Religion, Nationalism, and Homophobia. Poland and the United States in Comparison

FIU, March 9 2012
UNITED STATES OF HOMOPHOBIA

IT'S TIME TO LIFT THE BAN.
Towards LGBT-Rights Liberalization:

“Whether by supporting LGBT advocates marching in Belgrade, (...), or condemning a vile law under consideration in Uganda, we are committed to our friends and allies in every region of the world who are fighting for equality and justice.

These are not Western concepts; these are universal human rights.

(...) If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, know that the United States stands with you and we are unwavering in our commitment to ending this cycle of hate.”

Hillary Clinton on the “International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, May 17 2011

Homophobia + Anti-Gay Right Politics

1. Cultural embedded homophobia:
   => Public opinion

2. Institutional Homophobia:
   • Political / societal action against equal rights for LGBT
   • Focus “Same-Sex-Partnerships” (Civil Unions + Gay Marriage)
Explanation 1

Conservative / Fundamentalist Religion

- High religious belief + **practice**
- **Conservative + fundamentalist currents** promote homophobia

⇒ Source for *cultural homophobia*

⇒ Religious *ideology, not denomination matters!*
Explanation 2
Nationalism

- **Moderate Nationalism:** Strong but not necessarily exclusive sense of belonging to a nation

- **Radical Nationalism:** Part of right-wing ideology: exclusive understanding of belonging and of the nation
  - Patriarchal order = traditional gender-roles and family pattern
    => Homophobia
  - Homosexuality = „threat to national values“, „+ demography“
Explanation 3
Value Change + Threat Perception

Ongoing Liberalization...

The younger – urban – educated, the less homophobic

... can provoke anti-liberal reactions:

Eroding family-models + gender-roles as a “threat” parts of society in crisis

=> Open to religious fundamentalism, nationalism
Poland – United States 1

**Cultural Homophobia**

• (Still) divided nations: **PL ca. 65% / USA ca. 45% ↔ Gay marriage**

• Trend towards **more liberal** stances, different velocities

• **Highly religious societies**, high church-going frequency correlates with homophobic attitudes

• **Radical religious** (Catholic + Christian) **nationalism** as source
Poland overwhelmingly against gay-marriage

- 40% fully against
- 15% rather against
- 16% rather yes
- 9% definitely yes

(6/2011, CBOS)
United States

CNN 2010: first national poll on Gay Marriage:

"Do you think gays and lesbians should have a constitutional right to get married and have their marriage recognized by law as valid?"

• 52% replied "Yes"
• 46% replied "No"
• 2% had "No Opinion"

Wilcox/linda, 2011:

FIGURE 6.1

Changing support levels of religious groups on GLBT issues, 1988 and 2008

Institutional Homophobia on Civil Society Level

• Open or hidden religious “pro-family” organizations
• Christian nationalist groups

⇒mobilizing against gay-marriage: “marriage as union between man and woman”, “liberalist threat”
Poland: Institutional Homophobia – Civil Society:

Nationalist Catholic Radio Maryja
Poland: Institutional Homophobia
Civil Society

Nationalist “All Polish Youth”

“Why do we have to oppose the legalization of homosexual partnerships?”

“In defence of higher Law”
United States: Institutional Homophobia + Christian Nationalism

American Association for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property (Radical Catholic, Brazilian origin)

2011

Poland – United States 3
Institutional Homophobia in Politics

Morality policy seeking agendas:

• Morally “limited” liberal Centre-Left (Civil Union)
  – Defending human rights

• Morally restrictive Centre-Right + Radical Right
  – Successful mobilization for “defense of marriage”
United States
Still overwhelmingly restrictive (11/2011)

Winning the Freedom to Marry: Progress in the States

Source: http://www.freedomtomarry.org/states

Last Updated November 10, 2011
“Homosexuals in the Military

(...) The United States military service is an honorable vocation for honorable men and women. Marriage (...)”
Explaining Institutional Homophobia in PL + US = limping liberalization / restrictive legislation:

1. Similar Political Ideologies

2. Similar Patterns/Factors of Cultural Homophobia shaping Decision making:
USA: Gay Marriage on the Agenda

Restriction

• 1993: Supreme Court of Hawai: denied marriage license to homosexuals unconstitutional
• 1994: Hawai Legislature affirmed marriage for “man-women”
• 1996: Defense of Marriage Act (Clinton)
• 1998: Hawai voters rejected legalization of same-sex-marriages
USA

Liberalization:

• 2004: Massachusetts under equal-protection clause allowed
• 2009: Iowa and others
• 2011: Obama stopped defending Defense of Marriage Act
Explaining Cultural Homophobia in Poland + USA

- Context of global dialectic “liberalization - anti-liberal reactions”

- Similar anti-liberal religious ideologies (vs. “different confessions”)

- Similar degree of religious practice (middle-high): PO, voting

- Similar link between religion and nationalism...
Conclusion:
Twofold Role of Christian Nationalism

1. Radical Christian Nationalism as ideological source for...
   - fundamentalist Churches and believers
   - (radical) right-wing Parties/political Positions

2. Moderate Christian nationalism => religion in the public
   - facilitates religious lobbying on policy output
   - constraints liberal policy-making (PO, religious voting)
Open Question:

1. On political level:
   Homophobic rhetoric: “belief” or “strategy”?
Homophobia and Religion

- Religiosity identified as key variable in shaping gay-rights policy outcomes, especially in the US (Rayside, 2008: 299)
- Party homophobia positively correlated with the strength of religious belief in a country
- Party homophobia is negatively correlated with national progress in implementing gay rights (Commerer, 2010: 62)