioética 'confesional' como estrategia" in Vaggione, Juan Marco and Mujica, Jaris (comp.), *Conservadurismos, religión y política. Perspectivas de investigación en América Latina*. Córdoba: Ferreyra, 195-236; Luna, Naara (2013). "O direito à vida no contexto do aborto e da pesquisa com células-tronco embrionárias: disputas de agentes e valores religiosos em um estado laico". *Religião e Sociedade*, Vol. 33, Num. 1: 71-97; Morán Faúndes, José Manuel

In the last few years, the use of secular narratives by conservative activists has acquired a new political color. Secularity is not only visible as a particular speech, but also as a way of internal articulation and a call. Recent analyses show the presence of organized conservative actors unconnected to faith-based identities.[27] This has been analyzed in detail, focusing on the NGOs that are part of this type of activism. Many of these organizations emerged at the end of the 20th century in Europe and the Americas, with a strong confessional identity—principally Catholic or evangelical.[28] Examples are numerous: Human Life International (1981), Alliance Defending Freedom (1993), C-Fam (1997), all openly Christian. But even while this NGO-ization of religion persists, in some latitudes several NGOs are going through a process of "religious de-identification."[29] This phenomenon has not been necessarily translated as a concealment of the confessional identity under a "false" secular public image. On the contrary, it represents a process in which religion is being displaced to a secondary level to processes of mobilization, convergence, and calls to block feminist and LGBTI agendas. That is, independently of how much people that are part of that activism believe or do not believe in God, some actors are building organizations and articulations based on prioritizing a common agenda at the expense of fundamental common beliefs.

d) Fourth Dichotomy: Political/Depoliticization

The majority of religions, especially Abrahamic faiths, established since their origins a convergence between morality and politics. As a consequence, they created not only strict moral provisions, but also laws based on binary codifications of good and bad, desirable and undesirable, virtue and sin.[30] **These ideas are not only expressed through the strict moral codes that the most conservative factions of each religion defend. In addition, they seek to print them on legal systems, overlapping morality and law. Sexual politics of conservative religious activism should not be interpreted only as a matter of morality. Rather, it is a matter of power.** What is at stake is the political control of bodies through the contemporary normative order. LGBTI and feminist positions point precisely to the heart of that moralization of sexual politics, denouncing the secularized layers of religious sexual imaginaries that persist in law, and in some cases, in contemporary political fields.[31] The claims for the decriminalization of homosexuality in countries such as Uganda or Malawi, or the legal recognition of same-sex relationships, disrupt the heteronormativity of modern law. The moral defense of religious conservatisms is the defense of a political order.

However, the political nature of the conservative agenda is not always (actually, almost never) made explicit by those sectors. On the contrary, it is usually disguised under unquestionable notions of neutrality and objectivity that are argued during the debates around SRR and SOGI rights. Under their most expressly religious versions, opposition discourses to these rights appeal to ideas such as a natural law, an objective moral, or an indisputable truth that transcend politics. But on their secular versions, the appeal to legal and scientific arguments that are introduced as objective and undeniable also works as a way to introduce a sexual politics under the fiction of neutrality and a lack of ideology.[32] Religious conservatisms categorically affirm from the fields of psychiatry, biology, or medicine arguments such as the existence of trauma on same-sex couples' children or homosexuality and transexuality as pathologies, etc. In doing so, they are not only hiding multiple discussions within the scientific world regarding those issues, but also creating the idea of a "scientific consensus"—unreal in practice—depoliticizing the field. **Their self-imposed neutral nature is oriented to present their position as true and objective beyond any kind of political dispute. By opposition, they define their political adversaries, feminisms, and LGBTI movements in particular as "ideologized" (which explains the emphasis put in the term "gender ideology"), accusing their political positions as biased, partial, and fake.** The us/them dichotomy is based on a discourse that creates a division founded in the true/false, objectivity/partiality, and neutrality/ideology dichotomies.

e) Fifth Dichotomy: Local/Transnational

The argument of SRR and SOGI rights as threats for tradition, customs of the peoples, and state's sovereignty has become more usual as a form of resistance. The local is introduced as a group of values and customs that are essentialized by their discourses as a way to create imaginaries of an only identity shared by the members of a community.

In general terms, religious conservatisms of the Global South connect SRR and SOGI rights with imperialistic impositions. To some sectors, SOGI rights are interpreted as a Western endeavor in service of a cultural colonization process that homogenizes cultures using Eurocentric parameters. To put these customs at risk implies, therefore, to destroy the identity of the peoples. In India, for example, Baba Ramdev, a nationally known yoga guru close to the leaders of the conservative

and Vaggione, Juan Marco (2012). "Ciencia y religión (hétero)sexuadas: el discurso científico del activismo católico conservador sobre la sexualidad en Argentina y Chile," *Contemporanea – Revista de Sociologia da UFSCar*, 2 (1): 159-186

27 Morán Faúndes, José Manuel and Peñas Defago, María Angélica (2016). "Strategies of Self-Proclaimed Pro-Life Groups in Argentina. Effect of New Religious Actors on Sexual Policies." *Latin American Perspectives*, 43 (3): 144-162.

28 Munson, Ziad W. (2008). *The Making of Pro-Life Activists. How Social Movement Mobilization Works*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.

29 Morán Faúndes, José Manuel and Peñas Defago, María Angélica (2016). "Strategies of Self-Proclaimed Pro-Life Groups in Argentina. Effect of New Religious Actors on Sexual Policies." *Latin American Perspectives*, 43 (3): 144-162.

30 Jakobsen, Janet and Pellegrini, Ann (2003). *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance*. New York: New York University Press; Figari, Carlos (2007). *Sexualidad, religión y ciencia. Discursos científicos y religiosos acerca de la sexualidad*. Córdoba: Encuentro Grupo Editor.

31 Vaggione, Juan Marco (2014). "La politización de la sexualidad y los sentidos de lo religioso." *Sociedad y Religión*, 24 (42): 209-226, 218.

32 Morán Faúndes, José Manuel and Vaggione, Juan Marco (2012). "Ciencia y religión (hétero)sexuadas: el discurso científico del activismo católico conservador sobre la sexualidad en Argentina y Chile." *Contemporanea – Revista de Sociologia da UFSCar*, 2 (1): 159-186.

party Bharatiya Janata, has said not only that homosexuality is unnatural, but also an "American disease" that he can cure through yoga.[33] LGBTI expressions are characterized as foreign interferences, centrally Western, far from the "true" local, spiritual, and religious traditions.

Meanwhile, American and European conservatisms in general argue that SRR and SOGI rights are a relativistic and postmodern construction that undermines the roots of the Christian culture. Therefore, Latin American religious conservatisms—with a clear Christian foundation—combine the relativism critique with an anti-imperialistic vision, assuming that LGBTI claims are Eurocentric and anti-Christian constructions that are imposed from Europe to Latin America.

Thus, **the local operates as a transnational strategy opposing SOGI rights. On the one hand, each conservative sector has a new interpretation of these rights as global and local threats. On the other hand, every religious conservatism supports the idea that the protection of local values and customs implies a defense of the same "universal" institutions: marriage, heterosexuality, and traditional family.** Hence, this clear paradox works as the foundation for anti-imperialistic and anti-colonial discourses that conservatisms of every religious, political, and cultural sign have become to reappropriate.

At the same time, the use of a culturally uniform "us," linked to an essential religious heritage (Muslim, Christian, Hindi, etc.), shows how the local is employed as a cultural homogenization device. In this sense, only some actors would have the strength to represent that "us" that is supposedly being threatened by foreign cultural forces. The Russian Federation, for instance, has become lately a strong defender of certain Eastern traditional values that are resisting the universalistic Western attacks.[34] The discourse about the local operates in favor of a transnational geopolitics and a power distribution where diverse interests intervene. Conservatisms reinforce the local against universal rights, representing afterward a supposed regional or continental homogeneity based on a cultural shared identity that is static and essentialist.

1.2. STRATEGIC DISCOURSES AND KEY CONCEPTS

While the arguments employed by religious conservatisms in opposition to SRR and SOGI rights are diverse, lately some of these arguments have gaining greater prevalence at the global level. In the following pages, we will describe some of the main discourses and key concepts that structure that conservative impulse.

a) Protection of values and the traditional/natural family

The protection of certain traditional values, and principally of the family as a core part of these values, has gained importance as a particular opposition to some sexual rights that are transforming traditional family structures. **Conservative sectors introduce themselves as defenders of these unnegotiable values, which belong to a cultural essence that forms the community's identity. In this perspective, the family discourse complements and gives substance to those traditional values.** In 2011, for example, the Russian Orthodox Church adopted the declaration "The Basic Values: The Fundamentals of National Unity" during the World Russian People's Council. In this declaration, the church provided a catalogue of 17 traditional values, including the "Family as the union of a man and a woman, in which children grow up."[35]

The family, in the singular, is understood as a single model, constructed on the basis of heterosexuality, procreation and marriage. **The discourse about "the family" has two main complementary arguments: one that puts emphasis on the natural characteristic of the family, and one that puts emphasis on its traditional one.** Regarding the first argument, religious conservatisms generally defend the idea that the heterosexuality that constitutes the base of that family is "natural." The aim of that family as a basic social institution must be procreation. Without it, human beings would not be able to reproduce and society would not survive. To alter the "natural" configuration of marriage would imply to put society at risk and the survival of the human race as a whole.

The Catholic Church has been one of the institutions that has promoted this discourse. In the 1991 Centesimus Annus encyclical, written by John Paul II, the need to protect the human race was already mentioned, as well as animal species in danger of extinction, based on a human being's ecology structured upon a family built on the marriage between a man and a woman. The 2003 document "Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons" pointed out: "Homosexual unions are totally lacking in the biological and anthropological elements of marriage and family which would be the basis, on the level of reason, for granting them legal recognition. Such unions are not able to contribute in a proper way to the procreation and survival of the human race.… Sexual relations are human when and insofar as they express and promote the mutual assistance of the sexes in marriage and are open to the transmission of new life."[36] In this way, several campaigns have been developed by religious conservatisms sustaining that the allowance of same-sex unions will cause the extinction of the human race.[37]

The second argument prioritizes tradition as the foundation for the defense of a single model of family. Although Catholic and evangelical conservatisms mobilize this discourse, the appeal to the traditional family is also strong among conservative movements that see the West as a threat. In general terms, the argument

33 See: https://postcolonialinterventions.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/6-indian-queer-1.pdf

34 Curanović, Alicja (2015). *The Guardians of Traditional Values. Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church in the Quest for Status*. Washington: Transatlantic Academy.

35 See http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1496038.html

36 See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030731_homosexual-unions_en.html

37 See examples from Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and Spain, among others: https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/permitir-el-matrimonio-gay-condenar-humanidad-su-extinc-articulo-553618; https://www.lanacion.com.ar/1277274-el-fin-del-matrimonio; https://www.efe.com/efe/usa/mexico/suprema-corte-mexicana-declara-inconstitucional-norma-contra-matrimonio-gay/50000100-3341967; https://www.eldiario.es/politica/Interior-proteccion-matrimonio-homosexual-pervivencia_0_107089441.html

is founded on the idea that the base of the family recognized and promoted by law and cultural traditions is marriage and heterosexuality. This conception about the family is the one that has been historically identified as the basic core of every society.

The discourse about traditional values and family has had a meaningful impact on the international human rights arena. For the last ten years, the Russian Federation has been promoting resolutions about traditional values at the U.N.,[38] despite experts' insistence on the danger of defining a specific set of values for human rights.[39] Also, at the U.N. Human Rights Council, the Russian Federation, the OIC, and some African countries have supported resolutions regarding the protection of the family.[40] The last one was approved the day after the Council established a resolution named the "Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" (2016). During the discussions about it, the OIC States and the Russian Federation opposed the amendment introduced by other countries to broaden the concept of family to a more inclusive one, such as the one suggested by the United Kingdom about several types of families, or the one suggested by Switzerland about changing the concept of "family" to "families."[41] In 2017, the Draft Resolution "Protection of the family: role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of older persons" was introduced.[42]

b) Anti-imperialism and sovereignty of states

In a similar way to the discourse about the traditional family, **religious conservatisms use an anti-imperialistic discourse to oppose SRR and SOGI rights. These rights are presented as a foreign cultural construction, and, as a consequence, their promotion through human rights instruments is considered a cultural imposition and a threat to states' sovereignty.** Therefore, feminists and LGBTI movements are also considered as promoters of colonizing foreign agendas.[43]

Pope Francis, for example, has used these arguments to criticize monetary assistance dynamics to implement sexual education and gender equality initiatives. According to the *National Catholic Reporter* in 2015: "Recounting the story of a public education minister he knew who was offered money to construct new schools for the poor, Francis said to receive the money, the minister had to agree to use a course book with students that taught gender theory. 'This is the ideological colonization,' the pope said. 'It colonizes the people with an idea that changes, or wants to change, a mentality or a structure. It is not new, this,' he continued. 'The same was done by the dictators of the last century. They came with their own doctrine—think of the Balilla [youth groups of Fascist Italy], think of the Hitler Youth'".[44]

As with the discourse regarding the family, **these arguments are also based on an essentialist and static idea of culture and community's values**. On the Global South, the discourse promoted by religious conservatisms has even taken the form of a Western conspiracy with imperialistic goals.[45] This seeks to strategically intensify the region's colonial past. SRR and SOGI rights are interpreted as part of a colonial imposition from the Global North that jeopardizes states' sovereignty.

One of the dimensions giving impulse to that discourse is its capacity to rearticulate ideas with conservative ends that have been traditionally promoted by left sectors and progressive movements in anti-colonial and pro-independence struggles. Hence, in certain contexts of the Global South, religious conservatisms mobilize an anti-colonial discourse to create alliances with traditional left sectors,[46] and to get the attention of religious movements that have participated in de-colonial processes.

c) The pathologization of LGBTI expressions and the harm to children

One of the most recurrent discourses to oppose SOGI rights is the supposed harm these rights might cause to children. As it was described above, **the argument is based on the idea of a "normal" and "natural" model of family (the heterosexual model) that guarantees that children are socialized under "normal" standards, allowing a healthy mental development.** To grow up in families away from the heterosexual and cisgender model would put an obstacle to the normal development of children.

The assumption underlying that argument is that LGBTI expressions and identities are pathological practices that endanger third parties' health, especially children's health. This argument moves away from global mainstream psychiatry that has not considered non-heterosexual expressions as pathologies for decades, while a growing trans de-pathologization process keeps moving forward. Nevertheless, religious conservatisms continue to sustain this idea, even employing scientific language.[47] Through the use of a secular language, in some contexts they defend practices that menace SOGI rights, such as therapies to "cure homosexuality."

One of the main institutions responsible for producing a pathologizing discourse regarding homosexuality has been, and

38 See Resolution A/HRC/RES/16/3, "Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind."

39 See https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/maggie-murphy/traditional-values-vs-human-rights-at-un

40 See: Resolution A/HRC/RES/29/22, "Protection of the family: contribution of the family to the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for its members, particularly through its role in poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development" and Resolution A/HRC/RES/32/23, "Protection of the family: role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities."

41 See:http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20225&LangID=E

42 See Resolution A/HRC/35/L.21, "Protection of the family: role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of older persons."

43 Gunda, Masiiwa Ragies (2017). *Silent no Longer! Narratives of engagement between LGBTI groups and the churches in southern Africa*. Johannesburg: The Other Foundation.

44 See https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-strongly-criticizes-gender-theory-comparing-it-nuclear-arms

45 Kaoma, Kapya John (2012). *Colonizing African Values: How the U.S. Christian Right is Transforming Sexual Politics in Africa*. Somerville: Political Research Associates.

