

Article

Queer Politics: Re-Shaping the Politics of Church and State

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Abstract: The impact of LGBTQ+ individuals upon church institutions, state organizations, and political actors is expanding globally. Considerable policy objectives that protect queer people and families, most notably on marriage, trans rights, and non-discrimination policies, have been enacted in many nation states. However, although there are exceptions to queer political progress, broader church and government inter-actions have been altered as well, demonstrating a dynamic religious and political relationship. Far-right nationalists and traditional religious conservatives respond to queer influence by moving further to the right and using LGBTQ+ individuals and political groups as rhetorical and political targets to motivate their base. The result is a draconian environment for progressives inside these institutions. Also notable is the political power necessary to provoke this obsessive focus upon anything 'queer'.

Keywords: LGBTQ+; queer politics; queer theory; far-right nationalism



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1. Introduction

Church/State relationships are increasingly impacted by queer political activists and their subsequent political pressure. There is no better example of this burgeoning political influence than the responses coming from the Roman Catholic Church and the nationalist movements in Hungary and Poland. Queer activism has forced historically antagonistic political and religious organizations to adjust and re-focus their policies and political rhetoric to address the increasing visibility and growing influence of LGBTQ+ individuals. The result is often a movement to the right, that is, a response to queer pressure that can be seen in more restrictive political and religious policy positions, most often expressed in public statements that vilify and condemn queer people. This analysis examines how this LGBTQ+ pressure, access, and influence is growing and how this community is impacting Catholic and far-right organizations and political constructions that are categorically opposed to queer existence and power.

Traditional political and religious organizations are confronting active and financially supported LGBTQ+ groups and individuals within many nations. Activists increasingly react to local political, religious, social, and economic systems as queer identified individuals in public spaces who create considerable social disruption. Queer groups are also increasingly prominent. Additionally, at the same time, international organizations like the European Union and the United Nations have placed 'gay rights' into the category of 'human rights', leading some experts to report that, "Although LGBTQ+ people in every region of the world face marginalization and repression, their human rights have steadily advanced" (Angelo and Bocci 2021).

Ubiquitous access to social media has also advantaged the impact of queer organizations, a group that crosses gender, class, nationality, ethnicity, and religious practices. There is a recognizable solidarity shared among queer individuals, at least at the level of demand for personal safety and demands for legal recognition. It is possible to consider that these queer people form a global citizenship, and that financial, theoretical, and legal support is readily available even reaching into closed political communities (Poushter and Kent 2020, pp. 2–7).

Within the context of the LGBTQ+ social and political agendas is the contemporary example of queer activism competing with far-right conservatives that started in 2019. At that time, Malgorzata ‘Margot’ Szutowics and Zuzanna ‘Kania’ Madej founded *Stop Bullshit* (Stop Bzdurom) in Poland. They engaged in direct actions opposing the government’s homophobic policies and statements, forcing a nationwide discussion about LGBTQ+ people.

There was widespread media attention to this debate which continues today, shaping political realities at all levels of Polish society (Applebaum 2018, p. 38). The response to this activism was swift and punitive. Josephine Huetlin writes that, “Since its 2015 election victory, Poland’s Right-Wing Law and Justice Party has leveraged prejudice against the LGBTQ community for political gain’ and that, ‘President Andrzej Dudza described so-called LGBTQ ideology as “a kind of neo-Bolshevism”’ (Huetlin 2020).

Clearly Poland, like Hungary and the Vatican, are pre-occupied with gay rights, a position that is illustrative of the evolving dynamics that govern church and state relationships. Theirs is a type of symbiotic relationship that is based on a threat to traditional views of order and human nature.

A more precise explanation is that the way queer-based political organizations reinterpret and challenge the meaning of traditional heteronormative institutions. Queer theory challenges historically normed understandings of gender, marriage, and family relationships, the most basic blocks of any civil society. Queer ideas destabilize established norms regarding human nature and human society. What is not recognized by established religion and far-right groups is that the challenges come from individuals that have experienced abandonment from families, suffering, and political oppression and discrimination because of dogmatic definitions of identity and relationships.

