Review of International Studies (2024), **50:** 2, 289–311
doi:10.1017/S0260210523000530

RIS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The double-helix entanglements of transnational advocacy: Moral conservative resistance to LGBTI rights

Phillip M. Ayoub[1] and Kristina Stoeckl[2]

[1]Department of Political Science, University College London, London, UK and [2]Department of Political Science, LUISS, Rome, Italy
Corresponding author: Phillip M. Ayoub; Email: p.ayoub@ucl.ac.uk

(Received 22 February 2023; revised 31 July 2023; accepted 29 September 2023)

Abstract
The rights of people who are marginalised by their sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTI) have improved in many countries. Largely, these achievements can be traced back to the 'spiral model' of factors including transnational mobilisation by the LGBTI rights movement, the actions of a few pioneering governments, and advances in the human rights frameworks of some international organisations (IOs). Yet a rising and increasingly globally connected resistance works against LGBTI rights. It rests predominantly in the hands of a transnational advocacy network (TAN) that attempts to lay claim to international human rights law by reinterpreting it. Drawing on a decade of fieldwork and 240 interviews with LGBTI, anti-LGBTI, and state and IO actors, this article explores how the conservative TAN functions, in terms of who comprises it and how its agenda is constructed. We argue that this TAN has employed many of the same transnational tools that garnered LGBTIQ people their widespread recognition. It also conforms to the spiral model of rights diffusion, but in a process we call a double helix. As the double-helix metaphor suggests, rival TANs have a reciprocal relationship, having to navigate each other's presence in an interactive space and thus using related strategies and instruments for mutually exclusive ends.

Keywords: LGBTI rights; moral conservative activism; politics; religion and politics; transnational advocacy networks

'I will say the backlash is swift. It is violent. And it is far reaching.'[1]

Jessica Stern, US Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons

In the last 30 years, the rights of people who are marginalised by their sexual orientation and gender identity have improved rapidly in many countries. The principles of equality and non-discrimination have led to transformative achievements, such as the recognition of same-sex unions in most of the Western world,[2] often following the decriminalisation of homosexuality in prior decades.[3] Public opinion scholars have also charted previously unthinkable improvements

[1]Jessica Stern, 2022. 'A Conversation with U.S. Special Envoy Jessica Stern.' *Presented at the Council on Foreign Relations* (July 21), available at: {https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-us-special-envoy-jessica-stern}.

[2]Kelly Kollman and Matthew Waites, 'The global politics of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender human rights: An introduction', *Contemporary Politics*, 15:1 (2009), pp. 1–37; David Paternotte and Kelly Kollman, 'Regulating intimate relationships in the European polity: Same-sex unions and policy convergence', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 20:4 (2013), pp. 510–33.

[3]David John Frank, Bayliss J. Camp, and Steven A. Boutcher, 'Worldwide trends in the criminal regulation of sex, 1945 to 2005', *American Sociological Review*, 75:6 (2010), pp. 867–93.

in societal attitudes towards LGBTIQ[4] – though mainly lesbian and gay – populations.[5] For the most part, these achievements can be traced back to a 'velvet triangle'[6] involving the transnational mobilisation of the LGBTI rights movement, the actions of progressive governments in a few pioneering countries, and advances in the human rights frameworks of some international governmental organisations.[7] Much as Kathryn Sikkink suggested in her seminal work on boomerang[8] and spiral models,[9] transnational politics connect the local and the global on LGBTI rights.[10] And this transnational effort has had verifiable effects, to the extent that scholars refer to the unexpected developments in LGBTI rights as a world 'won' for some LGBTIQ people.[11]

Yet such successes have not gone unchallenged. The global accomplishments in the field of LGBTI rights have been counterbalanced by a rising and, in recent years, increasingly globally connected resistance to such rights. In 2021, Hungary's parliament passed a ban on so-called gay propaganda following the Russian blueprint of the previous decade. That same year, in Ghana, the state arrested 21 people for attending a training on LGBTI rights, echoing arrests in Egypt following a Marshrou' Leila rock concert – featuring an openly queer lead singer – some years earlier. Especially in the last decade, this opposition rests predominantly in the hands of transnationally connected social movements – frequently with a religious orientation – and conservative governments, ideologically like-minded actors that also lay a claim to international human rights law by rewriting or reinterpreting it.[12] It mobilises to challenge the achievements made by LGBTIQ people on both the global and local levels.

While resistance to women's and LGBTI rights is long documented in the literature,[13] its global and networked dimensions are only recently coming to be understood in a flourishing corner

[4]We use the acronym LGBTIQ for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or queer people. That does not diminish the fact that the LGBTIQ movement itself represents multiple groups, uses varied terminologies, and has diverse sets of goals across different contexts. For example, the United Nations also uses different acronyms to describe communities marginalised by their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (sometimes abbreviated as SOGIESC). We also drop the 'Q' when speaking specifically of rights, given that queer movements historically held anti-institutional ideologies.

[5]Amy Adamczyk, *Cross-National Public Opinion about Homosexuality: Examining Attitudes Across the Globe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017); Stuart J. Turnbull-Dugarte, 'The European lavender vote: Sexuality, ideology and vote choice in Western Europe', *European Journal of Political Research*, 59:3 (2020), pp. 517–37.

[6]Sabine Lang, 'Women's advocacy networks: The European Union, women's NGOs, and the velvet triangle', in Victoria Bernal and Inderpal Grewal (eds), *Theorizing NGOs: States, Feminism, and Neoliberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 266–84; Alison Woodward, 'Building velvet triangles: Gender and informal governance', in *Informal Governance in the European Union* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2004), pp. 76–93.

[7]Phillip M. Ayoub and David Paternotte, 'Europe and LGBT rights: A conflicted relationship', in Michael J. Bosia, Sandra M. McEvoy, and Momin Rahman (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Global LGBT and Sexual Diversity Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 153–67.

[8]Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

[9]Thomas Risse, Stephen Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink (eds), *The Persistent Power of Human Rights: From Commitment to Compliance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[10]Anthony Chase, 'Human rights contestations: Sexual orientation and gender identity', *International Journal of Human Rights*, 20:6 (2016), pp. 703–23.

[11]Jeffrey Weeks, *The World We Have Won: The Remaking of Erotic and Intimate Life* (London: Routledge, 2007).

[12]Clifford Bob, *Rights as Weapons: Instruments of Conflict, Tools of Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019); Cynthia Burack, *Because We Are Human: Contesting US Support for Gender and Sexuality Human Rights Abroad* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2018); Gráinne de Búrca and Katharine G. Young, 'The (mis)appropriation of human rights by the new global right: An introduction to the symposium', *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, 21:1 (2023), pp. 205–23; Kristopher Velasco, 'Transnational backlash and the deinstitutionalization of liberal norms: LGBT+ rights in a contested world', *American Journal of Sociology*, 128:5 (2023), pp. 1381–429.

[13]Tina Fetner, *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Conor O'Dwyer, *Coming Out of Communism: The Emergence of LGBT Activism in Eastern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

of the field.[14] This transnational resistance, which we call moral conservative advocacy,[15] is frequently interpreted as a nationalist, traditionalist, or religious reaction to the expansion of universal human rights. Whereas progressive politics are commonly theorised in terms of a dynamic spiral model (where rights advocates organise transnationally), resistance to it is often seen as the result of nationalism and the distinctiveness of varied faiths – factors that were once thought to create impediments to cross-border organising of conservative actors.[16] Growing evidence suggests this is clearly not the case. Both movements use transnational tools.

This article builds on the existing literature charting this opposition by asking: how does this dynamic, between two opposing movements, play out, and what are its consequences for theorising transnational advocacy networks (TANs)? By establishing a bridge between scholarship on contentious politics, international relations, and the sociology of religion, we address this question by introducing a theoretical metaphor called the double helix (described below) and leveraging a new data set to explore the content of the opposition movement and how it interacts. Drawing from over a decade of fieldwork and over 240 interviews with LGBTI, anti-LGBTI, and various state and international organisation (IO) actors, we argue that these resistances have employed in the last decade many of the same transnational tools that garnered LGBTIQ people their widespread recognition. They also conform to the boomerang and spiral models of human rights diffusion, but in a process we reconceive as a *double helix*. As the double-helix metaphor suggests, opposing TANs have a reciprocal relationship, having to navigate each other's presence in an interactive space. In other words, both those who seek the advancement of LGBTI rights and those who oppose them use related spaces, strategies, and instruments for mutually exclusive ends.

Given that LGBTI TANs are the subject of extensive work, a second aim is to elucidate processes of organising on the opposing side. A novelty of our work is also its direct access to key players in the anti-LGBTI movement. We use it to show that this opposition is plural, building off of a long history of moral conservative narratives and an institutional infrastructure that unites ideologically incongruent and geographically scattered actors around perceived threats such as communism, demographic decline, nativist panic, and secularism. We argue that all of these threats intersect directly with gender, in that they are almost always intertwined with a panic around the destabilisation of masculinity and femininity and challenges to patriarchy. In tracing this argument, we identify the main actors with network analysis and the framing processes that they use for their extensive pushback against LGBTI rights, as well as responses to that pushback by LGBTI

[14]Elizabeth S. Corredor, 'Unpacking "gender ideology" and the global right's antigender countermovement', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 44:3 (2019), pp. 613–38; Jelena Cupać and Irem Ebetürk, 'The personal is global political: The antifeminist backlash in the United Nations', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 22:4 (2020), pp. 702–14; 'Competitive mimicry: The socialization of antifeminist NGOs into the United Nations', *Global Constitutionalism*, 11:3 (2022), pp. 379–400; Neil Datta, 'Modern-day crusaders in Europe. Tradition, family and property: Analysis of a transnational, ultra-conservative, Catholic-inspired influence network', *Političke perspektive: Časopis za istraživanje politike*, 8:3 (2018), pp. 69–105; Sara Garbagnoli, 'Against the heresy of immanence: Vatican's "gender" as a new rhetorical device against the denaturalization of the sexual order', *Religion and Gender*, 6:2 (2016), pp. 187–204; Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment* (New York: Routledge, 2022); Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte (eds), *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing against Equality* (Londons: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017); Cornelia Möser, Jennifer Ramme, and Judit Takács, *Paradoxical Right-Wing Sexual Politics in Europe* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022); Rebecca Sanders, 'Norm spoiling: Undermining the international women's rights agenda', *International Affairs*, 94:2 (2018), pp. 271–91; Rebecca Sanders and Laura Dudley Jenkins, 'Special issue introduction: Contemporary international anti-feminism', *Global Constitutionalism*, 11:3 (2022), pp. 369–78; Birgit Sauer, 'Authoritarian right-wing populism as masculinist identity politics: The role of affects', in Gabriele Dietze and Julia Roth (eds), *Right-Wing Populism and Gender: European Perspectives and Beyond* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020), pp. 23–40; Velasco, 'Transnational backlash and the deinstitutionalization of liberal norms'; Kristopher Velasco, 'Opposition avoidance or mutual engagement? The interdependent dynamics between opposing transnational LGBT+ networks', *Social Forces*, 101:4 (2023), pp. 2087–116; Mieke Verloo (ed.), *Varieties of Opposition to Gender Equality in Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[15]While we have engaged our subjects in their own chosen vocabulary by calling them moral conservatives, the analysis itself opens serious questions about these actors actual claim to morality.