46 For this reason, in some contexts it is difficult to use the concept "religious right" to refer to conservatives.

47 Morán Faúndes, José Manuel and Vaggione, Juan Marco (2012). "Ciencia y religión (hétero)sexuadas: el discurso científico del activismo católico conservador sobre la sexualidad en Argentina y Chile". *Contemporanea – Revista de Sociologia da UFSCar*, 2 (1): 159-186.

continues to be, the Catholic Church. In 1975, only two years after the elimination of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) by the American Psychiatric Association, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics." In that document, the Catholic Church affirmed, "the homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of."[48] This position was reiterated in 1986 in the "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons," where the church also ordered to the bishops to remove the support to "any organizations which seek to undermine the teaching of the Church, which are ambiguous about it, or which neglect it entirely."[49] In 1992, the document "Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons," pointed out that: "sexual orientation does not constitute a quality comparable to race, ethnic background, etc. in respect to non-discrimination. Unlike these, homosexual orientation is an objective disorder and evokes moral concern. (…) There are areas in which it is not unjust discrimination to take sexual orientation into account, for example, in the placement of children for adoption or foster care."[50]

Additionally, the claims made by the LGBTI movement about same-sex marriage and adoption were presented as an instrumentalization of children to achieve objectives of social vindication. In the 2003 document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons," the Catholic Church established: "As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development."[51] On a similar note, as a reaction to UNICEF's statement calling to eliminate SOGI discriminatory norms, and in support of the legalization of same-sex marriage,[52] the Patriarch's Commission on the Family, Protection of Motherhood and Childhood of the Russian Orthodox Church pointed out that: "It is in the best interests of a child to be born into and raised by family, so that he can know his loving and caring father and mother. Placing children to be raised by same-sex couples is a gross violation of the rights and interests of a child. Calling for legalization of same-sex unions in connection with the upbringing of children, the UNICEF, therefore, is acting contrary to its mandate, promoting not protection of the rights of children, but their substantial violation."[53]

An interesting shift in that discourse happened in international and regional human rights arenas. Lately, religious conservatives have avoided appealing to the pathologization of non-heterosexual identities, probably due to the intense backlash that it could generate, undermining the legitimacy of their arguments as a consequence. At the 2016 Human Rights Council vote, where the resolution to designate an Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity was approved, the Russian Federation expressed: "We will refrain from any comments with respect to whether this choice [homosexuality] is a natural one. We will simply note that many thousands of years of human development were carried out by those who did not have this kind of a choice."[54]

d) Religious Freedom

Religious freedom defense has been prioritized by religious conservative sectors to face feminists and LGBTI agendas. **The right to religious freedom is introduced as the other side of SRR and SOGI rights, establishing an incompatibility between them and obliging states and human rights organizations to choose one or the other set of rights**.

During the 2011 session of the Human Rights Council, for example, the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the U.N. in Geneva, Silvano Tomasi, declared: "People are being attacked for taking positions that do not support sexual behavior between people of the same sex… When they express their moral beliefs or beliefs about human nature, which may also be expressions of religious convictions, or state opinions about scientific claims, they are stigmatized, and worse—they are vilified, and prosecuted."[55]

For more than 20 years, in different countries conservative actors have used religious freedom argument to oppose certain rights. In the United States, for example, much of this debate began after the US Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) in 1993. In 1997, the RFRA was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in the *City of Boerne v. Flores* case. In response, 21 individual states have passed state religious freedom restoration acts. The argument gained great national and even international visibility in 2014 after the *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores* case, when the United States Supreme Court decided that under the Obama administration (2009-2017) healthcare reform, corporations cannot be forced to pay for certain contraception methods, because to do so

48 See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html

49 See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html

50 See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19920724_homosexual-persons_en.html

51 See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030731_homosexual-unions_en.html

52 UNICEF. Position Paper No. 9 (November 2014). *Eliminating Discrimination Against Children and Parents Based on Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity.*

53 See http://pk-semya.ru/images/phocagallery/news/2014/3/PCF_Position_on_UNICEF_Statement.pdf

54 ARC International and ILGA (2016). *Compilation of the Adoption of the 2016 SOGI Resolution*, p. 87. ilga.org/downloads/SOGI_Resolution_Vote_compilation.pdf

55 See https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/vatican-official-at-un-decries-attacks-on-catholic-beliefs

Gender Ideology in Latin America

Sexual Education under Attack by the Gender Ideology Framework

In Latin America, the implementation of sex education programs is challenged by religious rights mobilization, despite evidence that shows the critical role played by it in achieving gender equality. Like other issues of the sexual and reproductive rights agenda, the debates around educational plans and gender-related public policies have been framed as a struggle against "gender ideology".

In 2015, 2016, and 2017, Ministers of Education in Brazil, Colombia, Uruguay, and Peru faced strong opposition from conservative groups. In Peru, conservative organizations won a court case against the inclusion of a gender-sensitive approach in the school curriculum and supported the Parliament's removal of two education ministers. In 2017, Uruguay—one of the most secular countries in Latin America—experienced a strong opposition to the proposal to include a comprehensive sexual education at schools, elaborated by the Uruguayan National Council of pre-school and primary education. Conservative groups such as A Mis Hijos No Los Tocan (Do Not Touch My Children) have been behind this mobilization.

In 2016 in Colombia, during the negotiations of the peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the gender ideology frame was actively used as a weapon to gain votes against this agreement. Conservative actors rejected the inclusion of the phrase "the elimination of all forms of discrimination, valuing women as political subjects" from the text of the peace agreement, using gender ideology as the frame. After the referendum where the peace agreement was rejected, Minister of Education Gina Parody resigned. She paid the political price for defending the peace agreement and a gender-sensitive approach.

In 2011 in Brazil, school material prepared by the Ministry of Education promoting diversity in schools was recalled after strong pressure from conservative movements and evangelical and Catholic leaders. The material "Schools without Homophobia" (maliciously termed "Gay Kit" by the opposition) was denounced as an instrument to promote homosexuality among children and destroy families. Since then, the fight to eliminate gender-sensitive language and sex education from national plans of education has intensified. In 2014, conservative congress people edited the Brazilian National Plan of Education and removed the clause that stated that one of the goals of the public educational system is "the overtake of educational inequalities, with emphasis on the promotion of racial, regional, gender and sexual orientation equality." The same counter-mobilization took place at the state and municipal level. The case eventually reached the Brazilian Supreme Court in a polemic decision in which religious teaching in public schools was authorized. In 2014, a movement called "A school without a party" proposed a bill of laws advocating for the ban of sexual education and critical views of history and social sciences in schools, which they framed as "gender ideology" and "ideological indoctrination." Since 2014, at least 62 legislative projects based on the "right to conscience" and "religious freedom" of families were proposed in the Congress and state legislatures. Brazil is just one example of a cross-regional wave of protests against sexual education and gender equality in the school's curricula that has been successful in influencing public educational policies.

Source: Gianella, Camila, Rodriguez de Assis Machado, Marta, and Peñas Defago, María Angélica (2017) "What causes Latin America's high incidence of adolescent pregnancy?" *CMI BRIEF*,16: 9.

would violate the corporation owners' freedom of religion.

Likewise, in the midst of the last decades' growing terrorist attacks and the propagation of Islamophobic discourses as a reaction, the argument of freedom of religion has gained complex nuances. In international human rights arenas, OIC state members, for instance, argued the respect of religion as a remedy states could adopt to struggle against discriminatory policies against Muslims, especially migrants. However, the argument that defends respect of religion is mobilized in many occasions as a way to protect discriminatory values protected under certain religious interpretations. In 2017, when the Human Rights Council entered into dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), Libya and Iran delegations questioned the statement made by the Special Rapporteur regarding the use of freedom of religion as an opposition to SOGI rights. The Libyan speaker said, "I understand that here we are discussing the freedom of religion and belief not the freedom of sexual orientation, so I can't understand what is the rationale behind the mention of LGBTI." Then, on behalf of Iran, Mr. Tofigh Sedigh Mostahkam said, "We are concerned that the issue of sexual orientation, in other words the LGBTs, have been mentioned in the report of the Special Rapporteur, since it is a non-issue with regard to FoRB".[56]

e) Gender ideology

More than an argument on itself, gender ideology is a discursive model based on suppositions and normative conceptions that reunite several elements of the discourses analyzed above. It refers to the idea that the gender perspective promoted by feminist and LGBTI movements are based on ideological regulations that are being imposed by states from international forums.[57] The "gender ideology" concept is employed to

56 See http://iheu.org/freedom-religion-belief-not-used-discriminate-others-says-iheu-un-high-commissioner/

57 Miskolci, Richard and Campana, Maximiliano (2017). Ideologia de gênero": notas para a genealogia de um pânico moral contemporáneo. *Sociedade e Estado Brasília*, 32 (3): 723-745.

spread the idea that SRR and SOGI rights advocate a social reengineering, de-legitimizing the "natural" model based on the male/female dichotomy and heterosexuality. The debates around SOGI rights and gender-related public policies have been framed as a fight against gender ideology."

The use of gender ideology to discredit attempts toward gender equality is not a new phenomenon. During the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (ICPD) in 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Holy See strategically used gender ideology to present gender as a model imposed by liberals against the traditional family. Gender was portrayed as an artificial definition originating from "savage capitalism," which aimed to destroy the traditional family. The Catholic hierarchy and its allies denounced movements like the feminist and LGBTI movements, arguing that they undermine family values and threaten the moral fabric of society.[58]

A central aspect of that discourse is how ideology is emphasized as a key dimension of SRR and SOGI rights. Ideology is used here as a synonym of "fake ideas," contrasting them with the "true ideas" that are the ones supported by religious conservatisms. The gender ideology argument works as a barrier that establishes a de-ideologized, neutral, and objective "us" versus a "them" that instrumentalizes human rights with ideological goals.

2. THE FINANCING OF RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES

In general terms, we lack analysis that describe the general panorama with respect to the scale of how organizations that oppose SRR and SOGI rights are financed worldwide. However, there is data about the sources of some of their funds. Although most of the data that exists is relatively fragmented, by combining this scattered information, it is possible to infer general trends. There are certain "general mechanisms of financing" that seem to repeat throughout the world among the main religious conservative actors: church fundraising, donations of conservative grantmakers and private donors, private businesses, access to public financing, and funds transfers between organizations.

2.1 CHURCH FUNDRAISING

Given that most of the opponents of SRR and SOGI rights are linked by religious beliefs, faith is an important driver in the financing process. Faith is used as a form of mobilization in many ways, and one of them is raising money.

Fundraising done by churches during periodic religious services is an important example of this,[59] although also some conservative religious institutions do carry out mass campaigns to obtain money from their parishioners, using media, advertising, etc. We do not know the percentage of money that religious institutions allocate directly to causes against LGBTI communities. However, we do know that fundraising has been the way in which some churches historically cover their daily expenses, and in many cases, it is considered part of the obligation of parishioners. In Chile, for example, 31% of the income of the Archdiocese of Santiago in 2016 was collected by the church, according to data declared by this institution in its tax declaration.[60]

2.2 DONATIONS FROM CONSERVATIVE GRANTMAKERS AND PRIVATE DONORS

Donations are a fundamental part of the resources of certain conservative religious NGOs that mobilize both locally and globally against SRR and SOGI rights. The US NGO National Organization for Marriage, for example, received more than US $7 million in donations in 2009. Two-thirds of that money came from just three donors.[61] Also, after founding the International Organization for the Family in 2016, its president, Brian Brown (also president of the World Congress of Families and the National Organization for Marriage), traveled to Moscow to promote and generate working ties with congressmen of the ruling party United Russia. From Moscow, he sent an email to potential donors requesting them to financially support this initiative.[62]

In addition to individual donations, there are several important donor organizations and foundations. Some of them directly fund conservative religious organizations, such as the Qatar Foundation, which belongs to the royal family of Qatar, and which finances the Doha International Institute for Family and Development. This NGO operates in international spaces such as the U.N.[63] Other donors finance not only specific organizations, but various types of projects and initiatives. **The Regnerus study, a well-known research project developed by Professor Mark Regnerus of the University of Austin in 2012, was financially supported by two US donor institutions, the Witherspoon Institute (US $700,000) and the Bradley Foundation (US $90,000). This research concluded that children who grow up in homes in which at least one of the adults is homosexual are harmed in their personal development. The results were scientifically denied because the study was based on a small sample of only two cases.[64]**

In Russia, precisely, there are two major conservative foundations: the Istoki Endowment Fund, which belongs to the Russian businessman Vladimir I. Yakunin, and St. Basil the Great Charitable

58 Gianella, Camila, Rodriguez de Assis Machado, Marta, and Peñas Defago, María Angélica (2017). What causes Latin America's high incidence of adolescent pregnancy? *CMI Brief*, 16 (9), 4. https://www.cmi.no/publications/6380-what-causes-latin-americas-high-incidence-of

59 Munson, Ziad (2008). *The Making of Pro-life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

60 See http://www2.latercera.com/noticia/el-arzobispado-abre-sus-arcas/

61 See https://web.archive.org/web/20120119182240/http:/washingtonindependent.com/104788/despite-grassroots-claim-most-of-national-organization-for-marriage-funding-comes-from-few-sources

62 See http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/globalizing-homophobia-part-4-the-world-congress-of-families-and-russias-christian-saviors/

63 Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (2013) *Lobbying for Faith and Family: A Study of Religious NGOs at the United Nations*. Oslo: NORAD.

64 See https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/10/supreme-court-gay-marriage_n_2850302.html

Foundation, created by businessman Konstantin Malofeev**.** These foundations finance various types of projects aimed at promoting "traditional values," and consequently the discourse of the Russian Orthodox Church. Both foundations also have links with the World Congress of Families of the United States.[65]

In the United States, one of the most important meetings where conservative donors make decisions about their support to organizations and projects is The Gathering. This is an annual meeting of various conservative donors that dates from the eighties.[66] At the meeting, a wide range of topics are presented and discussed. However, since the nineties, a conservative sexual agenda has been especially promoted inside The Gathering: "In 1997 at The Gathering, Don Schmierer was part of a special team—assembled by Fieldstead & Company of Howard Ahmanson, Jr.… — that solicited funding from The Gathering's deep pocketed investors to finance a Fieldstead-commissioned master plan to combat 'organized homosexuality.' …In 2006 Family Research Council head Tony Perkins told The Gathering that the 'second greatest threat:' to America, besides 'radical Islamists' was 'radical homosexuals.'"[67] The most important donor participating in The Gathering is the National Christian Foundation. Although this foundation supports various projects, not all of them necessarily focused on sexual moral issues; within the United States, it usually supports the Religious Right and initiatives aimed at promoting the so-called "culture wars" against the feminist and LGBTI agendas.

Access to donations is important not only because of the amount of money that is mobilized in these processes, but also because access to these funds means that their financing does not depend so significantly on economic cycles, as compared with those human rights organizations that base their funding on applications for national and/or intergovernmental public funds.

2.3 PRIVATE BUSINESSES

Some religious conservative actors own their own businesses. The Catholic Church is a paradigmatic case in this field. **At the international level, it owns the Institute for the Works of Religion (the so-called "Vatican Bank"), which manages funds for around 7,000 million euros.** Among other things, this institution finances the poorest branches of the church globally. Likewise, locally the Catholic Church administers a series of businesses that allow it to generate money, such as private Catholic schools, or properties that it rents for commercial purposes. In Chile, for example, the episcopate of the Catholic Church declared in 2016 an annual income of almost US$ 16 million, and 22% of that amount corresponded to money coming only from the rental of real estate.[68]

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church obtained state permission to generate and manage its own businesses.[69] Currently, it owns the Sofrino plant, where different products linked to religious ceremonies are produced and marketed. The sale of candles is the business that gives additional income to this church. The cost of producing a candle is dozens of times less than the price for which candles are sold. [70]

In some countries, churches also manage businesses linked to telecommunications, an activity that in certain contexts has gained strength. In Brazil, for example, Christian churches have been buying and administering television and broadcasting channels for years, from where they broadcast their religious messages. The link between faith and the business of communications in Brazil is evident. In Russia, since 2007, the Orthodox Church has owned the television channel Spas: "This media outlet fiercely lashes out at western [sic] liberal values which appear to be at odds with an orthodox ideology. In a similar vein, it pointedly accuses the western [sic] world of undermining Russian statehood."[71]

Owning businesses allows religious conservatives to access large funds that lack significant restrictions on how and where to use them. Possibly, this allows them a greater level of flexibility in the use of their money compared to the funds available to LGBTI organizations.

2.4 PUBLIC FINANCING AND STATE SUPPORT

A fourth important source of funding is the resources that some conservative religious actors receive from certain states. In Argentina, for example, where the Constitution of the Republic establishes in its Article 2 that "The federal government supports the Roman Catholic Apostolic cult," the State allocated AR $130,421,300 (almost US $6,500,000) from the public budget in 2018 to finance the salaries of the bishops and other officials of the Catholic Church.[72] In the Democratic Republic of Georgia, state funding for the local Orthodox Church in 2013 was GEL 29,220,349 (about US $17,000,000).[73] In Russia, between 2012 and 2015, "the Russian Orthodox Church and its associated structures received 14 billion rubles (US $189,200,000) from the state."[74] Of course, state funds given to conservative churches are not necessarily used by them for actions opposing SRR and SOGI rights, but to sustain their organizational structures.