Queer theoretical ideas are premised upon relativity and the idea that all reality is predicated upon social construction. The perspective is notable for framing critical questions and active participation in politics as outsiders. Queer critiques reveal that established frames of civil order create bias and privilege. Conservative elites, particularly historically important civil and religious elites, find their power and legitimacy threatened by queer ideas and political actions. The response is to resort to authoritarian methods of social control to stop the promulgation of LGBTQ+ ideas and to delegitimize queer activists.

Why does queer activism and LGBTQ+ people evoke such powerful opposition? And what objectives are sought by this expanding group? Three scholars, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick are foundational queer theorists. They provide a baseline of information and scholarly insight for activists and academics as this community experiences and further experiments with queer power. Together they formulate a theoretical background that informs queer consciousness and the desire for internal acceptance, social recognition, and political rights. These theoretical ideas constitute the intellectual power that motivates the personal risks that activists take to advance queer rights. LGBTQ+ individuals have embraced the feminist notion that all politics are personal. These theorists and the ideas that they have refined are fundamental building blocks of identity and ultimately activism.

2. Queer Theory and Politics

Michel Foucault linked sexuality and knowledge with political power insisting that, ‘It is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that transverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge’ (Foucault 1990, introduction). This idea encourages an awareness that action and engagement in the life-and-death struggle of coming out, revealing identities and sexualities, creates power and subsequently changes what people can accept, learn, and understand. According to Foucault, awakening existential awareness literally transforms identity and creates a personality. Solidarity and community with other queer-identified people quickly follows as individuals recognize this epiphany in others.

‘The personal is political’ has long been considered a reality for outsider groups, particularly in second-wave feminist theory in the United States. It is the same for LGBTQ+ individuals. Politics start at the point of coming out. ‘Power knowledge’ happens as people stand against oppositional religious and cultural patterns, the queer person experiences a powerful tension between themselves and traditional heteronormative culture. Foucault identifies this struggle and the power that comes from it. The result is the creation of personal space for LGBTQ+ people to consider themselves and the law, even within hostile environments. Here is the theoretical material for how important the process of coming out is to queer people. Coming out is a political act, often met with violence, and it flows into subsequent political organizations and group identity.

Simple arithmetic evidence of the political potential of coming out can be measured by the numbers of queer-identifying individuals in the world. The UCLA Williams Institute in the School of Law cites a range of 5.6–1.2% of any general population is LGBTQ+ (Gates 2011, p. 3). Conservatively speaking, 390 million people that identify as queer, at various stages of public expose, will challenge the patriarchy and, following Foucault’s ideas, create new forms of power. Established political organizations are forced to reckon with evolving and challenging power environments. Queer power, therefore, is destabilizing to any group or association that considers itself part of a heteronormative power system. It is perhaps even more consequential to political actors and organizations that are in direct opposition to developing queer consciousness and subsequent activism.

Judith Butler’s ideas further clarify theoretical notions that destabilize heteronormative religions and states. She makes her argument, which will in turn trigger antagonists, focusing a critique upon claims of ‘natural’ and ‘timeless’ established patterns of power and governance, i.e., the *status quo*. Butler’s definition of queer political power rejects objectivity and emphasizes the relative, or as she writes, the performative aspects of identity. For Butler, there can be no universal claim sufficient to define the boundaries of gender and sexual identity. Rather, ideas related to identity is ever refining or evolving, and static ideas are artificial impositions of power placed upon human and communal experience. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) refines the idea of performative identity, ‘Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies’.

This notion also applies to individual identity, particularly to dualistic interpretations of gender and the associated roles that these two groups perform in society. For Butler, every person is a variable project of self-creating. Gender is plastic (?), evolving from the repeated acts of individuals in private and in public (Butler 2021).

Self-awareness connects to actions which then combine and coagulate into a recreated way of thinking about the self and queer communities. Again, the politics of individual empowerment, the process of coming out, looms large here. Public identification as LGBTQ+ activates an awareness which multiplies, mutates, and expands with every action or choice. These identities clash with patterns of behavior recognized by organized religions and far-right political actors.