[16]Phillip M. Ayoub, 'With arms wide shut: Threat perception, norm reception, and mobilized resistance to LGBT rights', *Journal of Human Rights*, 13:3 (2014), pp. 337–62.

rights movements. Within this broader moral conservative programme, gender and sexuality have become lightning-rod issues, as they have in many contemporary political debates, with women's and LGBTI rights strategically identified as *the* focal political issues and targets. Homophobia and transphobia are thus not just an effect of such movements but a tool for constructing and galvanising political opposition.

In sum, the investigation of movements for and against LGBTI rights offers theoretical and empirical insights that contribute to knowledge on transnational advocacy networks and the centrality of gender in contemporary world politics. Our aims are to summarise the insightful recent literature on LGBTI and anti-LGBTI transnational movements in an accessible way, while introducing a conceptual metaphor to think through opposing TANs in the international space and offering new empirical data on the anti-LGBTI network and the claims it makes. The first section includes a literature review explaining key actors, claims, and venues of global resistances to LGBTI and LGBTI-adjacent rights. Thereafter, the second section addresses some of the assumptions inherent in the literature and turns to our main theoretical and conceptual contribution around the double-helix metaphor. There are opposing TANs in world politics, in this case one championing LGBTI rights and a moral conservative movement that seeks to undermine the former's accomplishments. We theorise how this impacts our understanding of TANs. The third section reflects on the methods that went into the empirical component of the study. The fourth section uses network analysis to sketch the varied actors that comprise the anti-LGBTI movement, using data collected from our participation at conferences of a key group called the World Congress of Families (WCF). This is our main empirical contribution. The fifth section outlines the claims and strategies the moral conservative movement deploys, also drawing on data from our interviews, and discusses how these claims and strategies shape the responses of LGBTI rights activists.

Transnational advocacy for and against LGBTI rights

The transformation towards an increasingly globally coordinated resistance to LGBTI rights is in line with a growing and important literature that has shone a light on the complicated and contested nature of human rights promotion. While the field of constructivist research found its footing in International Relations (IR) through research that often portrayed transnational organising as the domain of progressive movements, overshadowing the reality that the same channels are available to all sorts of identity-based movements,[17] studies of the last decade have complicated that portrayal. IR scholars, studying a variety of domains from Roma rights to anti-feminism, have introduced a panoply of concepts that recognise this tension, including norm contestation,[18] norm spoiling and proxy wars,[19] rhetorical adaptation,[20] norm antipreneurship,[21] norm evasion,[22] and norm polarisation.[23] Also concerning LGBTI rights, an opposing movement that uses several of the same transnational tools as the LGBTI rights movement, but for different ends, challenges the earliest conceptual models of rights diffusion and social change. Opponents of secular modernity are well organised and persistent, to a degree that our fields overlooked two decades ago, and that we must understand to fully unpack the polarised (non-)spread of LGBTI rights.

[17]Laura Landolt, '(Mis)constructing the Third World? Constructivist analysis of norm diffusion', *Third World Quarterly*, 25:3 (2004), pp. 579–91.

[18]Nicole Deitelhoff and Lisbeth Zimmermann, 'Norms under challenge: Unpacking the dynamics of norm robustness', *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 4:1 (2019), pp. 2–17.

[19]Sanders, 'Norm spoiling'.

[20]Jennifer M. Dixon, 'Rhetorical adaptation and resistance to international norms', *Perspectives on Politics*, 15:1 (2017), pp. 83–99.

[21]Alan Bloomfield and Shirley V. Scott, *Norm Antipreneurs and the Politics of Resistance to Global Normative Change* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[22]Zoltán I. Búzás, 'Racism and antiracism in the liberal international order', *International Organization*, 75:2 (2021), pp. 440–63.

[23]Jonathan Symons and Dennis Altman, 'International norm polarization: Sexuality as a subject of human rights protection', *International Theory*, 7:1 (2015), pp. 61–95.

Indeed, the presence and impact of both pro- and anti-LGBTI rights TANs are now becoming established in the literature. Several important recent works have added to our understanding of these phenomena, all of which acknowledge the cross-border and transnational processes that dislodge anti-gender movements from the purview of the state.[24] Kristopher Velasco has conducted the most systematic empirical work in this domain, and his recent body of work justifies our own endeavour in several ways, especially as it concerns tracing the origin stories of and interaction between these networks.[25] His large-scale data collection charts both the contraction and expansion of LGBTI rights and the indisputable reality that countries in the international system are influenced by both pro- and anti-LGBTI rights TANs. In fact, the international system itself – which offers a similar institutional environment to diverse actors – may necessitate the use of TANs, boomerangs, and IO engagement for a variety of movements. Having established that two movements circulate in world politics, Velasco codes the proliferation and presence of both to demonstrate their effects on state policies. He compellingly shows that, especially since the mid-2000s, resistance to LGBTI rights has emerged and expanded significantly on a global scale, and that its emergence and operation in a state coincides with that state's likelihood of defying the liberal norms of LGBTI rights adoption. If a state is more embedded in a pro-LGBTI rights TAN, compliance will be more likely.[26] The power such conservative resistance yields is considerable.

Both theoretically and empirically, some open questions remain in terms of how moral conservative movements have overcome national as well as ideological divides. For one, recognising international cooperation in the multiple resistances to LGBTI rights has been complicated by the knowledge that *nationalism* – typically antithetical to *transnationalism* – has served as such a formidable and universal barrier to the advancement of LGBTI rights across contexts in times past.[27] Histories of opposition in many states were rooted in nativism, emphasising the need to maintain local national traditions due to their perceived superiority over those of other nations. In recent years, these self-proclaimed 'defenders of the nation' have actively worked across borders to peddle a common narrative of an LGBTIQ threat. This is the paradox of the moral conservative movement: it relies on claims of resistance that are rooted in specific contexts around a language of national sovereignty, but it simultaneously deploys it globally via transnational cooperation.

Second, while moral conservatives consider the secularism of LGBTI rights a threat, it is important to remember that not long ago they also saw religious freedom and the idea of equality of faiths as threats. Just like nationalists, religious traditionalists tend to be convinced of the superiority of their own faith and do not easily connect across denominations.[28] The 'conservative ecumenism'[29] of the religious anti-LGBTIQ movement, which spans Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Evangelical believers and also strategically can include Muslims and Jewish groups, therefore came as a surprise for many sociologists of religion.[30] In early articulations, Bob called such collaborations the 'Baptis–Burqa coalition', and Cupać and Ebetürk used the term 'unholy

[24]Mary Case, 'The role of the popes in the invention of complementarity and the Vatican's anathematization of gender', *Religion and Gender*, 6 (2016), pp. 155–172 (p. 155); Datta, 'Modern-day crusaders in Europe'; Garbagnoli, 'Against the heresy of immanence'; Graff and Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics*; Eszter Kováts and Maari Põim, *Gender as Symbolic Glue: The Position and Role of Conservative and Far-right Parties in the Anti-Gender Mobilizations in Europe* (Budapest: Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2015); Kuhar and Paternotte, *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe*; Möser, Ramme, and Takács, *Paradoxical Right-Wing Sexual Politics*; Sauer, 'Authoritarian right-wing populism'.

[25]Kristopher Velasco, 'Human rights INGOs, LGBT INGOs, and LGBT policy diffusion, 1991–2015', *Social Forces*, 97:1 (2018), pp. 377–404; Velasco, 'Transnational backlash and the deinstitutionalization of liberal norms'; 'Opposition avoidance or mutual engagement?'.

[26]Velasco, 'Opposition avoidance or mutual engagement?'.

[27]Ayoub, 'With arms wide shut'.

[28]Thomas E. FitzGerald, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Introductory History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), p. 33.

[29]Andrey Shishkov, 'Two ecumenisms: Conservative Christian Alliances as a new form of ecumenical cooperation', *State, Religion and Church*, 4:2 (2017), pp. 58–87.

[30]When Slovenia adopted same-sex marriage (before a referendum), for example, Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim religious leaders issued a joint statement of opposition. Their collaboration was a historic first. Activists noted the irony that LGBTI rights could bring such disparate figures together. We thank Roman Kuhar for this point.

alliance'.[31] It crosses historical doctrinal divides between different faiths by identifying and framing issues such as abortion, divorce, or LGBTI rights not in terms of religious injunctions, but as moral, legal, and social problems.

That said, we know that resistance to LGBTI rights does not always lead to success in the long run. According to Tina Fetner, lesbian and gay activists in the United States decided they needed marriage equality *after* the religious right told them they could not have it.[32] And they accomplished it there eventually (at the federal level in 2015 via Obergefell v. Hodges), even if the path there was rocky and uneven with continued threats to its perseverance. Although the opposition is well funded and organised, their strategies have often backfired, instead galvanising and emboldening LGBTI rights advocates in various contexts.[33] In sum, to understand the growing contestation of liberal norms in the world order,[34] we must attempt to understand both pro- and anti-LGBTI networks and their interaction.