In some cases, states support religious conservative actors not with direct financing, but with property transfers, or by granting them the management of some businesses and services that allow them to

65 Hellam, Mall (2016) *Russia In Europe: the reactionary values agenda*. Open Estonia Foundation, https://oef.org.ee/fileadmin/user_upload/Russia_in_Europe_Executive_Summary_of_Research_Reports_final_ENG.pdf

66 See: https://twocare.org/the-gathering-the-religious-rights-cash-cow/

67 See https://twocare.org/the-secret-american-money-behind-the-world-congress-of-families/

68 See http://www2.latercera.com/noticia/el-arzobispado-abre-sus-arcas/

69 See https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2016/12/14/the-power-and-limits-of-the-russian-orthodox-church/#668fafa94b35

70 See https://www.rbth.com/business/2016/03/09/where-does-the-russian-orthodox-church-get-its-money-from_574079

71 See https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2016/12/14/the-power-and-limits-of-the-russian-orthodox-church/#668fafa94b35

72 See http://www.perfil.com/politica/marcos-pena-respondio-cuanto-ganan-los-obispos.phtml

73 Mikeladze, Tamta, Tchitanava, Eka, and NoniaSvili, Giorgi (2014). *The practice of the funding of the religious organizations by the central and local government*. TDI/EMC.

74 See https://www.rbth.com/business/2016/03/09/where-does-the-russian-orthodox-church-get-its-money-from_574079

generate funds. In Georgia, in just 2013, the state transferred 32,179 square meters of land to the Orthodox Church.[75] In Russia, as part of the policy of restitution initiated by the state in the 1990s, the Orthodox Church recovered a series of properties that were confiscated in the era of the Soviet Union.[76]

Other religious conservative actors seek financial support in competitive public funds or economic aid granted by states or intergovernmental organizations. To achieve this, they often avoid presenting their work and mission as a religious or conservative issue. Instead, they present themselves as organizations focused on aiding the less favored communities, to vulnerable populations, etc. In Argentina, for example, the conservative Catholic NGO Portal de Belén (Stable of Bethlehem) has occasionally accessed public funds. Since the 1980s, this organization has been working to prevent the advancement of SRR and SOGI rights in the country, and in 2010 it was one of the main organizations that mobilized to oppose the legalization of same-sex marriage. This NGO has shelters for poor pregnant women, where they provide food and assistance in order to prevent them from aborting.[77] Due to this work, Portal de Belén has accessed public funds granted by the government of the province of Córdoba, Argentina, which supports non-governmental dining initiatives for people with limited resources.[78]

In Eastern Europe, other examples can be observed. For instance, the European Christian Political Movement (ECPM) is funded by the European Parliament, and in Poland anti-rights organizations are receiving state funding, not human rights and/or women's groups. **In 2017, Croatia witnessed a similar disconcerting development around the public National Foundation for Civil Society Development—the leading semi-dependent public grantmaking body. Its board succumbed to political and social pressure from fundamentalist groups, resulting in the award of a 3-year institutional development grant to the organization In the Name of the Family, which led the referendum on marriage. They will receive approximately 55,000 EUR over a 3-year period. Still, this is insignificant in comparison to the shift in the values and practices of this public foundation, whose mission is to contribute "to the development of a modern, democratic and inclusive society."[79] A similar occurrence took place in Latvia, where a "family values" organization used Norwegian grants to spread salacious falsehoods about pedophilia in Norway.[80] These are all important indicators of how fundamentalist organizations gain access and influence public funding for civil society and human rights protection**.[81]

2.5 FUNDS TRANSFERS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS

Finally, another form of financing is the transfer of money from important conservative organizations to other conservative organizations located elsewhere in the world. While these transfers are not always easy to discover and document, research in multiple contexts has shown the existence of this funding mechanism. For example, "some information on broader European funding has been documented. These indicate transfers from the United States, from evangelicals as well as Catholic foundations and organizations."[82] In Croatia, there are uncorroborated rumors that the Polish NGO Ordo Iuris provided financing to its Croatian affiliate— organization-turned-foundation called Vigilare. **Financial and political support from Russia[83] has been identified in countries where the dominant religion is Orthodox (Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia), or where an open political friendship between state leaders (Hungary) or politicians in general (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania) with Russians is documented."[84]**

In sub-Saharan Africa, meanwhile, research shows that conservative religious organizations in the United States send funds on an ongoing basis to strengthen churches that oppose SOGI rights in countries such as Uganda, Kenya, or Nigeria. As Kapya Kaoma indicates,[85] in recent decades, the Religious Right has "invaded" Africa by offering funding to churches. In return, they are required to sever ties with funds from progressive religious institutions. Sometimes funding is acquired through conservative NGOs that transfer funds from US churches to other churches in Africa, disguised as humanitarian or development-related aid.[86] On other occasions, it is done through direct and not always transparent donations to individuals, usually religious leaders.[87]

An interesting fact is that the transfer of funds from one organization to another is not always motivated by an interest in financing religious institutions of the same denomination. On the contrary, it seems

75 Mikeladze, Tamta, Tchitanava, Eka, and NoniaSvili, Giorgi (2014) *The practice of the funding of the religious organizations by the central and local government*. TDI/EMC.

76 See https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2016/12/14/the-power-and-limits-of-the-russian-orthodox-church/#668fafa94b35

77 Morán Faúndes, José Manuel and Peñas Defago, María Angélica (2016). "The Strategies of the Self-Proclaimed Pro-Life Groups in Argentina. The Impact of New Religious Actors on Sexual Politics." *Latin American Perspectives*, 43 (3): 144-162.

78 See: http://www.defensorcordoba.org.ar/archivos/publicaciones/2018-8-21-17.22.50.358_GaleriaArchivo.pdf

79 https://zaklada.civilnodrustvo.hr/en//mission-vision-and-goals

80 https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/society/family-values-group-used-norwegian-money-to-spread-anti-norway-propaganda.a245956/

81 Bosanac, Gordan and Miošić, Nives (2018). *The Cold (Civil) War(s) No One Dares to Declare: Main Trends of Christian Fundamentalism in Eastern Europe*. MIMEO.

82 Hodžić, Amir and Bijelić, Nataša (2014). *Neo-Conservative Threats to Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights in the European Union*. Zagreb: CESI, 16-17. http://www.cesi.hr/en/neo-conservative-threats-to-sexual-and-reproductive-health-rights-in-the-europea/

83 Political Capital Institute (2014). *The Russian Connection: the spread of pro-Russian policies on the European far right* (available at http://www.riskandforecast.com/useruploads/files/pc_flash_report_russian_connection.pdf), and *Russia in Europe: the reactionary values agenda* (nd). (available at https://oef.org.ee/fileadmin/user_upload/Russia_in_Europe_Executive_Summary_of_Research_Reports_final_ENG.pdf)

84 Bosanac, Gordan and Miošić, Nives (2018). *The Cold (Civil) War(s) No One Dares to Declare: Main Trends of Christian Fundamentalism in Eastern Europe*. MIMEO.

85 Kaoma, Kapya John (2009). *Globalizing the Culture Wars. U.S. Conservatives, African Churches and Homophobia*. Somerville: Political Research Associates.

86 Hearn, Julie (2002). "The Invisible NGO: U.S. Evangelical Mission in Kenya." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 32: 32-60.

87 Kaoma, Kapya John (2009). *Globalizing the Culture Wars. U.S. Conservatives, African Churches and Homophobia*. Somerville: Political Research Associates.

that the interest is to strengthen the conservative agenda against SRR and SOGI rights through the transfer of resources to multiple and diverse religious conservative actors: "U.S. conservatives know no denominational boundaries in their aid. For example, although the Providence Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, is not an Episcopal congregation, it gave $115,000 to the Anglican Church in Uganda and has continued to support the Ugandan diocese of Mityana. Similarly, non-Episcopal congregations in Mississippi support Anglican projects in Kenya, and the Rev. Rick Warren, minister of the Saddleback Church in California, has established partnerships with Anglican churches in Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda."[88]

3. INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

Multiple actors form religious conservatisms as groups. Their heterogeneity enables them to move at different levels: local and transnational, religious and secular, governmental and civil society. Even though the borders separating the actors involved are porous, it is possible to observe at least three levels, each of them with diverse fragmentations: religious institutions, political actors, and civil society actors. In the following section, information about the main actors operating against SRR and SOGI rights will be systematized. In particular, we will consider the actors working at the U.N. system level because it is a privileged space where principles and instruments that connect SRR and SOGI rights with human rights are debated.

3.1. RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS: THE HOLY SEE AS A GLOBAL ACTOR

Several religious institutions act against SRR and SOGI rights at local levels. Although conservative religious institutions are multiple, there is one that stands out due to its international impact and global reach: the Holy See. The Catholic Church has historically sustained a condemnatory position toward non-heterosexual expressions. However, its opposition to any SOGI right became worse since John Paul II assumed his position as leader of the church in 1978. Sexuality became a central axis of its political intervention agenda at the global level.[89]

The presence of the Catholic Church in each country implies the installation of local ecclesiastic structures around national Episcopal Conferences that articulate hierarchic actions with Catholic authorities on each national territory. However, the Catholic Church has a fundamental role also at the international level. The Holy See has strengthened and made more complex its impact strategies, especially in international human rights settings, taking advantage of its constant evaluation of the U.N. From this perspective, it issues statements and takes actions to create obstacles for the advancement of SOGI rights. In 2008, for example, a group of 66 countries submitted a statement to the U.N. General Assembly claiming that human rights protect sexual orientation and gender identity. The following day, the Holy See delegation issued a statement affirming: "…the Holy See notes that the wording of this *statement* goes well beyond the above mentioned and shared intent. In particular, the categories 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity,' used in the text, find no recognition or clear and agreed definition in international law. If they had to be taken into consideration in the proclaiming and implementing of fundamental rights, these would create serious uncertainty in the law as well as undermine the ability of States to enter into and enforce new and existing human rights conventions and standards. Despite the *statement's* rightful condemnation of and protection from all forms of violence against homosexual persons, the document, when considered in its entirety, goes beyond this goal and instead gives rise to uncertainty in the law and challenges existing human rights norms."[90]

Especially from the 1990s, the Holy See has mobilized interreligious alliances to block SRR recognition in general and SOGI rights in particular. The turning point was at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.[91] During the Cairo Conference, the Holy See promoted alliances with several states, mostly Muslim States,[92] to create a joint opposition to the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights. That was actually the first step of many toward a connection between Catholic leaders and conservative Muslims.[93] **The transnational turn that the Cairo and Beijing conferences meant for global sexual policies implied as well the transnationalization of conservative religious activism, including the need to settle interreligious fronts.**

Additionally, **the Catholic Church is at the forefront of the production of discourses against SOGI rights, creating arguments regarding sexual agendas on each historical moment. Besides each Pope's statements and positions included in some encyclicals, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has been particularly active in this field.** This can be analyzed through some specific documents regarding the "intrinsic messiness" of homosexuality and the role Catholics should play on this topic, as it is expressed in the following documents: Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning

88 Kaoma, Kapya John (2009). *Globalizing the Culture Wars. U.S. Conservatives, African Churches and Homophobia*. Somerville: Political Research Associates, 10.

89 Vaggione, Juan Marco (2011). "Sexual Rights and religion. Same-sex Marriage and Lawmakers' Catholic Identity in Argentina." *University of Miami Law Review*, 65: 935-954.

90 See: https://holyseemission.org/contents//statements/55e34d333afbc1.41574484.php

91 Coates, Amy et al. (2014). "The Holy See on sexual and reproductive health rights: conservative in position, dynamic in response." *Reproductive Health Matters*, 22 (44): 114-124.

92 States like Libya and Iran.

93 Vuola, Elina (2002). "Remaking Universals?" *Theory Culture & Society*, 19 (1): 175-195; Shameem, Naureen (2017). *Rights at risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*. Toronto: AWID/OURs.

Sexual Ethics (1975), Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons (1986), Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons (1992), and Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons (2003). These positions are constantly reinforced by other Catholic Church organizations, such as the Pontifical Academy for Science, or the Pontifical Academy for Life, focused specifically on producing arguments about reproduction and sexuality that combine bioethics, science, law, and theology.

3.2. POLITICAL ACTORS: THE OIC AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE FOREFRONT OF CONSERVATIVE INITIATIVES

The impact of religions on the political field is not only materialized through religious institutions' initiatives. In several cases, through the mobilization of a patriarchal and heteronormative sexual agenda, political actors instrumentalize moral conservatism. There are at least two political actors at the U.N. that, without being religious institutions like the Holy See, mobilize at this moment the conservative agenda: the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Russian Federation acting together with the Russian Orthodox Church. The geopolitical importance of these actors shows this new configuration that religious conservatisms are creating at the global level. Furthermore, it shows how states and governmental entities, together with churches and religious institutions, constitute the relationship between religion and politics.

a) Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The OIC is an organization that was born in 1969, whose central objective is: "to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world."[94] **This organization has substantive differences with other religious institutions as the Holy See. In the first place, its members are states and not religious leaders. With 57 state members, the OIC is the second largest inter-states organization in the world, after the U.N. In the second place, the OIC authorities are not religious leaders or doctrinal authorities.** Moreover, the countries that form it do not necessarily define themselves as Muslim countries, and in many of them Islam is not the main religion.[95]

Throughout its history, the OIC has intensified and promoted the use of a human rights language. From its origins, the Charter of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation expressly mentions the state members' will "to adhere our commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter."[96] **In 1990, the OIC adopted the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, establishing its own regional chart of human rights.** From the perspective of some international analysts, this declaration is a strong conservative reaction to the Western characteristics of human rights as protected by the U.N. **This declaration departs from the guiding principles of universally recognized human rights. The declaration determines inequalities between men and women and has voids regarding regulations on freedom of religion.** Taking these aspects into account, Adama Dieng, representing the International Federation on Human Rights and the International Commission of Jurists, warned about the risks of the OIC Declaration during the 48th session of the Human Rights Commission in 1992. He pointed out in particular that the Declaration on Human Rights in Islam "seriously called in question the intercultural consensus on which the international legal instruments in the field of human rights were based; secondly, it introduced unacceptable discrimination vis-a-vis both non-Muslims and women, in the name of the defense of human rights; thirdly, it was deliberately restrictive regarding the exercise of certain fundamental rights and freedoms, to the point that some of its basic provisions fell short of the rules of law in force in many Muslim countries; and finally, under cover of the Islamic Sharia,[97] it gave legitimacy to practices—such as corporal punishment—that infringed the integrity and dignity of the human person."[98]

A recent OIC document adopted in 2005, the Convention on the Rights of Child in Islam, lessens the importance of Sharia as a source of interpretation and calls states to eliminate customs and traditions in conflict with the rights of the Covenant. However, the Convention reinforces stereotypes that contradict human rights in general, and women's and SOGI rights in particular. Among other aspects, Article 2 establishes that the Convention's objective is to strengthen family, and it mentions the role of "husband" and "wife" in the upbringing of children.[99] This is in conflict with contemporary interpretations sustained by human rights organizations regarding family, understanding it as diverse, and not always linked to heterosexual marriage. In this sense, the Convention operates as a source of arguments that uphold the idea of a "traditional family" and conservative values.

The 32nd session of the Human Rights Council in 2016 constitutes an example on how the OIC has mobilized a human rights discourse at the U.N. to promote conservative interpretations against LGBTI communities. On that occasion, the Council discussed and approved the resolution to create the mandate for an Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. All the OIC state members at the session, with the exception of Albania, voted against the resolution. Moreover, with Pakistan as a leader, these countries attempted

94 See https://www.oic-oci.org/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en

95 Shameem, Naureen (2017). *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*. Toronto: AWID/OURs.

96 See http://ww1.oic-oci.org/english/charter/OIC%20Charter-new-en.pdf

97 In fact, the declaration mentions that "All the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the Islamic Shari'ah," and its last Article establishes: "The Islamic Shari'ah is the only source of reference for the explanation or clarification of any of the articles of this Declaration."