3. Transitioning Church-State Relations by Queer Activism

Traditional political and religious organizations have established power systems that fail to include newly-revealed queer identities. Where the individual was previously called and expected to practice a faith tradition, or to participate in civil society, today these demands are experienced as hostile, painful, and incongruent. People cast out of the groups where they have ancestral history seek others who have similar experiences and who are similarly identified. This combined awareness informs queer political behavior and the strategic political preferences of the queer community.

Butler’s language and organizing ideas are relatable to individuals who have been moved outside of normative political, social, and religious paradigms. LGBTQ+ people operate as ‘outsiders’ that form and organize because of a chosen identity. Queer identity

transgresses national boundaries and culture, an important geo-political reality and one that has resulted in antagonistic reactions from established powers and political actors as they seek to organize, control, or ‘police’ LGBTQ+ activities. Butler’s ideas directly threaten established powers and norms because compulsory frames fail to include the sort of evolution that is possible in the atmosphere of ever-evolving social construction.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick further defines queer identity and the potential for queer political behavior. Sedgwick argues that the heterosexual and homosexual divide is a central controlling factor in all modern Western identities and social organizations, not merely homosexual organizations. It is impossible to consider any aspect or question related to power and governance without a critical analysis of contemporary heterosexual and homosexual discourse. Sedgwick is ‘trying to make the strongest possible introductory case for a hypothesis about the centrality of this normally marginal, conceptually intractable set of definitional issues to the important knowledges and understandings of twentieth-century Western culture’ (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1990, p. 1). From this argument comes the insistence that the queer identity is not just a part of contemporary culture, rather it is fundamental to it. She writes, ‘Furthermore, in accord with Foucault’s demonstration, whose results I will take to be axiomatic, that modern Western culture has placed what it calls sexuality in a more and more distinctively privileged relation to our most prized constructs of individual identity, truth, and knowledge, it becomes truer and truer that the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms the other languages and relations by which we know’ (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1990, pp. 3–7).

Kosofsky Sedgwick focuses attention upon a ‘discursive definition’ of existential identities, national, and international politics. Relativity is not part of the canon of internal organization, so it is apparent from the start that the introduction of queer people and groups into pluralism or autocracy destabilizes established notions of security and governance. Queer individuals and theory threaten established norms related to human sexuality, marriage, the family, and what is understood and accepted as sacred, and from the queer outsider’s vantage point, this is precisely the intention and objective.

The impact of LGBTQ+ influence is most obvious in a review of how queer individuals and groups have impacted antagonistic systems of power, and not by making them more tolerant. Rather the change is measured in the vitriolic and convulsions within the institutions (Pietkiewicz and Kołodziejczyk-Skrzypek 2016, p. 1575). There are many political systems that oppose queer rights and recognition, but few match the level of the Roman Catholic Church, the nationalist parties, and political actors in Hungary and Poland. What is lost in the progress of LGBTQ+ rights are the contorted responses and backlashes emanating from them and their levels of religious and civil influence. The level of opprobrium is the point. It is indicative of burgeoning queer power to challenge the established legitimacy, authority, and policy positions that advocate for heteronormativity on critical levels of governance. Are elites in the Vatican and within the far-right political parties and governments in Poland and Hungary genuinely defending one view of human nature and human society as preferable, more virtuous? Or is the response to LGBTQ+ activism a tool to manipulate political circumstances in favor of established powers? These are impossible questions to answer. Motivation is a treacherous investigation. However, what can be established and demonstrated is that these same traditional elites use queer ideas and queer people to garner political and religious support.

There is likely no more audible sound in this cultural debate than the ‘dog whistle’ used by traditional elites against LGBTQ+ action and ideas. A brief examination of queer theory is illustrative of the force behind queer political activism and the basis for the vociferous response brought by far-right conservatives.