Theory: The double helix of transnational advocacy networks

Understanding the interaction between the two networks is also important for theorising in international relations (IR). Moral conservatives construe LGBTI rights as a threat by presenting them as antithetical to traditions of both national and religious identity and/or by rooting them in a demographic and gender panic that is said to destabilise masculinity and the moral order.[35] We start from the observation that the movements for and against LGBTI rights interact at both international and domestic levels. In a process that we argue resembles a double helix, the frames and strategies of one TAN are reciprocal to those of the opposing TAN. They operate in a shared political space across multiple levels from domestic to international. Interaction and reciprocity reshape the very claims that TANs make and the demands they place on states. To be clear, we use the double-helix metaphor loosely, not as an attempt to bring biology to the socially constructed world we analyse. We do not want to argue that the two strands hang together for their mutual existence, like those of DNA. Our geometrical double helix illustrates – for IR theory – two side-by-side 'spirals' that do not operate in isolation. It is precisely the figure of the helix (instead of a double- or parallel-spiral) that is productive because it gives us a third dimension: a helix has depth. This illustrates the space for interaction between each spiral, despite the fact that the spirals in our story work against each other.

Interaction at various levels has implications for the spiral model of human rights diffusion, which scholars use to predict an evolution of positive changes in internationalisation and compliance as a result of pressure from a combination of domestic actors, TANs, and other supportive states.[36] The presence of two opposing TANs complicates the spiral model's phases, which typically are focused on theorising one TAN in the global space. This dichotomy – of international progress and domestic backlash – is folded in throughout the model, beginning with the idea that the initial *repression* towards social change occurs in the domestic sphere. A state will dismiss local advocacy

[31] Clifford Bob, *The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Cupać and Ebetürk, 'The personal is global political'.

[32] Michael C. Dorf and Sidney Tarrow, 'Strange bedfellows: How an anticipatory countermovement brought same-sex marriage into the public arena', *Law & Society Review*, 39:2 (2014), pp. 449–73; Fetner, *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*.

[33] Benjamin G. Bishin, Thomas J. Hayes, Matthew B. Incantalupo, and Charles Anthony Smith, 'Opinion backlash and public attitudes: Are political advances in gay rights counterproductive?', *American Journal of Political Science*, 60:3 (2016), pp. 625–48; O'Dwyer, *Coming Out of Communism*.

[34] Gregorio Bettiza and David Lewis, 'Authoritarian powers and norm contestation in the liberal international order: Theorizing the power politics of ideas and identity', *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 5:4 (2020), pp. 559–77.

[35] Ayoub, 'With arms wide shut'; Phillip M. Ayoub and Agnès Chetaille, 'Movement/countermovement interaction and instrumental framing in a multi-level world: Rooting Polish lesbian and gay activism', *Social Movement Studies*, 19:1 (2020), pp. 21–37; Möser, Ramme, and Takács, *Paradoxical Right-Wing Sexual Politics*; Sauer, 'Authoritarian right-wing populism'.

[36] Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, *The Persistent Power of Human Rights*.

groups and subsequently influence responses from allied progressive international groups. A similar pattern follows, including *denial*, in which a state claims sovereignty to cast away the progressive international groups' demands, leading progressive local advocates to seek transnational and international support. Eventually, a state will make concessions to local/transnational/international groups, opening a domestic discourse around the rights in question and eventually introducing institutional change.[37]

The presence of opposing networks that share this transnational space – which prompts us to transform the spiral into a double helix – means the original spiral is at least partly destabilised. Instead, in a double-helix model, we might expect norm polarisation with different outcomes in different domestic contexts, given that different TANs may have more or less purchase in any given state. Symons and Altman predict this, and Velasco demonstrates it.[38] Second, we should also anticipate that the very content of human rights claims is reshaped in this reciprocal dance of framing and counter-framing claims between TANs at the international level. This explains why, for example, the LGBTI rights movement relies more on 'family values' frames today than it has in the past. It also explains why religious conservatism prioritises resistance to LGBTI rights even in contexts where LGBTI achievements are not imminent.

If the transnational ties that bind LGBTIQ advocacy groups to states and IOs now exist next to another TAN that specifically targets LGBTI rights in these same venues, that builds on and complicates the spiral model. It suggests that the steps theorised there are metaphorically overlain by another such process. Figure 1 sets the basis for this idea with a double-helix illustration, depicting both how states are confronted with different TANs and how the master frames and strategies of the TANs operating in the same space influence each other through interaction.

Figure 1 illustrates two movements (the moral conservative movement and the LGBTI rights movement) as strands that operate in reference to each other, pursuing their own goals in awareness of the other and in which they pull at each other. Depending on the context or venue or moment in time, one strand may tug more than the other. Unlike the spiral model, however, which focuses on a lone strand (and often theorises resistance in the domestic space), the double-helix metaphor captures the dynamic and tension between two TANs. It thus complicates simplified or static formulations of backlash (e.g. as domestic) and helps us understand variation across time and space, given that one strand may hit harder in Time A than in Time B or in Context A than in Context B. Of course, the strands are not equally important or effective across time and space, which explains the varied outcomes we observe on LGBTI rights comparatively.

Hence, rights protecting LGBTIQ people are met with anti-LGBTI resistance at all levels – local, national, and international – and anti-LGBTI laws are also diffused and spread transnationally through a reverse-spiral process. We see a concerning trend of norm polarisation in this regard, in which opposing interpretations of human rights norms emerge and are advocated. This also means that globally circulating norms become contested – international systems of knowledge do not send unequivocal signals on what the norm is, depending on what state or region one is in[39] – and governments in some states conveniently pick and choose from contradictory sets of normative standards. While LGBTI rights TANs are dominant in many states that accomplished anchoring a norm such as 'equality' to LGBTIQ people, a moral conservative TAN may be persuasive in other contexts – e.g. ones in which LGBTIQ are invisible or deemed as threatening to the social order – ultimately rejecting such an understanding of equality.

[37] Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, *The Persistent Power of Human Rights*; Ahmed Shahid and Hilary Yerbury, 'A case study of the socialization of human rights language and norms in Maldives: Process, impact and challenges', *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 6:2 (2014), pp. 281–305.

[38] Symons and Altman, 'International norm polarization'; Velasco, 'Transnational backlash and the deinstitutionalization of liberal norms'; 'Opposition avoidance or mutual engagement?'.

[39] Symons and Altman, 'International norm polarization'; Velasco, 'Transnational backlash and the deinstitutionalization of liberal norms'.

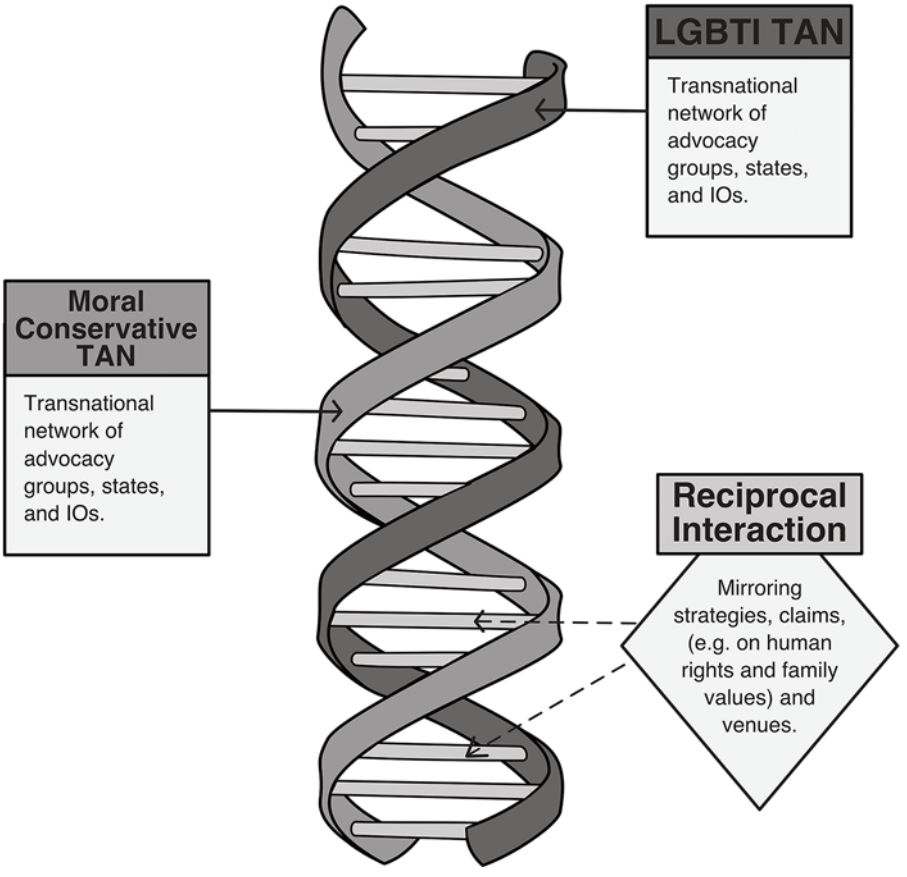

Figure 1. Double-helix model of opposing TAN interaction.