98 United Nations (1992). E/CN.4/1992/SR.20, p. 6 http://repository.un.org/bitstream/handle/11176/189214/E_CN.4_1992_SR.20-EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

99 "To care for the family, strengthen its capabilities, and extend to it the necessary support to prevent the deterioration of its economic, social, or health conditions, and to habilitate the husband and wife to ensure their fulfillment of their role of raising children physically, psychologically, and behaviorally". http://ww1.oic-oci.org/english/convenion/Rights%20of%20the%20Child%20In%20Islam%20E.pdf

to introduce amendments to the text, most of them to relativize the reach of the designation and to argue the necessity to protect local systems of values over universalistic dispositions. They also tried to eliminate key words specifically connected with sexual orientation and gender identity, and to replace them for general dispositions against discrimination.

b) The Russian Federation and the Russian Orthodox Church

The recent alliance between the Russian Federation and the Orthodox Church of that country has transformed Russia in a central actor in the opposition to SOGI rights in international arenas.[100] After the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church, the Orthodox Church is the largest Christian church globally, with an expanding influence on Eastern Europe and Russia. It is formed by 14 autocephalous churches (or 15, if the American Orthodox Church is recognized), where the most important one is the Russian church that gathers half of the followers of every Orthodox Church in the world.

The Russian Orthodox Church was an institution that occupied a marginal space in Russian politics during the 20th century. For a brief period of time during the Nazi invasion over the Soviet Union, Stalin gave certain protections to the church in exchange for support to face Germany. But other than this exception, the Orthodox Church was harshly persecuted during the Soviet Union years. **However, the scenario changed when the Soviet regime fell. The necessity the new government had to create legitimacy enabled a strategic alliance between the Russian state and the Orthodox Church**.

The mutual cooperation path between the state and the Church started in 1993, when the Church acted as a mediator in President Boris Yeltsin's conflict with political parties regarding the content of the new constitution.[101] This role allowed the Russian Orthodox Church to earn trust and gratitude among politicians, which was also materialized in a series of concessions the government made in its favor. The first one was the 1997 Freedom of Religion Act, which recognized a special role for the Orthodox Church in Russian society, as the institutional representative of Christians. Even though during the first two terms of Vladimir Putin (2000-2008) the government did not make any other concession; starting in the administration of Dmitry Medvedev (2008-2012), the majority of the Church's demands were fulfilled. "In 2009, military chaplains were first introduced in the Russian army. In 2010, a new law on the 'Return of Property of a Religious Character Held by the State or the Municipalities to Religious Organizations,' came into force. In 2011, religious faculties and seminars were given governmental accreditation to grant academic degrees. Then, in 2012, Orthodox religion was introduced into school curricula."[102] During his third presidential term, Putin built closer ties with the Church.

The alliance between the state and the Orthodox Church is materialized today in multiple ways. On the one hand, the Church gives support to the Kremlin in complex political situations, such as the government's decision to act in the 2014 Ukrainian crisis. Also, the state and the Church have created an explicit cooperation, in which the Church provides services to the army, health facilities, schools, and nursing homes. On the other hand, the government has adopted rhetoric and agendas that favor the Orthodox Church's role as the defender of morals shaping domestic and international politics in Russia. In this context, the appeal to "traditional values" and especially to a "traditional family" has become fundamental. Self-proclaiming itself as the guarantor of a robust morality contrary to Western nihilism, the Russian Federation claims identitarian values, building a unique path to modernization, different than the Western one.[103] On the international day of families in 2016, the Russian Federation issued a statement directed to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), arguing that Russian politics is oriented to "restoring and preserving traditional family values…. The active promotion of so-called 'new notions of family' aimed at destroying the traditional received wisdom of humanity with regard to this institution and its significance is particularly dangerous."[104]

In practice, the defense of traditional values sustained by the Russian Federation has built a conservative sexual agenda. Actions against SOGI rights are propelled by the idea that Russia is fulfilling a moral and civilizing duty. **At the domestic level, this has been translated into several sub-national laws that since 2006 prohibit "homosexual propaganda" (e.g., Ryazan, Arkhangelsk, Kostroma, and Novosibirsk),[105] a similar national law (2012), another that prohibits desecrations on artistic manifestations and media (2014), etc.[106] At the international level, since 2009 Russia seeks to build alliances with countries considered as non-Western in order to occupy a position as the leader of the conservative counter-offensive at international human rights arenas.[107]** This was the case, for example, in the debates about the Human Rights Council resolution of an Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender

100 Hug, Adam (ed.) (n/d). *Sharing worst practice. How countries and institutions in the former Soviet Union help create legal tools of repression*. The Foreign Policy Centre. https://fpc.org.uk/publications/sharingworstpractice/

101 Curanović, Alicja (2015). "The Guardians of Traditional Values. Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church in the Quest for Status." Washington: Transatlantic Academy.

102 Shameem, Naureen (2017). *Rights at risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*. Toronto: AWID/OURs, 8.

103 Curanović, Alicja (2015). "The Guardians of Traditional Values. Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church in the Quest for Status." Washington: Transatlantic Academy.

104 See https://www.osce.org/pc/245656?download=true

105 Jernow, Alli (2012). "Homosexual Propaganda Bans" – Why is Speech so Dangerous?". *Destination Equality*, Autumn. https://ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/web_version_of_magazine_sep2012.pdf

106 Hug, Adam (ed.) (n/d). *Sharing worst practice. How countries and institutions in the former Soviet Union help create legal tools of repression*. The Foreign Policy Centre. https://fpc.org.uk/publications/sharingworstpractice/; Curanović, Alicja (2015). "The Guardians of Traditional Values. Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church in the Quest for Status." Washington: Transatlantic Academy.

107 See http://www.intlawgrrls.com/2012/10/russian-values.html

TABLE 1

Main religious conservative NGOs that work at the United Nations

NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION	RELIGIOUS	MAIN OFFICE LOCATION	ECOSOC STATUS
Alliance Defending Freedom	Evangelical	Arizona, USA	2010
American Family Association	Evangelical	Mississippi, USA	2003
Concerned Women for America	Evangelical	Washington, USA	2001
Family Research Council	Evangelical	Washington, USA	2002
Focus on the Family	Evangelical	Colorado, USA	2003
World Congress of Families	Evangelical	Illinois, USA	-
American Life League	Catholic	Virginia, USA	2000
Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam)	Catholic	New York, USA	2014
Human Life International	Catholic	Virginia, USA	2014
Population Research Institute*	Catholic	Virginia, USA	-
World Youth Alliance	Catholic**	New York, USA	2004
Family Watch International	Mormon	Arizona, USA	-
United Families International	Mormon	Arizona, USA	1999
World Family Policy Centre*	Mormon	Utah, USA	-
Doha International Institute for Family and Development	Cross-faith	Doha, Qatar	2009
Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society	Cross-faith	Illinois, USA	2003
National Right to Life Committee	Cross-faith	Washington, USA	1999

* These organizations ceased to exist in 2008. **Although our information says that the World Youth Alliance is a Catholic NGO, the report elaborated by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation understands that this is a cross-faith NGO.

Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data supplied by: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (2013). *Lobbying for Faith and Family: A Study of Religious NGOs at the United Nations*. Oslo: NORAD; Shameem, Naureen (2017). *Rights at risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*. Toronto: AWID/OURs.

Identity at the U.N. During informal consultancies conducted prior to the session, the Russian Federation declared its position against the initiative. Additionally, and self-proclaiming itself as the representative of several countries opposing the designation that decided not to assist to the previous consultancies, Russia declared that far from being a consensual designation, it was being rejected by a vast number of African and OIC countries. As a consequence, its vote was against the resolution.[108]

3.3. CIVIL SOCIETY: THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVE NGOS

There is a vast network of religious conservative NGOs across the world that act transnationally. At the U.N., there are more than 4,000 registered NGOs with consultative status in ECOSOC, and around 10% of these belong to religious organizations.[109] According to 2010 information, among the religious NGOs, 58.4% are Christian, 16.3% are Muslim, 6.9% are Jewish, and the rest of them are divided between other religions.[110] Not every organization has its focus on SRR and SOGI rights. Among the ones that do focus on this, though, not every organization has a conservative position. However, the majority of the organizations against those rights have a religious connection.

As Table 1 shows, **there are two characteristics that stand out among the NGOs acting at the level of the international human rights system: 1) the majority of the NGOs have their office in the United States (principally in eight states) and 2) have Christian roots, with an Evangelical, Catholic, or Mormon base. Moreover, some of them congregate different Christian denominations.** Just as the report prepared by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation describes "Muslim organizations and Christian NGOs originating outside the Western hemisphere play a limited role in the UN lobbying effort… and Jewish groups are hardly involved." Of the organizations mentioned above, the only NGO that does not have an office in the United States and that includes a Muslim

108 See http://arc-international.net/global-advocacy/human-rights-council/32nd-session-of-the-human-rights-council/la-designacion-de-una-expertoa-independiente-sobre-orientacion-sexual-e-identidad-de-genero-analisis-del-proceso-los-resultados-y-sus-implicaciones/

109 Haynes, Jeff (2014). *Faith-Based Organizations at the United Nations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

110 Petersen, Marie Juul (2010). *International Religious NGOs at The United Nations: A Study of a Group of Religious Organizations*. https://sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/847#_edn44

perspective is the Doha International Institute for Family and Development, financed by the Qatar Foundation that belongs to the Royal Family. Nevertheless, this organization was part of a Christian initiative and keeps strong bonds with conservative Mormon activists from the United States.

The geographic and religious characteristics of the main NGOs that work at the U.N. show the geopolitical structure of these actors. The United States appears as the key piece of this model of activism. In other words, **US politics seems to be the engine of the religious conservative activism working from the civil society in international scenarios, in a search for exporting local "culture wars" to global arenas.**

Also significant is the fact that the majority of the NGOs mentioned above gained their consultative status at the U.N. in the last 20 years. This indicates that the growing of these organizations in international human rights arenas is a quite recent strategy that was probably born as a backlash to the advancement of sexual and reproductive rights at the Cairo and Beijing U.N. conferences in 1994 and 1995, respectively. Likewise, according to international analysts, a large part of their organizational capacity and international impact can be explained due to the impulse given by the George W. Bush administration (2001-2009). During these terms, Religious Right activists were incorporated in the United States delegations attending U.N. conferences, such as the World Summit for Children.

This enabled them also to develop partnerships with international activists and to create stronger interreligious alliances. In fact, conservative Christian NGOs tend to establish networks with activists from state members of the OIC, hence actively participating in foreign American policy. Therefore, despite the tensions that frequently exist at domestic levels between different religions, in international human rights settings, religious, political, and civil society actors act like a single bloc around a shared sexual agenda.

SECTION II: CASE STUDIES LATIN AMERICA, EASTERN EUROPE, AND AFRICA

CASE STUDY 1: ACTORS AND STRATEGIES IN DEFENSE OF A CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS AGENDA IN LATIN AMERICA

Without discounting the role that religious hierarchies, arguments based on the bible, and religious traditions continue to play, a diversification of actors, strategies, and arguments opposing pluralistic sexual agendas has taken place in Latin America. Despite the fact that traditional forms of religious power, such as secret and public lobbying of religious hierarchies, remain valid, in the last decades, a series of strategies targeting the impact on law and public policies grew in power. This is one of the paradoxes of sexual politics in Latin America: while the content of the laws defended by conservative activism has the tendency to avoid a democratization of the sexual order, the channels they use are increasingly the same as those allowed by the democratic system itself.

In Panama, the Episcopal Conference, the Ecumenical Committee and the Evangelical Alliance made joint statements rejecting the Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 of the Inter American Court of Human Rights about gender identity and same-sex marriage. In a public statement, the religious leaders expressed that "Lately, the idea has been forced on us that the defense of marriage and family is discrimination."

This section introduces an analysis of the leading actors, not only religious actors, and their main strategies and discourses defending an agenda that opposes the recognition of SRR and SOGI rights in Latin America.

1.1 RELIGIOUS LEADERS

In the multiplicity of actors that defend a conservative religious agenda, the Catholic hierarchy has and continues to exercise a decisive voice in the sexual politics in the countries of the area. Due to an increased visibility of the population's diversity in practices and sexual identities (including among believers) and the Catholic hierarchy far from becoming more flexible, the subject of sexual morals has become an even higher priority for this Church. This has also been a consequence of the advancements of feminist and LGBTI movements. **Maintaining their official position regarding sexual morality throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, the Catholic hierarchy has made an impact on governments with different ideologies, defending a matrimonial regime based on heterosexuality and reproduction.** This Church's symbolic and material power, together with the legitimacy that it claims to have sourced in the high rates of the population that identifies as Catholic, continues

to allow their hierarchy to have a strong impact on legislation and public policies concerning sexuality, family, and reproduction.

In the last decades however, along with the Catholic hierarchy, the presence of different evangelical churches has strengthened in Latin America. These churches have gained a prevalent political role. Religious pluralism has deepened in Latin America, particularly in the last years, regarding evangelical churches that have transformed the religious field.

Even though the percentage of people that identify as Catholic still represents the majority, evangelicals have had a firm increase. In some countries, the percentages of Catholics and evangelicals are not far apart (in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, the percentage of evangelicals oscillates around 36% and 41% of the population). This growth has given evangelical leaders both the power to negotiate with governments and to mobilize the population. These churches, in general, keep sexual agendas consistent with the Catholic hierarchy. In particular, Pentecostal, Baptist, and Free Brothers churches have been identified as the main opposition to feminist and LGBTI agendas in the area. **Although these churches have had (and still have) tensions with the Catholic Church (rooted principally in the Catholic Church's privileges), their common resistance to "culture of death" and "gender ideology" has enabled the construction of a common agenda. As evidence of the previous statement, both churches, for example, have coordinated several actions and statements against a more pluralistic sexual agenda.** In Panama, for instance, the Episcopal Conference, the Ecumenical Committee, and the Evangelical Alliance made joint statements rejecting the Advisory Opinion OC-24/17 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights about gender identity and same-sex marriage. In a public statement, the religious leaders expressed that "Lately, the idea has been forced on us that the defense of marriage and family is discrimination."

Hence, notwithstanding the fact that different institutional systems might be of complete separation between church and state (or in other words, systems of high formal secularism), religious sectors might still have a strong influence on the country's policies. In Latin America, it is common that public officials from different branches of government (governors, representatives, senators, and judges) take into consideration the opinion of religious leaders when making decisions. Another way to impact electoral agendas is through appealing to their believers. In the Dominican Republic in 2016, the Christian Action Group (Grupo Acción Cristiana) and the Biblical Foundation Church (Iglesia Fundamento Bíblico) exhorted 200 pastors of temples of Santo Domingo to lead their parishioners to vote for the "less bad" candidates in national elections, that is, to vote for candidates that were not promoting abortion or same-sex marriage. In the statement, the pastors claimed that "the new agenda is encouraged by international bodies such as the OAS and the U.N. that are trying to implement birth control policies and to destroy the bases and values of the Judeo-Christian culture, imposing legislation in developing countries that have showed weak institutions."

One way to impact electoral agendas is through appealing to their believers. In the Dominican Republic in 2016, the Christian Action Group (Grupo Acción Cristiana) and the Biblical Foundation Church (Iglesia Fundamento Bíblico) exhorted 200 pastors of temples of Santo Domingo to lead their parishioners to vote for the "less bad" candidates in national elections, that is, to vote for candidates that were not promoting abortion or same-sex marriage.

In other cases, the public legitimacy that religious hierarchies enjoy as social and political actors has allowed them to take part in processes of designing public policies about sexuality and reproduction. In Honduras, for example, the legislation that created the National AIDS Commission (Comisión Nacional del SIDA, CONASIDA) in 1999 established that the commission would include representatives from the Catholic Church and the Association of Evangelical Churches. After its 2015 amendment, both organizations were removed from the political level of CONASIDA, but both—the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Fraternity—were included at the level of technical consultants, with the function of "assist[ing] CONASIDA technically on its political level of decision making and encourag[ing] and execut[ing] coordinated actions."