4. The Vatican Struggles with LGBTQ+ Power

Reflection upon the time committed and the content of the arguments made by officials in the Vatican to counter an increasingly normalized queer reality indicates an existential view that few political groups can match. Certainly, in the last twenty-five years, repro-

ductive rights, divorce, gay marriage, and LGBTQ+ ideas constitute a significant part of what the Vatican has felt compelled to address as part of its religious mission. Abortion and anti-gay are their top two", writes Duddy-Burke, he continues, "Not immigration, not poverty, not climate change, not racial justice—it's anti-abortion and not allowing the spread of 'deviant lifestyles'. It's a campaign against our community. It's written into their priorities" (Knoppow 2020, p. 4).

It is significant that the heightened concern with these issues match the development of science as a tool for understanding the human mind and body. Furthermore, Catholic Canon Law defines men and women as distinct and different. Interpretation and application of the binary in practice solidifies non-negotiable circumstances of gender (McDougall 2013, pp. 12–14). McDougall details the trail of evidence that creates resolute conceptions of gender aligned with a specific philosophical anthropology. Accepting contemporary psychological, sociological, biological evidence related to gender and sexual orientation undermines the authority of Catholicism and calls into question

Man and woman have been created, which is to say, willed by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. "Being man" or "being woman" is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator.²⁴⁰ Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity "in the image of God". In their "being-man" and "being-woman", they reflect the legitimacy and even its very existence Man Creator's wisdom and goodness. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994, p. 369)

The Catholic Catechism expresses absolute confidence in a dualistic interpretation of gender. The binary is enforced by law and tradition and the most powerful of allies: 2000 years of state-sponsored Christianity. European states are culturally Christian states. Accordingly, their secular statutes reflect complementary Catholic theological ideas. Castles and Flood confirm a distinctive relationship between the incidences of divorce in secular legal proceedings and the traditional context of European nations as cultural Christians (Castles and Flood 1991, p. 279). They discuss a 'family of nations' approach that enables a broad examination of influencing factors.

What is clear is that Catholicism is European in origin and its subsequent evolution. Colonization passed these secular and theological relationships onto disparate parts of the world. The result is an amazing fortress that protects ideas about the individual and even moves to enforce through repetition and political force constructions of human nature. These Catholic cultural, legal, religious, and economics are antithetical to queer identity, 'Christian's beliefs about conflict with sexual minorities are shaped by their understandings of Christian values, social change, interpretation of the Bible, and *in response to religious institutions* (emphasis mine)' (Wilkins et al. 2022, p. 73).

Clearly, the Roman Catholic Church has viewed the circumstances of LGBTQ+ individuals in unequivocal terms, 'Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus, the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994, p. 243). It is a challenge to imagine a more direct assault upon queer existence and queer activism. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church continues to reformulate itself by the seemingly constant preoccupation with contemporary cultural movements, notably gender political challenges advanced by LGBTQ+ individuals and political activity. Angela Coco examines 'conversations that are selected to illustrate different experiences of power relations—particularly different aspects of gender dynamics' (Coco 2013, p. 22). She concludes that there is a substantial history of challenges brought by critics. Although there is not the sort of radical transformation other political institutions have experienced, there is a wearing aspect that does change individuals within the Catholic hierarchy. Perhaps more important is the evolution within the Catholic laity. Decades of evidence demonstrates diverging practices of practicing Catholics, particularly around reproductive rights and tolerance of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Priests and ecclesiastical elites, however, maintain intense loyalty to the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the institutional Church. They see the impact of queer politics as a direct threat to their power, access, and prestige: ‘One reason high-status groups are likely more inclined to endorse zero-sum beliefs is precisely because of their position . . . to maintain their privileged positions—particularly if they are concerned that their status might change’ (Wilkins et al. 2022, p. 75). A persistent confrontation is present and certainly moves the issues brought by queer political activists into internal debates and subsequent decisions over a diverse area of Church policy impacting the laity. Queer politics ‘frame’ Catholic responses to many different policy objectives.