This double-helix nature of the relation between pro-LGBTI and anti-LGBTI movements also impacts movement goals and strategies. In many ways, moral conservative opposition thus mimics – or 'mirrors' to borrow a term from Agnès Chetaille – the successes of LGBTIQ movements for LGBTI rights.[40] For decades, due to shared experiences that defined their minority identity and uniform exclusion from the nation in most states, sexual and gendered minorities had sought out international venues to influence and diffuse their claims for rights.[41] Moral conservative actors – despite not having an equally crystallised shared experience of their own – have increasingly borrowed[42] these strategies of transnational cooperation and are also forming them

[40]Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Mary Bernstein, 'Culture, power, and institutions: A multi-institutional politics approach to social movements', *Sociological Theory*, 26:1 (2008), pp. 74–99; Agnès Chetaille, *Les paradoxes d'une histoire sans transition: Entre l'Ouest et la nation, les mobilisations gaies et lesbiennes en Pologne (1980–2010)* (Paris: EHESS, 2015); Velasco, 'Transnational backlash and the deinstitutionalization of liberal norms'. While Chetaille speaks mainly of mirroring movement frames, we use the term mirroring more expansively here. We see the movement as increasingly global and mirroring other TANs. Furthermore, Armstrong and Bernstein ('Culture, power, and institutions') emphasise that such mirroring may be influenced by institutional environments. This may be partly deliberative, but the commonalities may also reflect the fact that they both exist within the same institutional environment of a human rights regime, IOs, states, etc (cf. Velasco). So, while some decisions may be agentic choices, the institutional environment constrains the choice options.

[41]Phillip M. Ayoub, *When States Come Out: Europe's Sexual Minorities and the Politics of Visibility* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[42]And are possibly compelled to borrow due to their operation in similar institutional environments; Armstrong and Bernstein, 'Culture, power, and institutions'.

anew. Deploying a moral conservative background narrative (presented below) to construct an imagined past that binds the people they represent together, moral conservatives create a group identity as victims of LGBTI rights and define their goals in terms of minority rights. It helps them pursue what Sanders calls norm spoiling, where actors target existing norms (within IOs) to make them weaker.[43] To underscore their claims, they borrow the language of progressive movements, weaponising the rhetoric of women's rights pioneers, Martin Luther King, or Gandhi to challenge the granting of rights to groups marginalised by their sexuality or gender identity.[44] For example, trans women's rights are often problematically constructed as a threat to cis women, or LGBTI rights as infringing on the rights of the child or the right to religious liberty.[45] These innovations in moral conservative argumentation are vivid examples of the double-helix process of anti-LGBTIQ mobilisation in the face of pro-LGBTIQ forces.

Thus, part of the answer to the puzzles driving this work lies in the fact that *national* 'politics', 'identities,' or 'traditions' are now increasingly intertwined with transnationally circulating ideas about traditional values and the family that come to play a corresponding role in many states. These networks are often developed around other sets of issues (e.g. migration), despite increasingly having shifted focus to fold in gender, sexuality, and gender identity as tools – rallying cries – for moral conservativism. They thrive in an era of world politics shaped by populist narratives that oppose globalisation[46] and the 'ruling global elite', to which LGBTI rights are allegedly tied (the irony being that the resistance movements are well funded by elites and increasingly globalised themselves). Indeed, LGBTI rights are seen as a shared threat to national sovereignty in many states, and they have come to provoke a camaraderie – among not only those keen to 'defend' their own nation but also those seeking to champion the purity and tradition of an imagined past. Moreover, by taking seriously the fact that transnational organising is available to all sorts of movements, including ones diametrically opposed to one another, our argument demonstrates that the tools that have propelled the LGBTI rights movements to transformational global successes also hold potential for opposing movements – even one that often draws on a nationalist ideology.

Method

We illustrate this concept and argument using a mixed-method approach – involving semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and network and content analysis – that is attentive to the complex history of anti-LGBTI resistance and its global ties. These mixed methods speak to each other in productive ways, not only for validation, but also to provide a holistic understanding of process (for example, the story of how a network tie came to being). Participant observation at WCF events gave us an understanding of the key claims and goals, as well as providing access to participants and materials – such as conference programmes that could be analysed using network analysis. The interviews offered a wealth of data in substantiating how moral conservatives think of their purpose in the movement and how they strategise and bring people together. The time period of this study is from 2010–21; the data collection fieldwork with LGBTI activists spanned the whole period, whereas those with the moral conservative advocates happened within the scope of our ERC grant from 2016–19.

Together, the analysis is informed by our 240 interviews, especially the 120 with transnationally connected moral conservative advocates on issues ranging from traditional values to pro-life, human rights, and religious freedom laws to homeschooling. Given this is a theoretical piece, we use our interviews primarily to substantiate the conceptual claims, though we also draw directly from them in the fifth section. The interviews that are most central to that analysis were sampled

[43]Sanders, 'Norm spoiling'.

[44]Bob, *Rights as Weapons*; de Búrca and Young, 'The (mis)appropriation of human rights by the new global right'; Kuhar and Paternotte, *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe*, p. 2; Sanders and Jenkins, 'Special issue introduction'.

[45]Bob, *Rights as Weapons*.

[46]Igor Logvinenko and Michael Dichio, 'Authoritarian populism, courts and democratic erosion', *Just Security* (2021), available at: {https://www.justsecurity.org/74624/authoritarian-populism-courts-and-democratic-erosion/}.

on the basis of the interviewees' leadership role in international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and NGOs and their steadfast involvement in the networks studied.[47] Due to their nodal centrality in the moral conservative network (see the fourth section), our analysis pays special attention to Russian and American advocates. Our fieldwork in the conservative camp stretched over four years, which meant, in some cases, multiple encounters with key actors, allowing us to assess changes in their roles inside the network. In sum, we have a cross-national scope of both key players and target-states in moral conservative activism.

Second, our team also conducted fieldwork on-site at various moral conservative transnational advocacy gatherings, including the meetings of the WCF in Tbilisi, Georgia (2016); Budapest, Hungary (2017); Chisinau, Moldova (2018); and Verona, Italy (2019); the meetings of the Global Home Education Exchange Conference in Rome, Italy (2017) and Moscow and St Petersburg, Russia (2018); and the Christmas Readings Pro-Life Conference in Moscow, Russia (2017). Since our argument centres on the idea that global transnational networks for and against LGBTI rights function in opposition to each other, we also draw (though to a lesser degree due to issues of space) on our research with the LGBTI rights movement. Combined, this work includes the additional 120 interviews and focus groups with LGBTI activists representing two dozen countries.[48] As with the moral conservative analysis, which offered us access to conference programmes, we also studied these from the other TAN, using content analysis to show how the language of the LGBTIQ movement changed in response to moral conservative organising (see the fifth section).

The transnational network against LGBTI rights

Building on the argument that both networks exist and operate globally, we use the next sections to trace back the historical antecedents of the transnational movement against LGBTI rights, asking where it came from and who operates it in contemporary world politics. Our inquiry helps to identify and understand the various actors that make up the moral conservative advocacy networks. First, we define the varied and loose conglomeration of actors that comprise the resistances against LGBTI rights as *moral conservatives* because (a) the actors in question construct their programme around topics in the field of morality politics, and (b) their positions on these issues belong to the conservative normative *Denkfigur*[49] (or figure of thought). Such conservatism privileges nationalism over globalism, particularism over universalism, legal sovereignty over international law, patriarchy over equality, hierarchy over democracy, the collective over the individual, religion over the secular, and duties over liberties. Thus, the moral conservative actors we study are not conservative in the dictionary sense of the term, as people inclined to reject new ideas. They are, instead, open to new ideas and strategies, including incorporating a language of human rights,[50] if it furthers the development of the moral conservative programme.

That programme brings together actors that, at a first glance, have little in common: Russia, a series of Muslim states, as well as other states from Central and Eastern Europe and the Global South; Evangelicals and Orthodox Christians, Catholics, and Protestants; pro-life civil society groups and anti-migration right-wing populist parties, neoconservative media commentators, small businesses and homeowners, and entrepreneurs in the world of big business and economic consultancy. They cooperate and create thin bridges of commonality that unite them across their persistent divides.

[47] Interviews were conducted in English (55 per cent), Russian (39 per cent), German (3 per cent), or a combination of those languages (3 per cent). We conducted interviews in person in Russia, the United States, Hungary, Austria, Moldova, and Italy, as well as over electronic media in other cases.

[48] Participant observation at strategic activist meetings (including those of ILGA-Europe in 2010, 2011, and 2016; and ILGA World in 2022), the European institutions, and organised protests took place in Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Poland, and the United States.

[49] Karl Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995).

[50] Andrew R. Lewis, *The Rights Turn in Conservative Christian Politics: How Abortion Transformed the Culture Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Networks of social movement organisations tie together these disparate players and diffuse an anti-gender message – organisations that are also connected to right-wing populist political parties that have become a formidable force in contemporary domestic and world politics.[51] These organisations involve groups such as the International Organization for the Family (IOF, before 2016 the WCF), CitizenGo, Agenda Europe, and Tradition Family Property. The IOF connects thousands of actors across borders and at annual summits, and as Stoeckl has traced, diffuses Christian right ideas far and wide, for example from the United States to Russia.[52] The advocacy group and online platform CitizenGo was founded in Spain but now spans 17 countries and specifically targets epistemic communities – artists, academics – and political leaders who champion LGBTI rights; they claim 12,000,000 registered users;[53] mimicking many progressive platforms, such as MoveOn, it is the main moral conservative platform for transnational advocacy in the digital era.[54] In Europe, Neil Datta's work has documented the wide reach of Agenda Europe, an umbrella TAN of more than 100 organisations in over 30 countries that target LGBTI rights by depicting them as an affront to Christian values.[55]

States and international organisations (such as the Catholic and Orthodox churches) have joined and/or provided venues for such actors to mobilise and for resistance to LGBTI rights to take root. Our data collection confirms Weiss and Bosia's idea that state authorities find advantages in espousing what they call political homophobia, a purposeful state strategy 'embedded in the scapegoating of an "other" … as the product of transnational influence peddling and alliances'.[56] The concept helps us to understand the coming together of relatively varied actors, as well as their deployment of relatively similar and modular discourses around traditional values that institutionalise homophobia and transphobia in the state. State actors can use the strategy preemptively to their benefit – they are geared to mobilise supporters – even before an LGBTI movement has formed or is on the cusp of any tangible success. It has given states new purpose on the global stage, for example, to play a role as defenders of 'traditional values' and of the 'family'.