Lastly, to consider Churches as public actors requires, among other considerations, to unravel their politics toward the media, politics that have been consolidating during the second half of the 20th Century. This has been a consequence of the development of a series of public impact channels to communicate messages connected to their sexual morals. Their media politics has been a key feature of their strategy. In the case of the Vatican, one can observe an ongoing readaptation of its dissemination of information structure as a way to promote its role in political, cultural, and legal discussions. The Catholic Church's interest in communication media is not new. The early attention the Vatican paid to that industry can be observed through the reforms on its institutional

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structure. With the expansion of new technologies, the official statements of the Vatican regarding the Internet, and the use of social networks by the Catholic Church started to become visible with Pope John Paul II, only to expand with Pope Benedict XVI (for example, with the official Twitter account of the Pope, pontifex), and became decisive in the Vatican's media system led by Pope Francis.

Evangelical churches have also created an important network of radio stations and television channels to strengthen their messages and influence. In Chile for example, Radio Harmony (Armonia), with 50 stations in the country, is directed by Pastor Rubén Sáez. Radio Corporation (Corporación) has become a network of more than 30 stations belonging to the church Christ Your Only Hope (Cristo tu única esperanza). In Panama, there are radio stations that are owned by pastors of different churches, such as Radio Hosanna of the church with the same name, connected to pastor Edwin Álvarez.

1.2 CONSERVATIVE CIVIL SOCIETY

Even though religious leaders continue to be central actors in the construction of conservative agendas, other sectors have also arisen as important actors in the opposition to SRR and SOGI Rights. The formation of "pro-life" and/or "pro-family" NGOs—according to the self-denomination they use publicly—has become one of the most relevant diffusion mechanisms of the conservative agenda in the last decades throughout Latin America. **The presence of these actors has not only opened new opportunities for conservative activism, detached from the traditional *modus operandi* of churches, but has also created new strategic tools, based on a diversification of identities that move through the public space. This process of religious NGO-ization has developed as one of the principal facets of conservative activism in Latin America.**

Starting in the 1970s in the United States—especially encouraged by the legalization of abortion in *Roe v. Wade*—and then in the rest of the Americas, a great number of NGOs have been created at the national, regional, and international level with the purpose to defend religious doctrines. A key example in this sense, linked to Catholicism, is the case of the organization Human Life International (Vida Humana Internacional), founded in 1984 as the Latin American chapter of the same organization first created in the United States in 1981. Human Life International has 17 branches in Latin America, while the organization Make Yourself Heard (Hazte Oír), originated in Spain in 2001, currently has branches all over Europe and Latin America. From the evangelical perspective, the International Coalition Pro Family (Coalición Internacional Pro Familia, CIPROFAM) has a strong presence in different countries, such as Colombia and Peru.

In recent years, these types of organizations—self-proclaimed "pro-life" and/or "pro-family" organizations—started to mobilize conservative activism from spaces other than those occupied by religious leaders and hierarchies, but with a sexual agenda in harmony with the churches' leaders. **One of the key features to understand the relevance of conservative NGOs in contemporary sexual politics is how these NGOs have started to displace, in recent years, the centrality of religion as a priority identification element of those who share a conservative sexual agenda.**

Hence, even though some organizations do not have a formal, direct connection to churches, they present an institutional identity that is openly confessional. For example, this is the case of Corporación de Abogados Católicos, Consorcio de Médicos Católicos de Argentina, the Asociación de Abogados Católicos de México, and the Asociación de Abogados Cristianos de Guatemala, among others.

It is also important to mention the case of civil society organizations whose public identity does not show features linked to religion, but whose membership is connected and/or leaders expressly claim to ascribe to a certain faith, and are committed with official doctrines of their church in matters of sexual politics. In this category, we can find organizations such as the Centro de Bioética, Persona y Familia, which usually presents itself as associated with secular disciplines such as science and law but was created and is led by activists from the Movimiento Fundar, an organization that considers itself Catholic and is recognized by the archbishopric of Buenos Aires.

In Chile in 2015, evangelicals created the political party Evangelicals in Action (Evangélicos en Acción) in the midst of a series of initiatives presented by the Executive Power regarding the decriminalization of abortion and the sanction of a gender identity law.

Another example is the NGO Vida SV in El Salvador that claims to be a secular organization but was founded and is directed by members of Acción Católica. This type of organization tends to strategically displace, in general, their religious dimension, to privilege secular arguments at the public space and achieve a bigger political impact as a consequence.

Finally, it is possible to observe organizations that present an institutional identity that does not show religious features and whose membership does not subscribe to a particular religion, creating a sort of religious de-identification. In this way, the religious element is minimized in the area of identity of both the organization and its members. The organization does not

appear to have a specific religious identification, admitting members from different religions, or even without professing a particular faith. Transformemos Honduras is an example of this kind of NGO. In all of these cases, the membership is a consequence not of a unified religious identity, but of a common agenda based on the rejection of SRR.

This process of religious NGO-ization has allowed the articulation of diverse, relatively new advocacy strategies for the conservatives, which, however, had been intensely used by feminist and LGBTI movements.

Beside the impact on traditional decision-making political spaces, street mobilizations, and actions in and from communication media, since the late 1990s several NGOs in Latin America started to develop a complementary strategy consisting of taking these disputes to the courts.

Nevertheless, NGOs' actions in the legal field cross national borders. It is now frequent to find conservative mobilization in the international human rights field. In this regard, a paradigmatic case is the OAS 2013 General Assembly, where conservative organizations were highly visible. Starting in 2013, at both OAS' General Assemblies and at the hearings called by the General Secretary, actions by conservative sectors have been intensified. The American evangelical organization Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) has been a persistent actor in the OAS, articulating actions with other Latin American evangelical and Catholic organizations. This was made explicit in 2016 during the 46th General Assembly in the Dominican Republic, where ADF coordinated the campaign "Yes, we want sustainability" with civil and religious local organizations. Using this campaign, they were trying to alert member states about "gender ideology" when ratifying bilateral agreements in the OAS.

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Yet another international articulation of Catholic NGOs is their participation at the World Families' Meeting from the mid-1990s, a global meeting to coordinate actions against SRR and SOGI rights. The first meeting, in 1994, took place in Rome. Since these meetings have been held every three years in different countries. In the last two meetings held in Mexico (2015) and Ireland (2018), Pope Francis I was in charge of the closing speech of the conference..

Readapting the traditional arenasof intervention.

The use of the Courts as strategy

In Bolivia, after the 2017 gender identity law, conservative religious sectors promoted several actions to create obstacles to the law's implementation. Shortly after the sanctioning of the law, a group of legislators connected with Plataforma por la Vida y la Familia, filed a case arguing the unconstitutionality of the law. In June 2017, the authorities of the Episcopal Conference of Bolivia, together with Iglesias Evangélicas Unidas, introduced a statement to the Constitutional Court supporting the claim of unconstitutionality. In November 2017, the Constitutional Plurinational Court decided that Paragraph II, Article 11 of the Identity Law, regarding rights and duties, was unconstitutional, consequently prohibiting marriages and adoptions of people that had chosen to modify their gender identities.

1.3 STATE ACTORS

Another key sector in defense of the conservative agenda is related to the state political field. Just as some citizens mobilize guarding a restrictive sexual morality, different sectors in the political realm also make use of their positions to protect a conservative religious agenda. It is extremely common in the area to observe how the Catholic Church appeals to governors, legislators, politicians, and judges, among other believers, to protect Catholic sexual morals and to avoid the enforcement of SRR and SOGI rights. Abortion and same-sex couples' rights are two of the main issues where the Catholic Church provides specific instructions to its congregation about how to act in the sanction, enforcement, or implementation processes of laws and public policies.

Evangelical churches have also made an impact on the political community regarding the protection of a conservative religious agenda. Despite the fact that for a long time the evangelical field was not interested in Latin American politics, lately evangelical sectors and churches specifically have started to have a direct and

> In 2012, the public officials from the Executive Income Office (Dirección Ejecutiva de Ingresos) of the Government of Honduras participated in a day of prayer organized by Evelio Reyes. According to the information on its website (www.dei.gob.hn), "the day of prayer on state institutions has been approved from its origins by the President of the Republic, Porfirio Lobo Sosa, in order to inspire the fear of God of all public officials of his governments, but particularly

active influential role on governments. It is common to identify the 1980s as the moment when the "evangelical vote" came alive and gained influence, and evangelical sectors promoted candidates and created confessional evangelical political parties. These processes were more intense and grew rapidly in the countries where the evangelical population rates were higher. **Catholic and evangelical influence on the political field could be observed at two levels: an institutional level connected with political parties aligned with a conservative sexual agenda, and another level regarding public officials, governors, and politicians that use their positions and decision-making spaces to obstruct SRR and SOGI rights agendas.** Regarding the first level, even though more traditional Catholic parties—such as Christian Democracy (Democracia Cristiana)—have become less powerful, even disappearing in particular contexts, a strong linkage persists within certain conservative parties with a religious ideological bias. Although they do not show an explicit religious identity, political parties such as the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) in Mexico or the Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI) in Chile share in their origins and agendas a Christian vision of society.

In other countries, religious parties have redoubled their efforts toward what they consider to be potential threats to their sexual morals. In Chile in 2015, evangelicals created the political party Evangelicals in Action (Evangélicos en acción) in the midst of a series of initiatives presented by the Executive Power regarding the decriminalization of abortion and the sanction of a gender identity law.

While this proliferation and strengthening of evangelical churches as political actors represents a challenge to the symbolic power of the Catholic hierarchy, prioritizing a common agenda allows them to share objectives. Conservative political parties of both religious fields channel their influence on the political community toward family, sexuality, and reproduction, consequently reducing their existing tensions.

On the second level mentioned above, political actors (governors, members of political parties, public officials, etc.) make use of their positions, even in contexts where the relationship between parties and religious conservatisms might not be perfect.

A phenomenon of elected officials having a clear agenda to defend—from within the State—a conservative religious agenda is becoming more and more common. In some cases, these officials are motivated by their own personal convictions, understanding that their political mission has to be in harmony with their religious beliefs regarding sexuality and reproduction. Hence, in October 2012 for example, public officials from the Executive Income Office (Dirección Ejecutiva de Ingresos) of the Government of Honduras participated in a day of prayer organized by Evelio Reyes. According to the information on its website (www.dei.gob.hn), "the day of prayer on state institutions has been approved from its origins by the President of the Republic, Porfirio Lobo Sosa, in order to inspire the fear of God of all public officials of his governments, but particularly of officials in charge of managing the state's resources."

In Brazil, conservative evangelical leaders are the most prone to introduce candidacies and to act as a political group against SRR and SOGI rights. The evangelical bench—with almost 90 seats—has presented initiatives to criminalize abortion, to reduce the age of criminal responsibility from 18 to 16 years old, and to enact a family regulation defining family as heterosexual, monogamist, and with a reproductive objective.

In another paradigmatic case, this time from Colombia, former devotedly Catholic Attorney General Alejandro Ordoñez attempted to create obstacles to the enforcement of SRR and SOGI rights before leaving his position. This Attorney General filed a claim to the Constitutional Court requesting the elimination of same-sex couples' pensions and the prohibition of gay men to adopt, in clear opposition to the Court's decisions T-716/ 2011 and T-276/2012. During the legal processes that ended up allowing same-sex marriages, Ordoñez not only questioned the lawfulness of these processes, but also ordered his subordinates to elaborated periodic reports about his actions, with the objective of creating pressure to avoid the celebration of same-sex marriages.

In other cases, the impact coming from the political field is created by officials that were elected due to the impulse of political parties aligned with conservative religious sectors. As mentioned above, in several Latin American countries, the growth of confessional evangelical parties has facilitated the incorporation of evangelical elected officials. Brazil, for example, has witnessed the development of religious parliamentary benches as a privileged strategy by several religious leaders to promote restrictive sexual politics. Conservative evangelical leaders are the most prone to introduce candidacies and to act as a political group against SRR and SOGI rights. As a matter of fact, the evangelical bench—with almost 90 seats—has presented initiatives to criminalize abortion, to reduce the age of criminal responsibility from 18 to 16 years old, and to enact a family regulation defining family as heterosexual, monogamist, and with a reproductive objective. It is worth mentioning that this bench, as a group, supported President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment.

Additionally, under a religious identification and/or out of necessity for political legitimacy as a way to incite Catholic or evangelical votes, religions have a

In June 2016, the World Parliamentary and Leaders Action for Life and Family presented a claim to the OAS against this international body, arguing that its policies were "threatening the rights to life, family and freedom of expression, freedom of association and religious freedom."

strong influence on Latin American leaders. Beyond their personal beliefs, there are leaders and officials that defend a conservative religious agenda for strategic reasons. It is not infrequent that candidates and leaders support some of the claims made by churches (especially the ones related to sexual morals) in exchange for political/electoral support. During her 2016 campaign, for example, presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori publicly agreed to stand against civil unions of same-sex couples, contradicting her previous statements about it. The signature of this agreement was held during an event organized by the Coordinadora Cívica Cristiana Pro Valores.

Just as with other actors and strategies analyzed above, national borders do not limit actions promoted by political actors. On the contrary, these actors seek to reach transnational spaces and strategies. The platforms promoted by the World Parliamentary and Leaders Action for Life and Family (Acción Mundial de Parlamentarios y Gobernantes por la Vida y la Familia) and by the Hemispheric Congress of Pro Life Parliamentarians (Congreso Hemisférico de Parlamentarios por la Vida) unites congresspersons and senators from Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and El Salvador, among other countries. After a meeting in Mexico in June 2016, this platform presented a claim to the OAS against this international body, arguing that its policies were "threatening the rights to life, family and freedom of expression, freedom of association and religious freedom."

1.4 SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC CENTERS

The use of a scientific discourse has become more frequent in conservative religious activism, promoting biological and psychiatric notions to defend a certain sexual order. The secular and objective depiction these arguments use allows the penetration of religious conservatisms on highly important strategic spaces for political influence. Therefore, not only is the participation of figures linked to those sectors ever more common in academic spaces such as scientific conferences, university courses, or research centers and networks, but also in parliamentary discussions, courts, and international human rights forums where laws and policies about sexuality and reproduction are designed, sanctioned, and enforced.

In this context, the Catholic hierarchy has a primary role in this process. **In recent decades, it has begun to place its actions on medical and biological disciplinary fields, specifically through the creation of research centers and bioethics committees. Using organizations such as the Pontifical Academy for Faith, the Pontifical Academy for Science, and the Pontifical Academy for Life, the Vatican has attempted to build a scientific discourse under the Catholic doctrine, mixing its religious principles with secular biological arguments.** This discourse is the foundation for teaching and research at Catholic universities and public bioethical committees that make decisions about the legitimacy of some practices in health facilities. From this perspective, bioethical training centers created by the Catholic Church have become a central tool.

Actions developed from universities directly connected to conservative churches, especially the Catholic Church, and religious research centers are also paramount. Specifically, some Catholic universities are engines of arguments and academic positionings about the regulation of sexuality. In Argentina, for example, the Universidad Austral (formally associated with Opus Dei), the Catholic Pontifical University of Argentina, and the Fraternidad de Agrupaciones Santo Tomás de Aquino, among other institutions, are some of the main academic institutions where the conservative scientific discourse regarding sexuality and reproduction were designed.

In 2010, during the legislative discussion of the same-sex marriage law and the possibility of same-sex couples to adopt in Argentina, Universidad Austral issued a 176-page public document with scientific arguments with the aim of rejecting the legislative reform.

In Chile, it is possible to find a similar scenario with the Bioethical Center of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and the Universidad de los Andes—also associated with Opus Dei. These spaces activate arguments that try to circumscribe sexuality to specific biological and psychiatric notions. In 2010, for example, during the legislative discussion of the same-sex marriage law and the possibility of same-sex couples to adopt in Argentina, Universidad Austral issued a 176-page public document with scientific arguments with the aim of rejecting the legislative reform. In this same period, professors from religious universities participated in the Senate's public hearings around the country to debate about same-sex marriage.

In Brazil, where LGBTI people live under extremely vulnerable conditions, the Federal District's Court of Brazil issued a provisory decision in September 2017 allowing psychologists to "treat" homosexuality as a disease. This decision was the answer to a popular claim filed by a group of psychologists that defend "sexual reversion" therapies, a practice that has been prohibited in Brazil by the Federal Council of Psychology since 1999.