Considering what has taken place in the political positioning of practicing Catholics, it is obvious that despite official objections from Church officials, Roman Catholics are following secular trends of acceptance for queer people. Considering that since 1992 when 27% of American Catholics supported gay marriage to 2020 when 67% approve legal unions, it is apparent that vitriolic opposition coming from the Vatican has failed (Archer and McCarthy 2020, p. 3). Global data is equally revealing. Although there is greater variety explained by wealth, education and culture, there is a general trend towards approval for LGBTQ+ rights. This trend is particularly strong in former European colonies that are now independent countries (Poushter and Kent 2020, p. 4).

And still the official Church message remains the same and focuses intently upon resisting LGBTQ+ policy positions. Pope Benedict consistently spoke against forces challenging traditional and ‘natural’ family relationships. ‘Man and woman have been created . . . in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective begins as man and woman’. (Benedict XVI 2008, p. 3). Queer theoretical ideas and LGBTQ+ activists insist that the binary curtails identity and contorts all human relationships into a hierarchy where men function as ‘heads of the household’ and women become primarily ‘mothers’ and domestic workers. Benedict, like his contemporary predecessors and now, Pope Francis, vociferously disagrees, ‘In their ‘being-man’ and ‘being-woman’, they reflect the Creator’s wisdom and goodness’ (Benedict XVI 2008, para. 6).

The disconnect between officials in the Vatican and contemporary Catholics regarding the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church illustrates the impact of queer activism upon a political and religious institution entrenched in misogyny and homophobia. Despite the Church’s best efforts made to control human behavior and even scientific development, this political and religious institution has been forced to enforce patterns of oppression that go back centuries. The Catholic Church has become increasingly conservative to protect and preserve its traditional legitimacy and because of this, ever more disconnected from Western societies. The papacy of John Paul II and Benedict XVI are illustrative of that movement. Pope Francis makes more tolerant statements regarding queer people, but the official teaching of the Church has not budged. External queer political visibility remains a constant threat to Church policy and teaching. The evolving influence of queer political activism has not only threatened official communication coming from Catholic elites, but also the vital link of precedence. Realistically, because of prior teachings and papal encyclicals, the Vatican is unable to move on issues related to LGBTQ+ people. A shift of this magnitude would delegitimize the papacy itself.

‘Modern contemporary culture has opened new spaces, new forms of freedom . . . to enrich the understanding of this difference. But it has also introduced many doubts and much skepticism. For example, Pope Francis has recently called Europe and its theology “aged”. In addition, he recently said “I ask myself, if the so-called gender theory is not, at the same time, an expression of frustration and resignation, which seeks to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it. . . . ’ (Francis 2015, p. 2). So, acceptance grows among some practicing Catholics while the ‘official’ religious conversation coming from the Vatican continues to reject LGBTQ+ lives as fully expressive examples of human possibility. This creates confusion in the relationship between people in the pews and the hierarchy of the Church.

Queer activism has moved the Catholic Church further away from practicing Catholics in the West and in many other nations (Pew Research 2018, pp. 2–7). A chasm has expanded because the Vatican has retrenched into non-negotiable positions, reproductive rights, gender equality, and LGBTQ+ rights, which is in direct opposition to how many individuals live in the modern world. Visibility and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals result in greater contact and exposure, particularly at the most personal level possible: the family. From this perspective, it is unreasonable for someone to experience queer as ‘... an intrinsic moral evil; and thus, the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder ...’ (Polgar and Selling 2019, p. 44).

Evidence for this disconnect is found in the Catholics who disregard Vatican instruction on reproductive rights and reception of the sacraments, not to mention individuals leaving the Roman Catholic Church in the developed world (Jones and Dreweke 2011, pp. 3–6). Queer theory and queer people have contributed to a shift in a fundamental relationship between the Vatican and Catholic, Christian, and secular people. Equally significant is the influence that Queer advocacy has had upon nationalist far-right politicians and political parties.