Russia and its Orthodox Church have played an outsized role on this front in the last decade, even going so far as to frame its invasions of Ukraine as protecting it from LGBTIQ people.[57] Many other state actors (e.g. Hungary and Uganda) have similarly deployed a rhetoric of resistance to 'gender ideology', spread new specifically trans- and homophobic policies, and hosted and supported causes that limit LGBTI rights – all under the banner of protecting traditional values, religious liberty, and the family. Like the process of norm diffusion described in the literature on LGBTI rights,[58] moral conservative groups also draw domestic advantage by mobilising allied international support, opening a domestic discourse around the rights in question and leading to states 'talking the talk' of resistance to LGBTI rights.

In order to illustrate the wide global reach of these networks, and their truly transnational character, we use a network analysis of the IOF/WCF – the most exemplary INGO underpinning moral conservative TANs. It originated in the mid-1990s out of cooperation among the United

[51] Graff and Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics*; Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

[52] Kristina Stoeckl 'The rise of the Russian Christian Right: The case of the World Congress of Families', *Religion, State and Society,* 48:4 (2020), pp. 223–38.

[53] Graff and Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics*, p. 45.

[54] Nina Hall, *Transnational Advocacy in the Digital Era: Think Global, Act Local* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[55] Neil Datta, 'Modern-Day Crusaders in Europe. Tradition, Family and Property: Analysis of Transnational, Ultra-Conservative, Catholic-Inspired Influence Network', Brussels: EPF. (2020), available at: {https://www.epfweb.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/EPF%20TFP_EN_Oct30_0.pdf} (accessed 6 November 2021).

[56] Meredith L. Weiss and Michael J. Bosia, *Global Homophobia: States, Movements, and the Politics of Oppression* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013), p. 2.

[57] Phillip M. Ayoub, 'Protean power in movement: Navigating uncertainty in the LGBT rights revolution', in Peter J. Katzenstein and Lucia Seybert (eds), *Power in Uncertainty: Exploring the Unexpected in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 79–99; Nikita Sleptcov, 'Political homophobia as a state strategy in Russia', *Journal of Global Initiatives*, 12:1 (2018), pp. 140–61; Cai Wilkinson, 'Putting "traditional values" into practice: The rise and contestation of anti-homopropaganda laws in Russia', *Journal of Human Rights*, 13:3 (2014), pp. 363–79.

[58] Ayoub, *When States Come Out*.

States-based Rockford Institute (represented by Alan Carlson) and their Russian partners.[59] It incrementally enlarged its outreach and network to include more activists and organisations from the former Soviet Union, partners from Europe, and members from Africa, Latin America, and Asia. With its headquarters in the United States, but relying on sponsorship and initiatives by local politicians, activists, and churches, the WCF had hosted 13 global summits up until 2019 (the period included in our network analysis). We list these summits below identified with Roman numerals, which corresponds to the numbering used by the WCF:

WCF I	1997 Prague, Czechia
WCF II	1999 Geneva, Switzerland
WCF III	2004 Mexico City, Mexico
WCF IV	2007 Warsaw, Poland
WCF V	2009 Amsterdam, Netherlands
WCF VI	2012 Madrid, Spain
WCF VII	2013 Sydney, Australia
WCF VIII	2014 Moscow, Russia
WCF IX	2015 Salt Lake City, USA
WCF X	2016 Tbilisi, Georgia
WCF XI	2017 Budapest, Hungary
WCF XII	2018 Chisinau, Moldova
WCF XIII	2019 Verona, Italy

Figure 2 depicts the global network of the WCF. As we have noted above, these conferences have a central function inside the moral conservative TAN. The WCF as convenor brings together actors and organisations from around the world for the exchange and diffusion of ideas and strategies – including around resistance to LGBTI rights. The organisations connected by it promote a moral conservative agenda through communication, education, strategic legal action, and political networking. The circles and triangles in Figure 2 illustrate the WCF conferences. Circles identify the host cities of the conferences, and triangles show the 'sending countries' – those that send speaking-participants to the WCF summits. The thickness of a tie – which captures the flow of participants from sending to host countries – between the triangles and the circles is proportional to the logarithm of the number of participants of a country in a congress. The size of the triangles is proportional to the logarithm of the number of participants of a country in a congress, and the size of the circles is proportional to the logarithm of the number of participants in a congress – this means that the larger the triangle, the more participants that country sent, and the larger the circle, the more participants in the congress.[60] Much of the WCF activity takes place in Europe, though note the centrality of the United States as a sending country for all of the conferences. Some groups, like those in the United States, Poland, Italy, and Russia, have disproportionate involvement in the network. Most importantly, the data show that there is a considerable exchange among countries from around the globe. The function of the WCF as convenor organisation is comparable to other 'network-weaving institutions'[61] that bring together local and regional NGOs. In the area of LGBTI rights, ILGA (the International Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, and Intersex Association) is an INGO that brings domestic NGOs and actors together in this way.

[59] Kristina Stoeckl, 'The rise of the Russian Christian right: The case of the World Congress of Families', *Religion, State and Society*, 48:4 (2020), pp. 223–38.

[60] We exclude one-time participants of the host country of a conference, because this would naturally overestimate that country's involvement. (The data show that geographic proximity makes attendance much more likely.) Furthermore, while the geographical coordinates of the congresses correspond to the cities where they took place, the triangles simply indicate the country sending participants.

[61] Paul Ingram and Magnus Thor Torfason, 'Organizing the in-between: The population dynamics of network-weaving organizations in the global interstate network', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55:4 (2010), pp. 577–605.

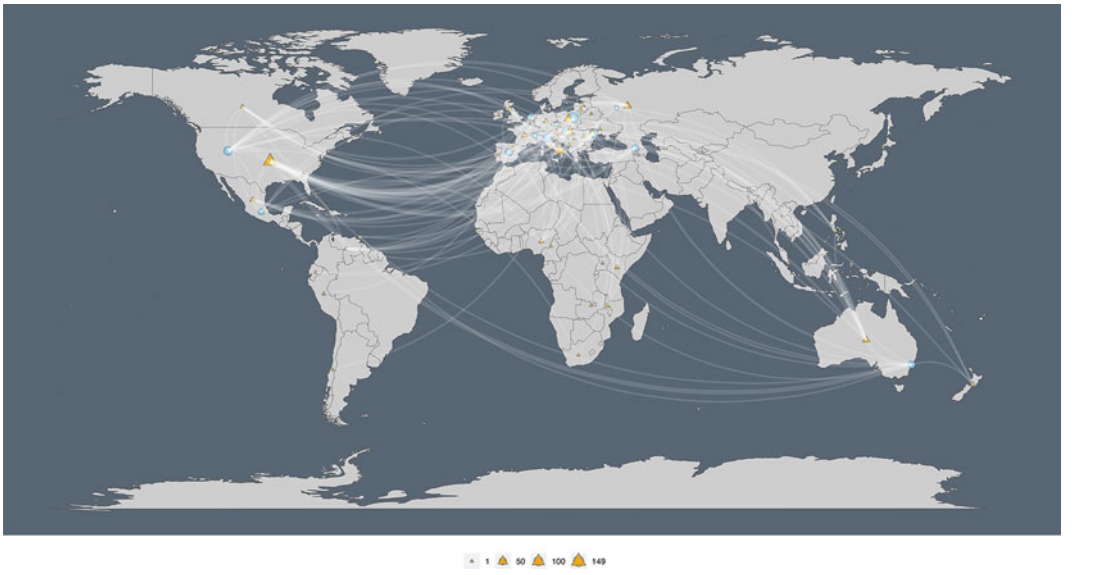

Figure 2. The global network of WCF organising.

Figure 3 shifts our attention to data on the participant groups themselves, which shines a light on key norm entrepreneurs in moral conservative activism. The figure also illustrates the frequency of active attendance, with regular and committed actors likely shaping the modality and narrative of the events consistently over time.[62] One insight that we take away from the network analysis in Figure 3 is that the group of central and stable members of the WCF network is not large. Indeed, relatively few organisations and individuals have been consistent participants in the WCF for over a decade, and even fewer have been present since its founding over 20 years ago. Only around two dozen actors (organisations and individual participants) have attended more than half of the 13 congresses that the WCF has organised. Among the group of steadfast participants, we count organisations from the United States, Nigeria, Russia, Italy, and Spain. Each one of these organisations or their leader is, in turn, a part of a larger regional network of organisations and actors, which makes the entire network geographically complex and multilayered.

Among the most faithful participants in WCF congresses is the Foundation for African Cultural Heritage (FACH), which has been reported as a participant in all but two. This umbrella NGO has its seat in Nigeria and coordinates a network of organisations and initiatives across the country. FACH is not the only WCF tie to Africa – as Figure 2 shows, the congresses have seen representation from Kenya, Cameroon, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia. Our findings on WCF participation from the Global South buttress Rahul Rao's claim that networks opposing LGBTI rights are complicated, with homophobia in the Global South both an import (historically) from the West but also holding agency that helps propagate this anti-LGBTI network internationally.[63]

Another point worth emphasising is that the actors that mobilise against LGBTI rights frequently come from locales that scholarship has tended to view as homogeneous rather than polarised. There is heterogeneity within institutions, states, and regions that are deemed to fall on one side of an LGBTI rights divide. The clearest example is the European Union (EU) itself, which is widely considered a front-runner on LGBTI rights and has become a motor for these rights in

[62]The drop in participation for the WCF VIII summit, which took place in Moscow in 2014, is due to the international sanctions placed on Russia and the subsequent WCF suspension of the event, limiting international participation, even if the WCF 'core group' attended nonetheless.

[63]Rahul Rao, *Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Figure 3. NGOs comprising the WCF core network.

Central and Eastern Europe.[64] Yet the EU's unequivocal support for LGBTI rights in international institutions such as the United Nations' Human Rights Council has been challenged by some of its own member states (particularly Hungary and Poland in recent years). Civil society mobilisation inside EU countries (including in the 'old' member states, like *La Manif pour tous in* France) also remains contested and sometimes rejects the EU's policy line on the matter. Russia, likewise, is widely regarded as a threat to Western democracies and as a source of military aggression and disinformation,[65] yet some conservative groups in the United States and Western Europe have looked to Putin's Russia as a persuasive conservative political power.