CASE STUDY 2: THE COLD (CIVIL) WAR(S) NO ONE DARES TO DECLARE. MAIN TRENDS OF CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

By Gordan Bosanac and Nives Miošić

Reviewers: Marina Škrabalo, Neil Datta, and Gillian Kane

This study reports on the impact of Christian fundamentalism in Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, FYR Macedonia, Slovenia, Lithuania, and Latvia. It is based on limited research available, investigative media reports, and the authors' own experiences as civil society activists responding to religious fundamentalism in Croatia and the EU. It is important to note that the trends and events presented primarily refer to EU member states. However, they also include countries in Southeastern Europe (Western Balkans), such as Serbia and FRY Macedonia, countries interested in EU membership. Also of note, events in Eastern Europe cannot and should not be viewed in isolation from those taking place at the EU level; indeed they are an integral part. Therefore, where appropriate, we highlight connections between Eastern European countries and the broader EU setting.

2.1 THE EMERGENCE OF KEY ACTORS AND NETWORKS OF CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

In most Eastern European countries, Christian fundamentalism emerged in the period 2009-2010 in the form of a reactionary movement to national policy debates on LGBT and reproductive rights. Croatia, Slovakia, and Slovenia were exceptions to this rule in as much as their stronger mobilization was not reactionary, but rather, in anticipation and as a preventive mechanism to policies taking root internationally—specifically marriage equality—and its prevention by means of citizen-initiated constitutional referenda.

Croatian experience, which played out in three phases, can perhaps offer some insights into how the fundamentalist movement developed. Namely, Croatia is one of the first countries in Eastern Europe to experience the effects of the newly organized Christian fundamentalist movement, beginning in 1996 and more forcefully by 2006, with a focus on sexuality education. In the first phase, during the 1990s, the anti-abortion movement in Croatia was dominated by the Catholic Church, led by charismatic priests openly spreading anti-abortion propaganda. The Church framed the debate within a broader concern for the protection of the traditional family and national population renewal. Following the fall of communism, abortion was presented as unfriendly to faith, family, and national identity. The Church provided direct support services (advice, psychological support, etc.) to families in the form of so-called "family centers" that were financed by the official Catholic Church. In the second phase, from 2000 to 2010, independent citizens' associations (NGOs) emerged. These were founded by "concerned" religious citizens who were previously active challenging sexuality education in public school curricula. The third phase, from 2010 onward, is characterized by a notable increase in the number of nationally and internationally connected fundamentalist NGOs who were seemingly independent from the Church hierarchy and parish structure. The Catholic Church made a strategic decision to withdraw to the background and let "ordinary concerned religious citizens" become the spokespersons of fundamentalist anti-human rights ideas. This is consistent with the strategy of Opus Dei, whose local chapters have been opening throughout Eastern Europe and Russia since the mid-1990s.

Furthermore, links between Croatian organizations and the ultraconservative Polish movements Tradition, Family, Property (TFP) and Ordo Iuris have been well documented.

> In Macedonia, fundamentalists succeeded in significantly restricting access to abortion by introducing a mandatory request for abortion from the provider, a mandatory notification of the husband in case the woman is married, and a mandatory waiting period, which must include "counseling" and an ultrasound. Pregnancies over 10 weeks require a special decision by a commission that includes a gynecologist, an internal medicine doctor, and a social worker, all appointed by the Minister of Health.

In 2013, Croatian fundamentalists successfully voted down a referendum on marriage equality. They succeeded in large part because of voting laws; there is no minimum requirement for voter turnout in national referenda, meaning that the low turnout of 37.9% was sufficient to enable constitutional change. In contrast, their efforts in Slovakia failed because the census mechanism requires a turnout of 50% +1 for referenda validity; only 21% of voters participated in the Slovak referendum on marriage equality. Slovenia had two referenda on marriage equality (2012 and 2015), and in both cases the fundamentalists were successful. In 2012, they repealed the Family Code that included a broad definition of family and same-sex adoption rights. In 2015, the Parliament again included marriage equality into Slovenian legislation, only for it to be repealed in a December 2015 referendum. This was the second time in 3 years. There are other anti-rights initiatives currently circulating.

2.2 THE MAIN PLAYERS

In Eastern European countries, the religious actors are very diverse and not at all monolithic. There is as much inter- and intra-religious competition as there is cooperation. Hence, some follow the official line of the religious leadership, while others attempt to apply conservative pressure on the institutional religious leadership. Factions within the religious institutional leadership also ally with various groups, depending on the occasion. Finally, the religious institutions' overall social position, power, and influence in each country plays a role. Thus, in countries where the church is influential (e.g. Poland, Croatia, Romania), they openly back and provide logistical support to conservative movements. In countries where the church is weak and/or compromised, they tend to take a back seat (e.g., Hungary or Slovenia).

In all the countries studied, activist NGOs are present. Some have well-established organizations that link with networks and newly established "empty shell" organizations; these include the same people with different positions in different organizations. Many include close family and friendship ties among the organizations' leaders. They collaborate with international organizations and networks, including the US-based Alliance Defending Freedom and Liberty Counsel, the European Dignity Watch, and the European Centre for Law and Justice. They may also join pan-European citizens' initiatives such as Mum, Dad and Kids, which works for the legal recognition of the heterosexual family. The One of Us anti-abortion initiative, which was eventually rejected by the European Commission, transformed into a regional anti-abortion movement active in 24 EU countries. Since 2013, they have also been meeting annually under the banner Agenda Europe, gathering over 100 of the main national and trans-national anti-choice and anti-LGBT organizations in the European region (covering geographic Europe).

Representatives of Eastern European Christian fundamentalist organizations, including Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox, participate at the World Congress of Families. They use this platform to make contacts, share experiences, and strategize with organizations with whom they would not normally be—or like to be—associated with their national settings. This includes the Serbian Orthodox movement Dveri, and the Croatian U ime obitelji. They are careful not to compromise their nationalistic legitimacy at home, but nonetheless share ideas, approaches, and international speakers in events they organize locally.

The NGOs also collaborate with international organizations and networks, including the US-based Alliance Defending Freedom and Liberty Counsel, the European Dignity Watch, and the European Centre for Law and Justice. They may also join pan-European citizen's initiatives such as Mum, Dad and Kids, which works for the legal recognition of the heterosexual family.

The World Congress of Families is used by conservative actors as a platform to make contacts, shares experiences and strategizes with organizations with whom they would not normally be—or like to be—associated with in their national settings.

Finally, representatives of Eastern European Christian fundamentalists are also active in the European Christian Political Movement (ECPM), a European political party "that aims to reflect and work on Christian-democratic politics in Europe from an explicitly Christian-social point of view." They currently have six MEPs in the European Parliament, of whom three come from Eastern Europe (Poland and Slovakia), while their seven-member board incudes politicians from Slovakia, Georgia, the Netherlands, Moldova, Croatia, and Poland.

The influence of both radical US-based evangelical groups and Russia on Eastern European fundamentalist organizations is well documented. While Russian influence seems more integrated with official Kremlin foreign policy, the US fundamentalists' longtime experience shaping policies within and outside of the country make them particularly effective. They are now aided by the Trump Administration, which has enabled new opportunities for the US export of right-wing ideology. US fundamentalist organizations can now rely on the White House to facilitate their contacts with governments and support their reactionary agenda. Indeed, Trump has embraced religious fundamentalism as an integral part of his foreign policy.

2.3 THE MAIN STRATEGIES TO RESIST/REVERT SOGI RIGHTS

a) Discourses used by religious fundamentalist actors

Religious fundamentalists in Eastern Europe rely on several ideological frameworks to move their agenda forward. Over the last ten years, "gender ideology" has become increasingly popular as an umbrella framework and empty signifier. The term, however, was coined as the Vatican's response to the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights in the UN system in the mid-1990s and became widely recognized after the publication of the *Lexicon: Ambiguous and Debatable Terms Regarding Family Life and Ethical Questions* in 2003, by the Pontifical Council for the Family and with the support of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Hence, this empty signifier is applied opportunistically by fundamentalists to include whatever "threat" they identify in their local contexts at any given moment. In Eastern Europe the documented discourses include:

- **Corrupting human rights discourse**
    - Protection of "silent majority" rights, protection of Christianity as a value system in pluralist societies, protection of religious freedoms—in relation to freedom of speech, belief, and expression. Moreover, in

combination with sporadic anti-Islamic discourses, they claim "prosecution of Christians in the Arab world."

- Minority oppressing majority discourse (LGBT groups promote values that endanger the way of life and rights of the heterosexual majority)
- Democratic participation—in relation to policies debated locally, but especially marriage equality and, as of late, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention
- The right to conscientious objection—in relation to sexual health and reproductive rights, specifically abortion, and applied not just to individuals but to institutions Protection of children's rights— in relation to sexual education and same-sex couple adoption
- Protection of (grand)parents' rights—in relation to education in line with parents' belief systems
- Promotion of national sovereignty and resistance of international human rights law, especially in relation to the Istanbul Convention, ECHR, and EU directives guaranteeing same level of protection of civil rights across member states
- Anti-modernist and anti-globalist agenda where political liberalism is depicted as a Western European indicator of cultural decadence

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• Defamation discourse:

- Perverted distortion of the natural order—in relation to same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, assisted fertility treatments, surrogacy, transsexuality and transgender identities
- "Culture of death"—in relation to abortion and emergency contraception
- Linking minority sexual preferences and transgenderism to pedophilia, zoophilia, and necrophilia
- "White plague"—in relation to the decreasing demographic figures to which same-sex relationships contribute due to their inability to procreate

• Pseudo-scientific discourse—in relation to sexual education, same-sex marriage, same-sex couple adoption, abortion ("post-abortive syndrome," abortion reversals)

• Protection of the "natural order of things"—in relation to same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, assisted fertility treatments, surrogacy

• Traditional values/family values—in relation to same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, women's emancipation

Apart from these well-documented discourses, there are also two additional discourses that resonate well, particularly in Eastern European countries, given their 20th century histories, namely:

• Secular or radical feminist totalitarianism discourse (sometimes called extreme left wing), where SOGI, women's rights, and liberalism generally are attributed to being equal to or worse than Nazism, Soviet rule, or the rule of the Yugoslav Communist Party—"the militant feminist/lesbian/gay/left wing minority organizations are imposing their beliefs on the silent and oppressed majority."

• **Nationalism and historical revisionism**—nationalistic rhetoric seems to be omnipresent in Eastern European countries. It intersects with opposition to SOGI and women's rights in the context of restitution of the religious institutions' social position in post-communist societies; religious denomination was one of the key indicators of nationality in the nation-state building processes during the 1990s. However, in these nation-state-building processes, Croatia and Serbia have resorted to historic revisionism. This includes an apologetic stance of fundamentalists and leading religious figures toward pro-Nazi movements in WWII, reconfiguring this as a positive fight for national sovereignty.

b) Coopting human rights discourse

One key tool strategically deployed by the Christian fundamentalists in Eastern Europe is coopting a human rights discourse, language, and civic organizing from the progressive human rights movement. This has surprised and unnerved progressive human rights groups. Fundamentalist groups are increasingly successful mobilizing citizens by selecting topics related to gender, children, and sexuality, and recently, topics related to migration and refugees. They play on the fears of ordinary citizens (by using fake information and previously described discourses), to successfully create mass mobilizations. We see this in street protests like the Walk for Life, which was imported from the United States. They are also downplaying the religious aspect of their public appearances, moving from religious symbolism to contemporary, colorful, and joyous visual designs evoking commercial advertisements that promote

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healthy lifestyles (e.g., photos of happy families in shiny fields). These mass mobilization events are supported (openly or more discretely) by the official church. In some cases, church groups, in particular youth groups, are recruiting outside the capital and are organizing transportation to the Walks for Life. Mass mobilization is also visible against LGBT rights, which is framed as a fight against "gender ideology." Because of their size and media coverage, these events influence policy makers.

They also use small-scale street actions. This includes praying against abortion in front of the hospitals, demonstrating in front of theaters against performances that offend "Christian feelings" (Poland and Croatia), and using performative acts, like silently reading a book in public squares because they are "sick of the fact" that "gender theory" activists impose their own will and a way of life upon them (Slovenia).

They also use petitions—another traditional and almost forgotten method used by human rights groups. They have upgraded the traditional street collection of signatures with online petition websites such as CitizenGo. The petitions are directly spamming inboxes of decision makers and politicians. There is active participation in online public consultations related to the adoption of new legislation. By maintaining email databases, they mobilize their supporters quickly and spam online public consultations and inboxes of politicians with previously developed and shared comments to policy proposals.

c) Referenda

Citizen-initiated referendum initiatives are perhaps their biggest successes. In Croatia and Slovenia, they succeeded in collecting signatures and later initiating and winning national referenda against same-sex marriage. The same method was used in Romania, where they collected three million signatures in 2015. However, they failed to meet the minimum participation threshold requirement. The same happened in Slovakia. In general, the registered voters' turnout in these referenda is low—36.38 % in Slovenia, 37.9% in Croatia, 24.1% in Slovakia, and 20.4% in Romania. Compare this to the Irish marriage equality referendum 60.52% turnout, and it shows that the fundamentalists do not enjoy majority support in the targeted countries but are wisely using democratic mechanisms to win without the majority of the electorate.

In all these endeavors, the organizers had direct, countrywide access to church-going citizens, which makes citizen mobilization much easier. It should be noted, however, that religious fundamentalists also attend to grassroots mobilizing through lectures, trainings, youth camps, and their social networks, which is their comparative advantage. It is also evident that they have sufficient financial resources to cover travel costs, i.e., bringing citizens from different towns by buses to central rallies (Walk for Life), to cover expenses of numerous volunteers, and to invest into high-tech advertising through billboards, posters, and video commercials.

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d) Litigation

Use of litigation is also a well-known strategy to influence and change legislation. Although Eastern Europe still does not have wider mobilization of fundamentalist legal groups around "Christian discrimination" as in the United States, the US actors have mobilized in cases from Eastern European states before the European Court of Human Rights or the European Court of Justice.

They are also litigating against human rights activists and public figures who are openly critical of their work. **By taking the "victim position," they are suing human rights activists and journalists for hate speech against Christians as well as pursuing libel suits based on the violation of their human rights. Although such cases are generally dismissed by the courts, they manage to create an atmosphere in the public, portraying themselves as victims based on their religious beliefs.**

e) Working through extreme right-wing parties

Although fundamentalist groups primarily work through the civil society organizations, they have clear aspirations to engage in different forms of political party initiatives. Through their close connections and collaboration with extreme right-wing political parties, they are present in the elections. Sometimes these parties gain significant political power, as is the case with the Polish Law and Justice Party, which fully integrated fundamentalist groups into their activities.

Through their close connections and collaboration with extreme right-wing political parties, they are present in the elections... they also establish political parties. We see this in Croatia where the main fundamentalist NGO In the Name of the Family established the political party Project Homeland.

Romanian Preemptive Attack against Marriage Equality across the National, International, Political, and Religious Spectrum

Romania is a particularly concerning and instructive case of broad and strong political and societal mainstreaming of Christian fundamentalist positions on LGBTIQ rights and marriage equality across the political and religious spectrum, where the usual ideological and institutional divides between the left and the right, the socialists and the Christian Democrats, as well as between traditional vs. new religious denominations do not seem to matter.

The popular referendum was initiated in 2015 by the Coalition for Family (Coaliția Pentru Familie-CPF), which filed the request for the referendum in early 2016, backed up by 3 million signatures—six times more than the proscribed minimum of 500,000. The objective is to hold a referendum on the change of the constitutional definition of family as a union of "a man and a woman" (instead of the current gender-neutral "two spouses"). The Coalition for Family went public in 2013 when it opposed an individual MP's legislative initiative in support of civil union and has since grown into a powerful advocacy actor that brings together over 45 various citizens' associations and federations of different religious backgrounds (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, inter-confessional), as well as seemingly secular parents' associations, including parents of children with disabilities.

The Coalition has powerful allies in the Orthodox Church, as well as a number of neo-protestant churches whose number, membership, and political influence has been growing rapidly over the past two decades, mostly through humanitarian missionary projects initated upon the fall of Ceausescu, brokered by Romanian ex-pats in the United States.

The homophobic referendum in Romania also has powerful and outward support from two leading US-based ultraconservative think tanks—ADF International and Liberty Counsel, which have provided legal expertise and national and international advocacy support. On April 25, 2017, the Coalition for Family and ADF International co-hosted the conference "Referendum for the Family: Analysis and Implications" at the Romanian Parliament in Bucharest, which gathered Members of Parliament across the political spectrum, academia, representatives from all Christian denominations (Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant), and the media. Both organizations also filed friend-of-the-court briefs with the Constitutional Court that argued for the referendum to be allowed to proceed.