5. Eastern Europe: A Transition of Church-State Relations

The influence upon former satellites of the Soviet Union by queer political activism and ideas is further evidence of the impact of these ideas upon antagonistic political systems and institutions. Perhaps the most comprehensive declaration indicating awareness and struggle is the ubiquitous disclaimer of all things queer as ‘Western’—‘Under the banner of ‘family values’, in 2020 Hungary banned adoption by same sex couples, barred transgender people from changing their legal gender and refused to ratify the Istanbul convention, which aims to protect women from violence’ (Reid 2021, p. 4). The preoccupation continued unabated in 2022 where homosexuality is equated with pedophilia in official party literature.

There is ample evidence of even more specific intimidation and subsequent political reactions. It is interesting to consider that such a small population of people can have this kind of effect upon established patterns of thinking and national power. Equally important is to reflect upon the dangerous, even predatory social and economic circumstances of queer citizens living in these areas who experience these ‘reactions’ in personal assault, imprisonment, and ostracization. “Individuals performing non-formative sexualities are thought to threaten this national narrative” in Eastern Europe (Mole 2016, pp. 99–121). This is carried out by undermining the patriarchal family, failing to adhere to national stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, confusing the public-private roles of men and women, undermining the nation’s internal homogeneity, and deviating from its shared norms, especially those derived from religious teaching (Mole 2016, pp. 99–121).

The relationship between practicing Catholics and the official teaching and communication coming from the Vatican is somewhat tangential. LGBTQ+ people living in Hungary and Poland as citizens and members of the community are subject to much greater personal risk and threat than rejection from a faith practice. Eastern European queer people are threatened by nationalist far-right ideology. It is quite likely that there is no ‘safe space’ for queer activism in public and private spaces (Wesolowsky 2021, p. 3). With such a firm control over citizens in Eastern Europe, it is instructive to see how much attention is given to the queer activism. Again, even these exceedingly homophobic governmental institutions are directly impacted by the existence of queer ideas and people.

There is a palpable mix of conservative Catholicism and nationalism in Eastern European nations, particularly Hungary and Poland. Clearly, there are oppositional liberal parties and constituencies and counter responses from intellectuals and secularists, but the ‘national identity’ constructed by a political elite and supported by both the Catholic Church as a national institution and particular priests is currently the most influential and engaged power. This narrative is extremely effective in shaping public policy and personal identity pushing queer individuals to the margins. The right in Poland, as an

example, ‘perceives both feminist and homosexual circles as a threat to the national identity associated with the Catholic religion’ (Żuk and Żuk 2020, p. 571). The far-right attempts to incorporate this religious/political construction of identity and public policy as a ‘natural’ and morally correct identity. Those that adhere to these ideas are not only good citizens; they are also good Poles. What is also clear is that the nationalist parties are using queer activists and ideas as the most pressing challenge to national success and human happiness.

‘The European Union won the right in February to deploy tough new powers that could deny both Poland and Hungary EU funding from its 1.8 trillion-euro budget . . . for allegedly violating the bloc’s democratic standards’ (Bodoni and Miller 2022, p. 1). Multiple efforts to avoid compliance with EU policy and law related to queer and gender human rights objectives is illustrative of the extent that these far-right nationalist political parties will take their respective nations. Resistance by LGBTQ activists is futile, moving the nationalist parties in a trajectory for stronger opposition.

The supposed threat brought by LGBTQ+ people provide the energy for the social, economic, and political activities of the far right. Are the far-right political elite honest participants in a nationalist socialization or are they grossly manipulating support understanding the power of the ‘queer menace’? It is difficult to tell what motivates far-right elites, but the evidence is overwhelming that they use these ‘enemies of the people’ to animate their political base, ‘Gender has become a line of political and ideological division between the nationalist, religious right and all the progressive environments in Poland’ (Żuk and Żuk 2020, p. 569). Gender is certainly coded to include all categories of identity outside of traditional understandings of ‘men’ and ‘women’. Adherence to traditional roles is convincing evidence of true and loyal Hungarians and Poles. Deviance from religiously informed gender roles takes on both an existential threat and public shaming, i.e., the person is morally deficient, and they infect society.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s Fidesz party, ‘has sought to steer public attention away from the nation’s economic problems and used stigmatized minority groups in Hungary as the source of these and other problems’ (Nunez-Mietz 2019, p. 545). These diversionary and scapegoating tactics are extraordinarily effective as they flow from a traditional patriarchy, heteronormativity, and Christocentrism.