Figure 4 illustrates this complexity with the example of state and civil society positions on UN resolutions. Derived from data collection by Stoeckl and Medvedeva, it shows the voting outcomes of states in relation to resolutions on 'traditional values' and 'protection of the family' at the UN

[64]Martijn Mos, 'Of gay rights and Christmas ornaments: The political history of sexual orientation non-discrimination in the Treaty of Amsterdam', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 52:3 (2014), pp. 632–49; Koen Slootmaeckers, Heleen Touquet, and Peter Vermeersch (eds), *The EU Enlargement and Gay Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017).

[65]Sleptcov, 'Political homophobia'.

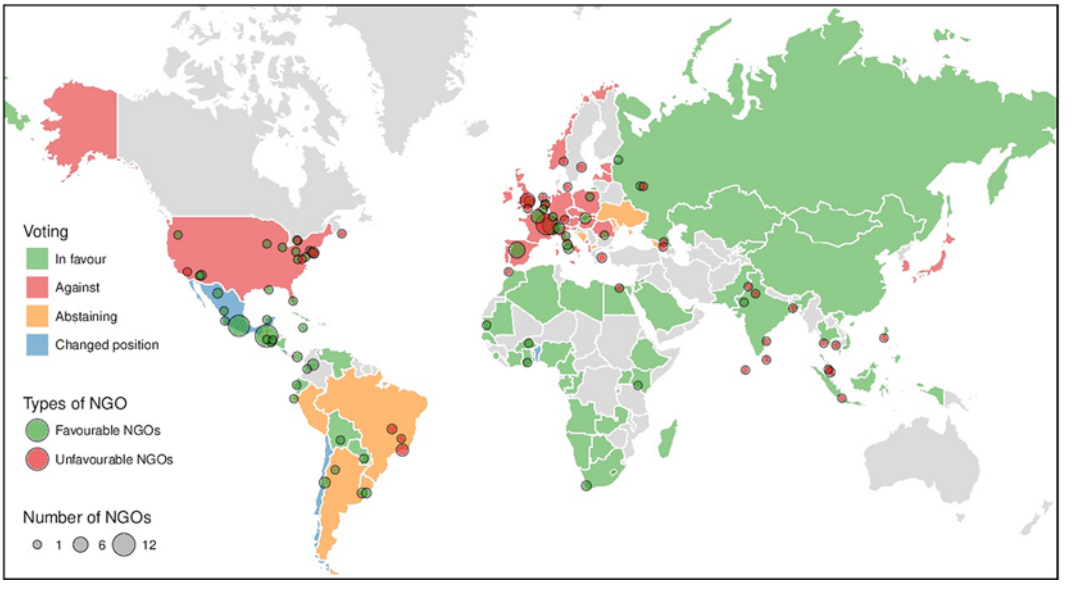

Figure 4. Countries voting for the UN's moral conservative resolutions and NGO locations, 2009–16.

between 2009 and 2016.[66] It depicts which countries supported, opposed, abstained, or held mixed positions. What is clear is that NGOs with various perspectives are present, including ones at odds with their state. The social movement literature expects NGOs to mobilise at an international venue when a state dismisses or represses the local advocacy groups, because appealing to the transnational level is a way for these groups to overcome state denial. In Figure 4, the mobilisation against the conservative family discourse from groups in countries such as India or Chechnya is exemplary of this pattern. However, that mechanism is also available to ideologically opposed groups, i.e. moral conservative mobilisation for norm spoiling[67] in countries that endorse progressive policies, as in the EU. The global reach of engaged civil society is striking, including in states voting against such resolutions.

Taking account of these transnational actors complicates the simplistic characterisation of 'LGBTI friendly' and 'LGBTI unfriendly' states, in that some of the engaged nodes of moral conservative actors are based in states that are seen as more advanced on LGBTI rights. The active involvement of American groups in funding and connecting moral conservative advocacy is a case in point, given how fragile and fluctuating the United States' LGBTI foreign policy mandate is from government to government. It moved forward rapidly under the Obama and later the Biden administrations in incorporating LGBTI rights into its foreign policy[68] and backtracked substantially under the Trump administration, all while proliferating and exporting a committed activist base to challenge such rights at home and abroad in each of these periods.[69] Our data show that there is also no clear regional divide, as opposing actors challenge the dichotomies of Global North and South, East and West, secular and religious, global and local, or rich and poor across world

[66]Kristina Stoeckl and Ksenia Medvedeva, 'Double bind at the UN: Western actors, Russia, and the traditionalist agenda', *Global Constitutionalism*, 7:3 (2018), pp. 383–421.

[67]Sanders, 'Norm spoiling'.

[68]Burack, *Because We Are Human*; Elise Carlson-Rainer, *From Pariah to Priority: How LGBTI Rights Became a Pillar of American and Swedish Foreign Policy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2021).

[69]Bob, *The Global Right Wing and the Clash*.

regions. Data complicates simplified portrayals of certain global regions or international organisations – such as the EU – as more or less LGBTI-friendly.[70] In reality, they are more complex, and their position is complicated by powerful actors that firmly bind them to transnational moral conservative advocacy networks.

In sum, bound by TANs as the double-helix model suggests, the opposition creates strange bedfellows and global coalitions that disguise much of the complexity and incoherence within their networks. Their coalitions exist not only between countries, but also between groups and individuals across borders, and they lead not only to geopolitical divisions but to conflicts within societies. At times, the actors that make up the movement itself are far more multifaceted and elaborate – spanning varied national backgrounds and religious affiliations – than we might anticipate. We turn now to the language that binds these actors together, which we call the *moral conservative narrative*, and the threat that this narrative attributes to LGBTI rights.

Claims, strategies, and venues of resistance

The emergence of a common language is an important indicator that actors are cooperating.[71] This is true for progressive mobilisation, for which concepts of 'equal rights', 'non-discrimination', or 'pride' were formative, but is similarly the case for their opposition. For 21st-century moral conservatism, the common language that drives cooperation is largely rooted in the resistance to LGBTI rights. Moral conservative actors construct their language of resistance around the concept of gender ideology, and opposition to it has mobilised otherwise distinct campaigns, such as the French *La Manif pour tous* campaign and the Colombian opposition to the FARC peace deal.[72] In doing so, they have consistently painted LGBTI rights as antithetical to traditional values – whatever those happen to denote in any given context. The centrality of gender for both advocates and detractors of LGBTI rights buttresses the claim that we make with the double-helix model, namely that the opposing TANs engage in a reciprocal dance of framing and counter-framing.

The work of Kuhar and Paternotte and their collaborators has shaped much of our thinking on this phenomenon of gender ideology.[73] The anti-gender movement's campaigns and even banners in far-flung contexts use near-identical iconography, these scholars show. While these activists develop their own locally resonant and hybrid versions of resistance to LGBTI rights, they actively borrow discourses and repertoires of contention via various modes of diffusion – through both direct network ties and indirect observation and emulation.[74] Our data confirm this. For example, Russian Orthodox activists in our interviews stated how they drew inspiration from the American homeschooling wing of the moral conservative TAN for the argument that children need to be 'protected' from so-called indoctrination by laws restricting instruction on gender identity or homosexuality in schools. Such arguments spread via the TAN we have studied – and even circle back, for example, as Americans supporting contemporary 'Don't Say Gay' bills drew inspiration from a 2021 Hungarian law. Speaking at the WCF in Chisinau, a participant told us: 'They want to indoctrinate innocent children, get them thinking sexually way before their time and introduce them to homosexuality and all this junk, which is not natural.'[75]

[70] Markus Thiel, *The European Union's International Promotion of LGBTI Rights: Promises and Pitfalls* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

[71] Sidney Tarrow, *The Language of Contention: Revolutions in Words, 1688–2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 201.

[72] *La Manif pour tous* developed in response to marriage equality, arguing for 'traditional family' rights. Initially successful, the Colombian opposition to the FARC peace deal also deployed a rhetoric of threat around LGBTI rights, arguing that the deal – which included LGBTI protections – would dismantle traditional values.

[73] Kuhar and Paternotte, *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe*.

[74] Möser, Ramme, and Takács, *Paradoxical Right-Wing Sexual Politics*; David Paternotte, 'Global times, global debates? Same-sex marriage worldwide', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 22:4 (2015), pp. 653–74.

[75] Anonymous, Interview (2018).

Kuhar and Paternotte trace the terms gender ideology, gender theory, and (anti-)genderism to John Paul II's Catholic Church and its insistence on the difference between and complementarity of the sexes.[76] By coining the term gender ideology, the Vatican was responding directly to the rapid changes around gender equality and LGBTI rights in the 1990s – especially the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 and the World Conference for Women in Beijing in 1995. The Church opposed the movements behind these changes and the scholarly community that had spearheaded them by deconstructing essentialist assumptions around both gender and sexuality. Moral conservatives use the term gender ideology to refer to 'abhorred ethical and social reforms, namely sexual and reproductive rights, same-sex marriage and adoption, new reproductive technologies, sex education, gender mainstreaming, protection against gender violence and others'.[77]

In this narrative, gender ideology is the central threat to the reproduction of *man*kind and societies in general, not only domestically but across the globe. In their repackaging of the contemporary meaning of gender, moral conservative actors have targeted a wide-ranging umbrella of political movements dealing with women's rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression. Especially in the second decade of the new century, the growing acceptance of marriage equality and gender recognition has put LGBTI rights centrally in the purview of the moral conservative movement.[78] LGBTI movements and rights are constructed as an authoritative threat, with the potential to denigrate the nation and religion and dismantle a multitude of core values – through the 'sexualisation of children', the disruption of the 'natural order', and the rejection of 'common sense'.[79]

Our fieldwork made such arguments abundantly clear. The 2012 WCF Congress in Madrid featured sections on 'the revolution against the family' and 'the homosexual lobby'. Similarly, the 2018 WCF Congress in Chisinau included a section entitled 'Against the Family – The International Networks Undermining Family and Faith' and 'Gender Ideology – The Latest Attack on the Family and the Legal Challenges It Poses'. The gender ideology narrative is also deeply entwined with contemporary populist rhetoric that stimulates fear around corrupt elites, decadent intergovernmental organisations (such as the UN and EU), and Marxism. Take for example this quote from Ryszard Legutko, Member of the European Parliament for the Polish far-right Law and Justice (PIS) party:

> Gender is an ideological plague. Genderism has become an official doctrine of the European Union. It is put everywhere, in every document, regardless of the subject. Repressive legal regulations and a gigantic censorship apparatus can follow genderism, and often they do.[80]

Our interviews give a similar account – for example, this one by Russian WCF leader, Alexey Komov, which links to conspiracy theory:

> In the West, you know, there was after the French Revolution, there was a lot of efforts to destroy any religious identity, then in the recent 100 years to destroy any national identity … Now, they are destroying gender identities, and I think the ultimate battle will be transhumanism, posthumanism. So, to get rid of your human identity. Experiments, make a genetic fusion with animals, with robots, with a computer, drugs, enhancing memory, physical ability,

[76]Kuhar and Paternotte, *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe*.