In early 2018, the campaigning in favor of the homophobic referendum in Romania was also publicly supported by a number of European anti-gender activists connected with the European Dignity Watch, including the Croatian leader of the equivalent referendum held in 2013.

Another model is that in addition to forming NGOs, they also establish political parties. We see this in Croatia where the main fundamentalist NGO In the Name of the Family established the political party Project Homeland. The party didn't achieve any significant election gains at both national and local elections. Finally, more and more infiltration/influence into the mainstream conservative parties has been observed—mainstream conservative parties are becoming increasingly vulnerable to fundamentalist infiltration.

f) Media and social networks

Given the global infotainment approach to media content production, mainstream media provides considerable space to Christian fundamentalists. This includes coverage of their events (e.g., Walk for Life) or in the form of media debates and talk shows with fundamentalists confronting their opposition. In an environment with so much media coverage, their positions are amplified and their discourse is normalized as part of a pluralistic debate in a democratic setting. Unfortunately, these types of sensationalized and televised debates do not allow for a structural discrediting of their pseudo-scientific arguments.

They are also skilled in media strategizing. **By establishing their own media (mostly news portals), they are producing and using fake news for defamation of their political opponents. In cooperation with groups from the United States, they host "international experts" as distinguished guests of their conservative events/ festivals and present them in the media as top experts for sexuality, Christian rights, children's rights, or similar**. Many media, but also political institutions are just transferring the news, without checking the background of "distinguished expert guests from the United States".

Their special focus is also on social networks (Facebook, Twitter), where they have very active organizational, but also private profiles, spreading the (fake) news produced on their media portals.

g) Transnational collaborations

Close collaboration across Europe and with US-based groups has been well documented. Željka Markić, the leader of the Croatian homophobic referendum initiative, is one of the trainers at the

In an environment with so much media coverage, their positions are amplified and their discourse is normalized as part of a pluralistic debate in a democratic setting.

recently initiated European Advocacy Academy This is a capacity-building platform for fundamentalist activists from Europe. Markić is also working outside of Croatia: she has released manipulative video messages to "the citizens of Romania" regarding an upcoming homophobic referendum. Mutual support between individuals, groups, and collectives is a strong part of the long-term strategy of fundamentalist movements.

h) Attacking the educational system

Finally, Eastern Europe seems to have perfected the concept of the "4-14 window," designed in US Christian fundamentalists' circles. It targets children between the ages of 4 and 14, when they are most susceptible and most easily converted. It also targets public schools for their after-school programs because at this young age children are unable to discern between teachers and other authority figures in a school setting. **In Eastern European countries, policy-makers have made this even easier. As part of the nation-states' building projects, which included important roles for religion and religious institutions, religious education became part of the formal state education system, including in Croatia, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania.**

This granted unrestricted access of religious dogma to children in their formative years. Although optional, religious education is attended in high numbers, which probably helps explain why faith-minded urban youth are becoming the voices of the fundamentalist movement. Today's 30-year-olds have been socialized in environments where the only value system they have been systemically exposed to is that of their religions. This is in strong juxtaposition to corrupt political elites and ill-functioning political and social institutions in their societies to which they have been exposed through the media and everyday life.

CASE STUDY 3: THE OPPOSITION ACTORS TO SRR AND SOGI RIGHTS IN AFRICA

By Kapya Kaoma

3.1 CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM, AND CATHOLIC. THE PROBLEMS OR POWER OF NUMBERS

Within 100 years, almost 500 million Sub-Saharan Africans have become Christian, with over 20 percent identifying as Pentecostals. In 1910, for example, 10 million Africans were Christians. By 2025, over 633 million Africans will be Christian. Muslims "increased more than 20-fold, rising from an estimated 11 million in 1900 to approximately 234 million in 2010." This number changes to 429 million Muslims if we add 195 million in North Africa. Islam is projected to grow by nearly 60 percent in the next 20 years. By 2030, Africa will be home to 639 million Muslims.

In Africa, Christianity and Islam may conflict with traditional religions, yet both religions benefit from the African religious heritage. Anti-gay religious and political leaders, for example, appeal to the traditional worldviews in their opposition to sexual plurality… Despite their antagonistic relationship and major theological differences, these religions have agreed that homosexuality is not just un-African but un-Christian and un-Islamic.

That within 110 years most Africans identify as either Christian or Muslim testifies to the growing influence of global religion.

However, the growth of these religions is religiously explained. Christianity and Islam may conflict with traditional religions, yet both religions benefit from the African religious heritage. Anti-gay religious and political leaders, for example, appeal to the traditional worldviews in their opposition to sexual plurality. To some extent, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah attested to in the Bible (Genesis 18–19) and the Qur'ān (Qur'ān 26) sacralizes, localizes, and modernizes anti-gay positions. The question of Islam's relationship with African Christianity and its influence on sexual politics in Africa is beyond this study. Nonetheless, protective homophobia unites both religions. In short, despite their antagonistic relationship and major theological differences, these religions have agreed that homosexuality is not just un-African but un-Christian and un-Islamic.

The prodigious growth of Christianity and Islam has increased religious fundamentalism on the continent. If Islamic fundamentalists are attempting to enshrine Shari'a laws in national constitutions, Christian leaders are equally demanding that "biblical laws" become the laws of the land.

Paradoxically, since religious laws are assumed to be unchallengeable and unchangeable, fundamentalists view the progress in sexual rights as an attack on religion—the same argument advanced by US Christian anti-gay proponents. In partnership with politicians and foreign allies, African religious leaders are mobilizing their followers to oppose sexual rights, which they perceive as both evil and against African social and religious norms. This opposition is embedded in religious, cultural, and postcolonial predispositions.

Christianity has global outreach as its goal—thereby connecting peoples who otherwise would be foreigners. Theologically, the Christian doctrine of oneness in Christ suggests *globality*. In this regard, the shrinking of the world into a global village—whereby local faith communities are linked to other global communities—accords Christianity an added advantage, as it falls within its belief system. As in other cases of globalization, however, the global North and specifically the United States (despite being a minority in world Christianity) has an overwhelming influence on African Christianity.

The examination of African Christian opposition to homosexuality has centered on Evangelicals and Protestants. Yet, the Vatican, Roman Catholic bishops, and para-church organizations are equally active participants in Africa's sexual politics. Considering this, in the following pages, I will introduce an analysis of the leading religious actors and their main strategies and discourses defending an agenda that opposes the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights in Africa.

a) The Catholic Church

The election of Pope Francis to replace Pope Benedict XVI suggested a major shift in the Vatican's opposition to sexual and reproductive rights. "If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge him?" Pope Francis asked in July 2013. On his September 2015 official visit to the United States, Pope Francis did not only speak at the Pontifical Council for the Family's *World Meeting of Families* in Philadelphia but also met with a gay couple (one of them was his former student) in Washington, DC. However, as the *New York Times* reported, the Pontiff also privately met with Kim Davis (a US county clerk in Kentucky who refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples despite the court order).

In November 2015, Pope Francis toured Africa. Despite the growing demonization of and violence directed at sexual minorities, the Pontiff did not utter a word on sexuality during the African tour. In June 2016, however, Pope Francis called on Christians and the Roman Catholic Church to ask for forgiveness from gays "for the way they had treated them".

The Vatican's opposition to gender theory directs the contradictory nature of Pope Francis's attitudes toward sexual minorities and trans and intersex persons, who he once compared to nuclear weapons.

As Cardinal Bergoglio in Argentina, Pope Francis described same-sex marriages as a "destructive pretension of God's plan" aimed at destroying divine image: man and woman. As Pope, he reiterated this position in his address to the Colloquium Humanum in Rome.

Unlike many African churches, the Vatican accepts the biological existence of sexual minorities "through the centuries" (Catechism, par. 2357), and claims to oppose "unjust discrimination" against LGBTI persons (Catechism, par. 2358). The Vatican's 2003 C*onsiderations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons,* however, encouraged politicians to safeguard "public morality" by protecting the youth from "erroneous ideas" which approve of same-sex unions, and adoption of children by same-sex couples. In *Amoris Laetitia,* Pope Francis views homosexuality as being forced on developing nations by the donor community (AL Par. 251).

Pope Francis's opposition to gender theory resurfaced in 2016 during his meeting with Bishops from Poland. He complained that due to the ideology of gender, children "are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching this? Because the books are provided by the persons and institutions that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this [is] terrible!"

The Pontiff's position is shared by Roman Catholic bishops and priests—with the support of the US Roman Catholic Right—at the forefront of homophobia. After the passage of Nigeria's anti-gay law in 2014, Roman Catholic Bishops commended President Goodluck Jonathan. Ugandan Roman Catholic bishops also thanked President Yoweri Museveni for assenting to the anti-homosexuality bill in 2014, which sought to expand the criminalization of homosexuality. In Cameroon, Victor Tonyé Mbakot, the Archbishop of Yaoundé, and Cardinal Christian Wiyghan Tumi mobilized the anti-homosexual and anti-abortion crusade, which catalyzed the public externalization of homosexuality and abortion.

While the Vatican claims to oppose the criminalization of sexual minorities across the continent, Roman Catholic bishops have been at the forefront of criminalization of same-sex unions. It is tempting to treat such statements as oppositional to the Vatican's stance on homosexuality. For the Vatican to request politicians to oppose same-gender rights while opposing all forms of violence and unjust discrimination is an oxymoron.

World Congress of Families
The Case of Kenya

According to Case, the Vatican's goal in sexual politics is to influence public policy—something reflected in Kenya's National Family Promotion and Protection Policy (NFPPP), spearheaded by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. Eight Roman Catholic clergy and several Protestant and evangelical pastors were among those who drafted the NFPPP. Intended to oppose sexual and gender rights, the September 2016 draft presented at the US-based World Congress of Families conference in Nairobi, Kenya, repeatedly cites the Vatican's statements without saying so.

The employment of the Vatican's teachings in what is meant to be a secular policy is an excellent example of how the Roman Catholic Church is purposefully driving its conservative agenda in Africa. Like the US Christian Right, the Vatican political project is to ensure that its religious views become the basis for secular law and policy. It is this agenda that Pope Francis is driving while publicly issuing what appear to be progressive views. But the Kenyan case also illustrates how homosexuality unites various Christian traditions—it knows no denominational or religious boundaries.

b) Protestant Christianity

The 1998 Lambeth Conference (global gathering of Anglican/Episcopal bishops) at the University of Kent, England, set in motion the Christian debates on human sexuality. I still visualize the drama that took place outside the Conference Hall as Nigerian Bishop Emmanuel Chukuma attempted to exorcise the demons of homosexuality from an English gay rights activist. Since then, Anglican bishops from Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, South Sudan, Burundi, and Rwanda, with links to the US Christian Right, have viciously opposed homosexuality.

African mainline Protestant churches monitor developments on sexual rights in the Global North. The 2003 consecration of an openly gay Episcopal Church bishop in the United States further catalyzed religious opposition to homosexuality and destabilized global Protestant Christianity at many levels. The paradigm shift on homosexuality in US Christianity led to cutting ties with African Protestant churches in the Anglican Communion and the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. The severed relationships, however, were replaced with new ties to like-minded US conservative churches.

But they also consider the approval of same-sex relations as spiritual betrayal. Apart from criticizing Global North Christianity for bringing the "anti-gay" gospel to Africa only to reject it, Archbishop Orombi of Uganda described homosexuality as "evil, abnormal, and unnatural as per the Bible. It is a culturally unacceptable practice."

Following the April 24, 2015, court ruling for gay rights advocacy groups to formally register in Kenya, Anglican Archbishop Eliud Wabukala objected that the judgment was "not only against Christianity but also against Muslims' teachings and traditions." Wabukala went on to argue that the Kenyan society is organized around "family units" as opposed to "gay rights groups." Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria described "gays as lower than dogs."

Presbyterian Churches in Africa are also opposed to same-sex rights. In addition to David Githii of Kenya, in 2006, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frimpong Manson "condemned the shameful act of homosexuality and same-sex marriages" and "pledged the church's full support for government's prompt and bold stance to prevent this abomination from being encouraged on Ghanaian soil."

Bishop Emmanuel Martey, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, wrote, "The Presbyterian Church of Ghana sees same-sex marriages as ungodly, sinful, unrighteous and "Satan's deadly agenda." He further called "on all Christians in Ghana and all Ghanaians in general to 'wake up' against it [homosexuality]." Martey also announced the establishment of therapy centers for rehabilitations of sexual minorities—sharing the pseudo-science of reparative therapy.

Like Pope Francis, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) Opuni Frimpong warned the government to resist "foreign donors who set acceptance of homosexuality as a condition for donations and supports."

c) National Council of Churches on Human Sexuality

Despite the World Council of Churches Reference Group on Human Sexuality and Christian Councils of Churches in the West holding progressive views on homosexuality, the majority of African Councils of Churches are opposed to homosexuality. The Council of Churches in Zambia General Secretary Rev. Suzanne Matale argues that "sex is between male and female in a marriage context [sic] hence homosexuality should not be tolerated."

In Liberia, the Liberian Council of Churches endorsed statement blamed the deadly Ebola disaster that killed thousands in West Africa on "corruption and immoral acts" such as homosexuality. Jonathan Hart, Archbishop of the Internal Episcopal (Anglican) Province of West Africa, Lewis Zeigler, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church of Liberia, Kortu Brown, the Bishop of the United Methodist Church, and over 100 Protestant and Evangelical/Pentecostal religious leaders signed on to the statement.

Like Pope Francis, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) Opuni Frimpong warned the government to resist "foreign donors who set acceptance of homosexuality as a condition for donations and supports." The CCG argues that the bible has "catalogued the punishments for sexual sins including excommunication and even death."

d) Evangelical Fellowship/Pentecostal churches and sexual politics

Ninety-eight percent of African evangelical leaders are opposed to homosexuality. All leading African Pentecostal and evangelical pastors share this opposition. **Because churches compete for public legitimacy, homosexuality becomes an important path to national and to some extent global fame. On the social front, however, the legalism that characterizes African evangelicalism blocks any discussion on homosexuality and abortion rights.**

The growth of evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity vis-à-vis the opposition to homosexuality is visible on the continent. Since the 1970s, American-founded churches have experienced rapid growth. With this increase comes political power—making the evangelical/Pentecostal pastors critical to national politics. Like their Protestant sisters, African evangelical/Pentecostal religious leaders' involvement in sexual politics is driven by their hermeneutics (biblical interpretation) as well as shifts on homosexuality in the West.

Both local and global socio-theological and political factors influence this objection. In "The homosexual agenda,"

Zambian Pastor Conrad Mbewe employs cultural, religious and postcolonial predispositions on sexuality. He describes homosexuality as "abnormal" and "irrational," a Western import, and contrary to African "cultural and Christian values." "Sex is not only for pleasure," he maintains. "It is also for procreation, taking us on the road of partnership in parenting, as we fulfill God's cultural mandate to fill the earth and subdue it." Mbewe has links to Western conservative churches but nonetheless views sexual rights advocates as being paid to promote homosexuality. The accusation of Western funding for sexual rights activism is highlighted in Africa's sexual politics. Behind it is the claim that sexual minorities are paid recruiters of people into homosexuality. Since US conservatives also make this claim, their sister churches share this position.

But Mbewe's opposition to homosexuality is also informed by the Global North acceptance of homosexuality, which he views as a spiritual betrayal:

> ***"It was the missionaries who taught us that marriage comprised one man and one woman for life, but now their own kith and kin are totally defacing this concept…"*** Mbewe also links homosexuality to abortion rights: "***It was the missionaries from the West who stopped us from sacrificing our babies, but now millions of babies are being slaughtered in the West in their mother's wombs.*** **As for tattooing, don't even talk about it**."

Similarly, Ugandan pastor Ssempa links his opposition to homosexuality to abortion rights. Specifically, he accused the Obama administration of promoting the gay agenda by funding "the daily butchering" of "innocent babies... in the abortion industry."