A local and transnational queer presence is evidence enough for Orban and Kaczynski to recognize a foe that will ensure distinctions from a ‘traditional’ narrative sufficient to devolve into a parody of filth and Western debauchery. Ironically, an impressive collection of evidence exposes just how far along the LGBTQ+ movement has developed over the last fifty years. In this kind of autocratic extremism, queer people and queer ideas are significant and visible enough for violent projection, along with the shaping of a nationalist political narrative. Żuk and Żuk point this out in the suggestion that ‘a state’s approach to sexual minorities . . . can be a good illustration of the development of civil rights’ (Żuk and Żuk 2020, p. 566).

The extension of nationalistic rants into the categories long associated with fascist extremism, anti-abortion groups, feminists, Jews, reveals the development of queer identity beginning in the late 1960s in the United States. Religious orthodoxy is inextricably linked as well,

... in a country like Poland where is one of the most repressive anti-abortion laws in Europe . . . , the Catholic Church is highly influential and does not hide its political alliances with the nationalist right . . . the PiS leader . . . along with the Church, have been trying to carry out a ‘cultural counterrevolution’ since 2015 . . . the slogan of ‘the defense of the traditional family’ was part of this ideological right-wing narrative . . . This slogan made it possible to scare the public about the ‘gender ideology’. (Żuk and Żuk 2020, p. 567)

How successful would these far-right political elites be without queer activism? The exact measurement of this is beyond the scope of any study published at this time. However, the level of engagement and direct assault directed towards queer ideas and LGBTQ+ individuals within these states is irrefutable. Nationalist fervor depends upon ‘othering’

some group who becomes responsible for all that ails the community. Hannah Arendt in *Eichmann In Jerusalem* details that sort of activity in exquisite detail. This homophobic behavior continues in areas of the world where the stress of global economics, relative freedom of movement, and certainly access to information beyond the imagination of authoritarian elites of the twentieth century, expands. Actions, policy, and public statements expose the focused attention that authoritarians in Eastern Europe place upon queer political ideas. More noteworthy is that the consistency of messaging, attacking LGBTQ+ people, ideas, and activism, indicates a growing global influence.

Currently, Church-State relationships are changing as queer theory and queer people all over the world are finding personal and collective expression outside traditional gender narratives. The evidence of queer acceptance is becoming part of the philosophical liberalism associated with Western nations. Gay marriage as a public policy with legal standing illustrates how far along LGBTQ+ civil rights have moved in liberal societies. There are global exceptions to this progression and organized religion and far-right nationalists use the evidence of queer legal progress to provoke fear and to secure political power. Objectifying and criminalizing LGBTQ+ individuals is tragic, and these actions are also indicative of growing queer influence. Queer ideas and queer people are easy targets for those fearful of comprehensive shifts in human understandings about identity and sexual orientation. This political anxiety emanates from an awareness that global shifts of this sort alter predictable patterns of association, privilege, and power.

Former U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton, in December of 2011 declared in Geneva to the world's diplomatic community that 'gay rights are human rights'. This moment altered power differentials all over the world because even in those areas where this idea is most offensive, it became, nonetheless, real. As significant as the progress towards legal rights and cultural acceptance may be, it is equally important to examine the impact of LGBTQ+ individuals and groups upon conservative religious organizations and far-right nationalistic politics. These groups utilize queer ideas and people to secure political privilege and have moved increasingly toward more antagonism directed against queer ideas and LGBTQ+ individuals. Queer political and social power impacting antagonistic secular and religious organizations, demonstrate the perception and reality of the growing political influence and concomitant loss of Church relevance in a world where Catholic power is transitioning and waning.

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