[77]Kuhar and Paternotte, *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe*, p. 5.

[78]Graff and Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics*, p. 5.

[79]Kuhar and Paternotte, *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe*, p. 5; Velasco, 'Transnational backlash and the deinstitutionalization of liberal norms'.

[80]Cited also in Elżbieta Adamiak, 'Imaginations about gender and LGBTI and their function in ideological discourses in Poland today', *Zentrum für Osteuropa- und Internationale Studien* (2021), available at: {https://www.zois-berlin.de/veranstaltungen/veranstaltungsarchiv/anti-genderism-in-central-and-eastern-europe-a-question-of-religion}.

> people connected to, you know, supercomputers or microchips, etc. They already have these movements of transhumans.[81]

Of course, this rhetorical construction of threat is also noticeably deployed by a variety of state actors and illustrated in a speech Russian president Vladimir Putin gave at a plenary session of the Valdai International Discussion Club:

> Some people in the West believe that an aggressive elimination of entire pages from their own history … and the demand to give up the traditional notions of mother, father, family and even gender, they believe that all of these are the mileposts on the path towards social renewal … In a number of Western countries, [this] debate over men's and women's rights has turned into a perfect phantasmagoria … Anyone who dares mention that men and women actually exist, which is a biological fact, risks being ostracized … I repeat, this is nothing new; in the 1920s, the so-called Soviet Kulturtraegers also invented some newspeak believing they were creating a new consciousness and changing values that way.[82]

Putin's remarks are not singular, and they are also not in response to a looming likelihood of trans rights and gender recognition on the near horizon in Russia. Instead, they are directly reminiscent of a globally circulating discourse we observe. For instance, US congresswoman Michele Bachman claims 'transgender Marxists – transgender Black Marxists … are seeking the overthrow of the United States and the dissolution of the traditional family', while the Polish president Andrei Duda called 'LGBT ideology' worse than communism in his 2020 election campaign.[83] In doing so, Duda adopted the assertion common in our interviews that 'LGBT ideology' was, interestingly, both a new Bolshevism ('the heirs of Trotsky')[84] *and* Nazism. In yet another articulation of this shared discourse, Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán flattered members of the US Republican Party at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Dallas in 2022 by comparing their domestic political opponents with the totalitarian rulers who once subjugated his homeland:

> If somebody has doubts whether progressive liberals and communists are the same, just ask us Hungarians. We fought them both, and I can tell you they are the same.[85]

The moral conservative movement paints gender ideology, and by extension LGBTI rights, as a Trojan horse that will erase difference between the sexes, ultimately disassemble the social order altogether and possibly establish a 'totalitarian' global order reminiscent of Soviet communism.[86] The above quotes exemplify how transnational moral conservative advocacy creates and draws on a shared language and narrative, which is the basis for their cooperation. Indeed, moral conservative resistance needs the issue of LGBTI rights to bind them together because the coherence among them is otherwise loose, as we demonstrated in the previous section. Kováts and Põim have called 'gender ideology' a symbolic glue that binds together moral conservative activists' loose claims and long and varied history.[87] LGBTI rights provide the shallow foundation on which such a loose

[81] Alexey Komov, Interview (2017).

[82] Vladimir Putin, 'Valdai Discussion Club meeting', *Presented at the Valdai Discussion Club meeting, Sochi, Russia* (October 2021), available at: {http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66975}.

[83] Sakshi Venkatraman and Brooke Sopelsa, '"Transgender Black Marxists" seek to overthrow U.S., Trump backer Michele Bachmann says', *NBC News* (9 September 2020), available at {https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/transgender-black-marxists-seek-overthrow-u-s-trump-backer-michele-n1239683}.

[84] Komov, Interview.

[85] Cited in Matt Welch, 'Viktor Orbán flatters Republicans with the lie that progressive liberals and communists are "the same"', *Reason Magazine* (8 May 2022), available at: {https://reason.com/2022/08/05/viktor-orban-flatters-republicans-with-the-lie-that-progressive-liberals-and-communists-are-the-same/}.

[86] Romain Carnac, 'Imaginary enemy, real wounds: Counter-movements, "gender theory", and the French Catholic church', *Social Movement Studies*, 19:1 (2020), pp. 63–81.

[87] Emil Edenborg, 'Anti-gender politics as discourse coalitions: Russia's domestic and international promotion of "traditional values"', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 70:2 (2023), pp. 175–84; Kováts and Põim, *Gender as Symbolic Glue*.

coherence is established – the issue set that produces agreement among varied moral conservative actors.

A key component of our argument is that the global motivation and success of today's transnationally connected anti-gender movements lie not only in the fact that they are *against* LGBTI rights, but that they stand *for* an alternative to what is perceived as the liberal political mainstream. By misconstructing LGBTI rights as the substance of liberal progressivism, the anti-gender movement brands itself as an alternative to political, cultural, and (partly) even economic liberalism. In doing so, the resistance to LGBTI rights allows moral conservative actors to perpetuate and repackage 20th-century ideological antagonisms between East and West, North and South, right and left, conservative and progressive, from which they draw political advantages. The conservative worldview generally privileges tradition, religion, patriarchy, and authority over progressivism, secularism, equality, and liberty. This tension is built into modern politics and is therefore not new. What is new, however, is the centrality of LGBTI rights for today's articulation of this tension. The global 'backlash'[88] against gender and LGBTI rights reaches deep into international institutions such as the UN or Council of Europe, the populist right in many countries of the world have taken up the anti-LGBTI rights cause, and resistance is high (and felt as urgent) in many countries with no or very limited social mobilisation in favour of LGBTI rights.

LGBTIQ responses

To be sure, LGBTI rights activists have worked tirelessly to respond to the narratives they have been met with, as the double-helix model would predict. This has resulted in a new language of their own resistance, a process that is a key element of the model. New strategic best practices in this vein have proliferated in recent years, centring around the deployment of 'family values' and religious frames in their own work. For example, the aptly titled guide 'Using Family as a Frame in Social Justice Activism'[89] has its roots in a transnational 2016 conference called 'Reclaiming Family Values', we discovered in our fieldwork. In the webinar that accompanied its launch, LGBTIQ organiser Bruno Selun said:

> It's important [to reclaim family values] … for a simple reason: we progressives have left the field of family and family values almost entirely to conservatives and neoconservatives over the last few years. As a result, when you talk about family values to anyone, they would usually think mother, father, child, marriage. Because conservatives and neoconservatives have successfully claimed that for themselves, and we've let them do it … it is important to reclaim family values and the family itself, from our perspective.[90]

A workshop organised at another gathering highlighted similar claims:

> This workshop outlines past and current opportunities, challenges and backlash in the European political landscape with regards to rainbow families and poses the question of how to respond to these, for instance by reclaiming the (conservative) notion of family values.[91]

For many LGBTI activists, taking back the family values frame was a method for reaching people who felt left behind by societal changes – communities that were swayed by the contemporary populist arguments the moral conservative movement exploited.

[88] Jennifer M. Piscopo and Denise M. Walsch, 'Introduction: Backlash and the future of feminism', *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society*, 45:2 (2020), pp. 265–78.

[89] Coffin, Alice, Evelyne Paradis, Gordan Bosanac, Gráinne Healy, Julia Ehrt, Matthew Hart, Nicky McIntyre, et al. 2017. 'Using Family as a Frame in Social Justice Activism: A Guide for Activists and Funders in Europe', *Creative Commons*, available at: {http://www.reclaimingfamilyvalues.eu/}, accessed 1 January 2022.

[90] 'Reclaiming Family Values Webinar' (2017).

[91] ILGA-Europe, '"Delegate Packet"' (2016), p. 40.

While reclaiming family or religion is authentically meaningful for some activists, it is also consciously a tool for others. As one participant at a meeting we observed stated:

> As a lesbian feminist activist, in my group [redacted], of course we're never going to get married, of course we don't want children, but we fought for marriage and reproductive rights, because it's an important tool … You can't ever say you're opposed to 'the family'; so we have to deal with it … We can use 'family values' to win allies. Faith is important.

Irish activists explained that they purposefully declared themselves 'the family values campaign' to take the wind out of the sails of the opposition. On deploying a frame of religious reconciliation in the Polish 'Let them see us' campaign, an activist reflected:

> Do we want to support a patriarchal institution defined by the religious institutions that oppose us? It's stifling to even think about supporting this institution [and the Catholic Church] with compromise. But at the end of the day, we want our rights, everyone can relate to the family, for better or worse.

Dozens of comparable examples illustrate attempts to influence these communities and demarcate this shift in LGBTI activism. For example, the ILGA World Conference in 2022 included a workshop called 'Building our Collective Strength to Counter the Anti-Gender Opposition', which was intended as a space to innovate in response to moral conservative activism. In our book that accompanies this piece, we also offer a content analysis that systematically shows growth in the use of these frames in LGBTI organising in the last decade.[92] For scholars, these shifts in the LGBTI movement's master frames – to include religion and family values – make all the more sense if we theorise contestation between opposing movements at the international level. For this reason, we propose the double-helix metaphor to reorient our thinking, given that the LGBTI movement operates in parallel to its opposition at all levels of politics. While variation in LGBTI and anti-LGBTI rights mobilisation depends on local conditions, double-helix parallels across time and space, and processes of framing and counter-framing, are observable.