The similarities between Ssempa's and Mbewe's characterization of abortion, namely "butchering" and "being slaughtered," is telling. The choice of words, the conflation of homosexuality with abortion and the "homosexual agenda" are now established mantra in African cultural politics. Like the Kenyan policy, these pastors do not cite the sources of such ideas. To the African audience, however, such claims are of African origin. Again, this is another example of how the US culture wars influence and inform sexuality disputes in Africa.

International networks— International oppositional frames

The links between abortion and SOGI Rights. The Case of Uganda

In early March 2009, Uganda hosted the Stephen Langa-led Family Life Network's (FLN) organized "Seminar on Exposing the Homosexuals Agenda" that resulted in the drafting of the *Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009*—which was signed into law in February 2014 but ruled unconstitutional the same year. With the mission of "restoring traditional family values and morals in Uganda," FLN partnered with three US-based anti-gay advocates—Pastor Scott Lively of Abiding Truth and Defend the Family, Don Schmierer of the now disbanded ex-gay group Exodus International (after its leader confessed that reparative therapy or healing of homosexuals had adverse consequences on sexual minorities), and Caleb Lee Brundidge of the International Healing Foundation. Among the participants were the country's high-profile religious leaders, parliamentarians, police officers, teachers, and concerned parents. During his presentation, Lively highlighted the claim that gays had a global agenda to destroy the family. Legalizing homosexuality, he reasoned, is at par with legalizing the "molestation of children or having sex with animals." Like Mbewe, Lively disputed the human rights position as "absolutely wrong." As for abortion, Lively presented it as "a product of the gay philosophy." In line with William Martin's claim about the Christian Right's distrust of the United Nations, Lively accused the United Nations of being controlled by gays—"Nobody has been able to stop them so far," he claimed, "I'm hoping Uganda can."

Lively also met with Ugandan lawmakers and government officials, some of whom would draft the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2009. The Bill sought to ban public advocacy for sexual rights and demanded the death penalty in some cases for same-sex intimate relations. On March 10, 2009, Lively explained the purpose of his trip on his Defend the Family blog: "The campaign was to teach about the 'gay' agenda in churches, schools, colleges, community groups, and in Parliament . . . The international 'gay' movement has devoted a lot of resources to transforming the moral culture from a marriage-based one to one that embraces sexual anarchy.… Our campaign was like a nuclear bomb against the 'gay' agenda in Uganda."

A week later, Lively's PowerPoint presentation became the basis for the FLN's "strategic meeting on combating homosexuality," during which the idea of lobbying for a new anti-gay law was born. After listening to participants' complaints against the government's failure to aggressively combat homosexuality, Charles Tuhaise, Principal Research Officer at the Parliament of Uganda, revealed that Lively's meeting with parliamentarians was highly influential. In his words, "[The parliament] feels it is necessary to draft a new law that deals comprehensively with the issue of homosexuality and ... takes into account the international gay agenda.... Right now, there is a proposal that a new law be drafted." Aside from Lively personally reviewing

the anti-gay bill and communicating with Ugandan lawmakers, the US anti-gay campaigners' language characterized the Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009. Despite international outrage to the bill, it was passed in parliament in 2013 and signed into law in February 2014. It was later struck down on technical grounds in August 2014 after human rights advocates went to court.

e) Homosexuality and Islam in sub-Saharan Africa

African Christians are highly suspicious of Islamic continental ambitions and vice versa. In sexual politics, however, they are bedfellows. While Christians negatively perceive Islamic demands for the *Shariazation* of national constitutions, the Christianization of African constitutions are an assumed public good. In 2010, for example, aided by American anti-gay and anti-abortion civil society organizations, Kenyan Christians demanded the removal of Islamic *kadhis* courts from the new constitution, while insisting on the inclusion of Christian "traditional family values" in the same document. **Muslims are wary of the rising power of fundamentalist Christian organizations backed by American Christians; nonetheless, they partner with Christians in their opposition to homosexuality. Since Islamic fundamentalists equally view the West as a threat to their global ambitions, on issues of human sexuality, Islam and African Christianity are agreed—homosexuality is a threat to their respective religio-cultural values.**

In Uganda, Muslims were part of the Pastor Ssempa-led "Taskforce against Homosexuality." Also, they called for the death penalty for gays, reminiscent of the US pastor's demands to fence off all gays until they die off. Mufti Sheikh Ramathan Shaban Mubajje asked President Museveni to round up all gays and dump them on an island in Lake Victoria until they starve to death. In 2011, Sheikh Mohammed Khalifa of the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya demanded the death penalty for gays. Writing about Kenya, Ndzovu states, "there is a consented effort by Muslim religious leaders to ensure that homosexuality is not acknowledged in society."

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The Muslim Association of Malawi did the same. Specifically, Muslim Association of Malawi Secretary General Dr. Salmin Omar Idrussi argued that gays "need to be handed [the] death penalty as a way of making sure that the issue is curbed". In 2016, 17 Senegalese Islamic associations demanded tougher sentences against homosexuality. Similarly, in both Nigeria and Uganda, anti-gay laws were backed by both religions.

Islam is a global religion—thus the negative perception of sexual minorities in Islamic nations is equally exported to Africa. For example, fundamentalist Islamic Middle East cultures sanction the execution of gays. Like President Mugabe, Iranian Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi-Amoli argues that "homosexuals are inferior to dogs and pigs." Aside from describing Western leaders who support homosexuals as "lower than animals," he argues, "Even animals ... dogs and pigs don't engage in this disgusting act [homosexuality], but they [Western politicians] pass laws in favour of them in their parliaments."

Similarly, Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi of the Islamic Society of North America terms "homosexuality is a moral disorder. It is a moral disease, a sin, and corruption... No person is born homosexual, just like no one is born a thief, a liar or murderer." Such claims are prominent in US Christian anti-homosexuality literature. As Herman argues, the Christian Right views homosexuality as "a sin akin to adultery—individuals are no more 'born gay' than they are born adulterers." This ideological unity may explain the partnership between Christian and Islamic religious leaders in sexual politics.

3.2 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

As pointed out above, **the influence of Global North Christianity on Africa dates to early missionary activities. Since then, the Anglican Church, Roman Catholic Church, and now various US-born Pentecostal Churches have exported hymnals, religious rituals, dressing codes, liturgies, and theologies to Africa in the name of Christian missions.** Although the exportation of Western cultural values to non-Western cultures can be contested as imperialism, in missiological terms, such exportations are considered a divine-sanctioned duty (Matt 28: 19-20). Across Christian traditions, participating in the Creator's mission (*missio Creatoris Dei*) is understood as sharing financial and spiritual resources as well as ideologies beyond local borders. With this conviction comes ideological exchanges—thus fueling the religious fundamentalist agenda.

Kalu agrees with Pearce in his study of African Pentecostalism, which he argues benefits from both internal and "external intervention and spiritual flows."[111] Aside from some African Initiated Churches, Kalu's point applies to Roman Catholics and Protestants alike. **Through the process of *glocalization*, African Christianity transforms and domesticates useful US conservative tactics and ideologies to serve locally defined political ends, while increasing its visibility in national politics.** Even though the influence of American conservatives on African Christianity has attracted scholarly debates,[112] the US conservatives understand their

111 Kalu, O. (2008). *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 190.

112 Maxwell, D. (2006). *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism & the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*. Oxford: James Currey; Ranger, T.O. (2008). *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press. The Daily Observer, Christian Leaders Say God Is Cursing Nation With Ebola Because Gays. Available at: http://joemygod.blogspot.com/2014/08/liberia-christian-leaders-say-god-is.html; Kaoma, K. (2009). *Globalizing the Culture Wars: U.S. Conservatives, African Churches, and*

Due to their vast resources and infrastructure— TV, radio, books, and schools—the US conservative missionaries have dominated the postcolonial mission field, thereby influencing local Christian expressions and politics.

involvements as Christian missions. Due to their vast resources and infrastructure—TV, radio, books, and schools—the US conservative missionaries have dominated the postcolonial mission field, thereby influencing local Christian expressions and politics.

The social movement to police sexuality is not accidental but is part of the organized conservative political project. As Pastor Lively showed, ideologically, to the US Right, homosexuality is sinful and a chosen lifestyle. If "love the sinner and hate the sin" speaks to the sinfulness of homosexuality, reparative therapy speaks to a chosen behavior.

Furthermore, **the Christian Right is highly suspicious of the United Nations, European Union, and the World Council of Churches due to their progressive human rights agenda. This conviction drives US Christian Right global activism.**

Often protective homophobia stems from various beliefs among them, the recruitment hypothesis. Anti-gay activists share the theory that homosexuality grows with recruitment—thus, the opposition is interpreted as protecting children and Africa. This opposition, however, is planted in the Bible, the Koran, and a romanticized unadulterated cultural identity. These beliefs are presented as one—hence, they carry sacred, religious, political, cultural, and neo-colonial overtones.

Homophobia. Somerville: Political Research Associates.

African religious leaders conflate homosexuality with same-sex marriages. **By overemphasizing marriage over human rights, anti-gay advocates have managed to avoid discussing the issue of violence directed at sexual minorities. Here, international and local human rights organizations need to find a working strategy that emphasizes the humanity of sexual minorities.**

Although African religious leaders' views on homosexuality are diverse, they appeal to sacred texts as well as global developments in their contestation of sexuality. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is highly pronounced by Muslim and evangelical/Pentecostal leaders—inviting the death penalty as punishment for homosexuality.[113] This story, one can safely argue, is the key interpretive lens among Islamic and Evangelical/Pentecostal religious leaders in Africa.

Finally, African Christianity believes that the "global homosexual agenda" exists and must be disrupted. Since religious leaders do not make laws, they push politicians to oppose homosexuality and commend governments' efforts when they do so. Like the Vatican and Pope Francis, most religious leaders are mute on arrests of and violence directed at sexual minorities—who are purposely considered criminals as opposed to innocent victims. In the globalized world, however, violence against and arrests of sexual minorities attract international outrage.

113 Ndzovu, H. J. (2016). "Un-natural, un-African, and unIslamic: The Three pronged onslaught undermining homosexual freedom in Kenya." In van Klinken, A. and Chitando, E. (eds.) *Public Religion and the Politics of Homosexuality in Africa*. London: Routledge.,78-91.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

The data analyzed in this report on the main dimensions of conservative religious activism demonstrates that actors and strategies have certain shared patterns despite regional differences. Those patterns go beyond geographic, social, and cultural borders. Taking this into consideration, we will present some common points found in conservative religious activism in the three regions analyzed in the case studies. In addition, we propose some reflections to continue thinking and building together in support of sexual and reproductive democracy.

The growth of conservative evangelical sectors and interreligious alliances

The case studies on Latin America and Africa emphasize that several countries are undergoing changes in religious patterns. In both regions, Christian sectors—especially evangelical sectors—have been growing in recent decades. This is relevant to understand current sexual politics for two reasons. On the one hand, the evangelical sectors that have grown are the most conservative ones, that is, those that oppose SRR and SOGI rights. On the other hand, the strengthening of evangelicals has not implied a weakening of traditional churches like the Catholic Church in the sexual politics' struggles. On the contrary, the case studies indicate that Catholic and evangelical leaders have been able to overcome theological differences and power struggles, when facing SRR and SOGI rights. Sexual politics mobilized by feminist and LGBTI movements have found an organized opposition strengthened by interreligious alliances.

New frames for common agendas

Interreligious alliances have been possible not only because of a shared common conservative ideology about sexuality. This report also shows how religious conservatisms have created and intensified their frames to oppose SRR and SOGI rights in recent years. Narratives such as "gender ideology," a "death culture," or the "defense of traditional values" (African, Christian, etc.) work as strategies to position feminist and LGBTI claims as ideological discourses in favor of death or imperialism/ colonialism. But they also work as frames to build a common front to oppose everything and everybody they consider a common enemy, allowing them also to homogenize feminist and LGBTI movements as two sides of the same coin. As a consequence, the idea that SRR and SOGI rights are ideology, death, colonization, etc. allows them to have a common frame for their agendas overcoming historical tensions among some churches and religions.

The NGO-ization process

Focusing on the main conservative actors and strategies, the analysis of the international arena and the three case studies put emphasis on the growth and power some conservative organizations have been gaining, nationally and internationally

The presence of these actors has not only opened new opportunities for conservative activism, detached from the traditional modus operandi of churches, but has also created new strategic tools, based on a diversification of identities that move through the public space.

This report has also focused on the multiplicity of actions these organizations lead in a coordinated way, going beyond national borders and influencing spaces such as the U.N., the O.A.S., the European Commission, etc. Among the organizations the case studies analyze, it is worth mentioning the actions and connections performed by the Alliance Defending Freedom, C-Fam, and Human Life International, among others.

To know how they work, their networks and national and international interactions are crucial to understanding how versatile actors opposing SRR and SOGI rights are, and to understand their international campaigns.

The importance of the media

Conservative sectors in each region have historically developed public impact policies. Even though traditional influences persist, the case studies have shown a diversification of the channels conservative sectors use to expand their influence and mobilization, going from churches to political parties. Their messages have been amplified through the use of traditional media but also through the creation of new means of communication of their own.

Together with that, it is worth mentioning the constant use and creation of online platforms as a way to promote specific campaigns against SRR and SOGI rights, such as the examples of HazteOir and CitizenGo. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are also an important tool for conservative sectors that use them to spread their messages and actions beyond geographical borders.

Global arenas for a common agenda

A feature that the three case studies also show is how conservative religious actors organize international conferences and meetings where different religions gather to design common agendas. Conferences such as the World Congress of Families or the Hemispheric Congress of Pro-Life Parliamentarians are key to coordinate actions and current and future conservative agendas.

Paying close attention to these international events could be

a window of opportunity to analyze and identify how global agendas are built in a coordinated way among conservative actors. These agendas are operationalized later in national settings. Attention to those conferences is also highly important to identify intersectional and interreligious alliances working against SRR and SOGI rights.

Some reflections to continue promoting SRR and SOGI rights

Throughout this report, we have sought to describe and analyze, through the use of diverse and reliable sources, the complex ways in which religious conservatisms are currently operating at global and local levels. The information contained in this report shows how these sectors can not be thought as a static set of homogeneous actors. Their capacity to adapt has allowed them to transcend national and regional borders, as well as to establish alliances with highly varied political sectors (from neo-fascist groups to anti-colonial leaders). We are living an era in which the achievements in matters of SRR and SOGI rights are threatened by a highly organized activism, but also strikingly diverse and complex, which acts in multiple arenas and use different strategies.

One of the central questions that emerge when observing the contemporary panorama refers to the role of religion in sexual politics debates. The data analyzed throughout this report show that religion continues to play a central role in the ways in which sexuality and rights in general are configured. In this sense, one of the challenges that arises for those of us who seek to defend SOGI and SRR rights is to define what role we should give to religious expressions in our struggle.

This scenario highlights a series of challenges for the community of grantmakers committed to pluralism and the expansion of rights and democracy. The emerging possibilities are diverse. Should we focus only on seeking the separation of religion and politics, and promote the secularization of our societies in order to ensure a full sexual democracy? Or should we be able to give greater prominence to religious expressions and pluralist faith communities in the struggle for SOGI and SRR rights, showing that religion is not always synonymous with conservatism and backlash? We can not respond univocally to these questions in this space, but we hope that this report will contribute to further work on these strategic questions. Our commitment is to think collectively of new ways of building a future that, far from restricting and closing, gives greater possibilities for the free, plural and democratic development of bodies and subjectivities.

About Global Philanthropy Project

Global Philanthropy Project (GPP) is a collaboration of funders and philanthropic advisors working to expand global philanthropic support to advance the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people in the Global South and East. Established in 2009, GPP's 19 member organizations include many of the leading global funders and philanthropic advisors for LGBTI rights. As the first international cohort of LGBTI funders, GPP is internationally recognized as the primary thought leader and go-to partner for donor coordination around global LGBTI work.

Our Goals:

1. Cultivate and deepen the knowledge, skills and capacity of GPP members and other funders in support of global LGBTI issues.

2. Increase the amount and influence the type of private and public foundation funding dedicated to global LGBTI issues.

3. Increase the amount and influence the type of multilateral and bilateral aid and development funding dedicated to global LGBTI issues.

4. Increase the amount and influence the type of philanthropic giving from individual donors dedicated to global LGBTI issues.

5. Increase the amount and influence the type of philanthropic giving from corporations dedicated to global LGBTI issues.

6. Build a dynamic, responsive, and effective structure enabling the GPP network.

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