The growing focus on LGBTI rights by the moral conservative movement in transnational spaces has led to a shift in LGBTI frames themselves. The double-helix model that we presented in Figure 1 illustrates this dynamic, in which the two opposing networks pursue their goals in awareness of the other and reflexively react to each other. The moral conservative movement's mirroring strategies and their use of rights frames indicate how they themselves are shaped by the LGBTI rights TAN and by the real successes of movements for equal rights and non-discrimination. At the same time, however, the conservative response to that initial success uses LGBTI rights as a proxy for preexisting ideological divisions that continue to hold power over the political imagination of many people, thus allowing political and state actors to perpetuate politically opportune dichotomies between East and West, North and South, right and left, conservative and progressive. The double-helix model helps us to understand this variation across time and space, as well as the changing terrain of LGBTI rights globally.

Conclusion

The central place of sexuality and gender in geopolitics is important for political science and IR scholarship to recognise. After the EU sanctioned Hungary for passing legislation that prohibited LGBTIQ 'propaganda', various US conservative politicians (including former vice president Mike Pence and former attorney general Jeff Sessions) travelled to Hungary to see 'what an actual

[92] Phillip M. Ayoub and Kristina Stoeckl, *The Global Fight against LGBTI Rights: How Transnational Conservative Networks Target Sexual and Gender Minorities* (New York: New York University Press, forthcoming).

pro-family, socially conservative government acts like', as conservative writer Rod Dreher put it.[93] Indeed, Budapest hosted the influential Conservative Political Action Conference gathering of US Republican politicians and conservatives in 2022. And the US conservative news host Tucker Carlson travelled to meet with Hungarian prime minister Victor Orbán and beam his views on 'Christian civilisation' and family values to Carlson's 3.2 million US viewers.[94] This article has tried to make sense of phenomena such as these and demonstrate their relevance for existing IR theory on transnational advocacy around contested norms.

We looked at key international fora where the relationship between pro-LGBTI and anti-LGBTI movements is levied, theorising (a) the double-helix nature of their interaction, before tracing (b) the key transnational actors involved in LGBTI rights resistance and (c) their primary strategies and claims. First, the theory is intended to contribute to models of human rights diffusion, which we argue are complicated by a double-spiral, or double-helix, of opposing networks. This means we must understand the interaction between movements that shape how human rights are framed (both for LGBTI and anti-LGBTI actors) and pushed for in multiple domestic contexts. Progressive human rights TANs do not operate in a vacuum in the global sphere. Thereafter, we drew on data from the network of the World Congress of Families to demonstrate the global reach of the moral conservative movement. Finally, we returned to our point that the moral conservative narrative is an important language of resistance that brings these disparate actors together across borders. This narrative helps explain various phenomena – from conservative ecumenism to cross-border populism – and features in important political debates of our times. We highlight the pattern of repackaging old fault lines in new ways and emphasise the challenges that this creates for gender justice and LGBTI rights movements, which are not free to forge a new political landscape on their own terms but are instead brought into a simplified – and to some extent bygone – terrain of confrontation. It behoves us to grasp this narrative, in order to understand many of the global contests around progressive politics, as well as the rise of illiberalism and the polarised nature of contemporary normative change.

While we have zeroed in on the illustrative example of LGBTI rights, the double-helix metaphor has currency for human rights research and activism more generally. This model may be applicable to a variety of contested issue areas in world politics, especially those that are prone to unfold with opposing networks organising around competing interpretations of basic human rights claims. For example, we see similarities in the opposing organising around racial equality and racism, with various groups, primarily in Western countries, advocating for the racial equality of historically marginalised minorities, while an emerging TAN of white nationalists has begun to organise against racial equality using the rhetoric of 'colour blindness' or 'reverse racism' – i.e. appropriating the language of discrimination to claim that white people are on the receiving end of discrimination.[95] While *white* nationalism is surely the greatest threat to the liberal international order in this example, future research will have to monitor if advocates of white nationalism make strange bedfellows with other opponents to racial equality, such as groups advocating for racial nationalism that have sprung up in India and China.[96]

Explicating the study of a complex transnational movement – one that takes on different shapes and forms across varied states and with a multitude of diverse actors – is challenging within the space of an article. We thus made a set of analytical choices that delineate the scope of the project that open doors for future research. First, characterising these movements as two competing ideologies is complicated by the fact that many LGBTIQ people (and some organisations that represent them) have deeply held religious beliefs that are intrinsic to their identities. Similarly, research on homonationalism shows that some arguments that the global anti-LGBTI rights resistance makes

[93] Elisabeth Zerofsky, 'How the American right fell in love with Hungary', *The New York Times* (19 October 2021), available at: {https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/19/magazine/viktor-orban-rod-dreher.html}.

[94] Zerofsky, 'How the American right fell in love with Hungary'.

[95] Búzás, 'Racism and antiracism', pp. 455–6.

[96] Búzás, 'Racism and antiracism'.

can be alluring to some women and LGBTIQ people.[97] These conflictive identity complexities exist within each individual strand of the double helix. Second, the opposition to LGBTI rights goes hand in hand with broader moral conservative issues that are focused on other gender justice goals.[98] The concurrent battles to roll back abortion rights in many countries, as in the US Supreme Court's 24 June 2022 decision to strike down Roe v. Wade, exemplify this. We acknowledge these wider connections, and we see our parsing out of LGBTI rights for the purposes of this piece as a heuristic device that allows us to develop the comparison between LGBTI and anti-LGBTI rights mobilisation as two opposing networks that operate in relation to each other – often deploying related strategies, claims, and venues.

While they do not direct their anti-gender ideology tactic exclusively at LGBTI rights, moral conservatives attribute gender ideology primarily to international LGBTI rights advocates, whose work they reframe in simultaneously creative and troubling ways.[99] For many of the moral conservative actors we spoke with, resistance to LGBTI rights is the central tentpole of their wide tent, the point around which their wide tent becomes narrow. This narrowing is the work of transnational actors, and this article has mainly been concerned with how and why they accomplish it. We hope that by engaging with it, readers will begin to gain a handle on who the actors are, how they operate, what claims they circulate, and their growing impact on world politics. Indeed, it is an element of change in contemporary politics the political science field must also consider.

Supplementary material. The supplementary material for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210523000530

Video Abstract: To view the online video abstract, please visit: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210523000530

Acknowledgements. We are immensely grateful to the editors and anonymous reviewers for sharp guidance that has vastly improved this paper. For constructive critique, needed encouragement, and valuable direction on the larger project associated with this piece, we are particularly grateful to Kristopher Velasco, Madeline Baer, Olga Brzezinska, Anthony Chase, Roman Kuhar, Sabine Lang, Igor Logvinenko, Gabriele Magni, Jennifer Piscopo, David Paternotte, Peter Matjašič, Cynthia Burack, Zoltán Búzás, Jennifer Dixon, Arturo Jimenez-Bacardi, Anna Korteweg, Violetta Zentai, Felipe Gonzalez Santos, Julia Mourão Permoser, Dmitry Uzlaner, Caroline Hill, Olena Kostenko, Hannah Jordan, Kerstin Prohaska, Vera Pozzi. Pasquale Annicchino, Regina Elsner, Brandon Gallaher, Susanna Mancini, Andrey Shishkov, Aristotle Papanikolaou, Chrissy Stroop, Lauren Bauman, Jaya Duckworth, Oli Vorster, and Nicola Righetti. For opportunities to workshop this research, we thank José Casanova and Georgetown University for the 'The Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church' conference in 2022; to Alison Brysk and the Mellichamp Program at the University of California at Santa Barbara for the 'Generating Human Rights' workshop in 2023; to Nina Hall and Nina Reiners and the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies for the 'Challenges and Opportunities in Global and Transnational Advocacy' conference in 2023; and finally to Eszter Polgári and Tamás Dombos, and Katja Kahlina, Heta Rundgren, and Riikka Taavetti, for productive conversations at the Central European University and at Université Paris 8, respectively.

Funding statement. This research received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) Standing Grant Standing Grant: POSEC, grant nr. ERC-STG-2015–676804; 2016-2022.

[97] Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[98] The moral conservative movement also targets women's reproductive rights, arguably the original target (Krizsán and Roggeband); gender justice broadly (Htun and Weldon, Piscopo and Walsch); gender studies (Engeli); sex and gender education; and LGBTI rights (e.g. same-sex partnership, adoption, surrogacy, and gender recognition). Isabelle Engeli, 'Gender and sexuality research in the age of populism: Lessons for political science', *European Political Science*, 19:2 (2020), pp. 226–35; Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice: State Action on Women's Rights around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Andrea Krizsán and Conny Roggeband, 'Opposing the Istanbul Convention: Actors, strategies and frames', in Andrea Krizsán and Conny Roggeband (eds), *Politicizing Gender and Democracy in the Context of the Istanbul Convention* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), pp. 55–119; Piscopo and Walsch, 'Introduction'.

[99] Kuhar and Paternotte, *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe*, p. 8.

Phiollip M. Ayoub is a professor in the Department of Political Science at University College London and co-editor of the *European Journal of Politics and Gender*. He is the author of three books, including *When States Come Out: Europe's Sexual Minorities and the Politics of Visibility* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Kristina Stoeckl is a professor in the Department of Political Science at Luiss University in Rome. She is the author of several books, including The Moralist International: Russia in the Global Culture Wars (co-authored with Dmitry Uzlaner, Fordham University Press, 2022) and The Russian Orthodox Church and Human Rights (Routledge, 2014).

Cite this article: Ayoub, P. M., Stoeckl, K. 2024. The double-helix entanglements of transnational advocacy: Moral conservative resistance to LGBTI rights. *Review of International Studies* **50,** 289–311. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210523000530