Nationalism and homophobia in Central and Eastern Europe

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Introduction

In terms of LGBT rights, few organisations have done as much to promote the legal equality of sexual minorities as the European Union. Especially since the inclusion of sexual orientation in the equalities agenda through Article 19 (formerly Article 13) of Treaty on the European Union (TEU), there has been increased pressure at the European level for existing members and accession states to promote the equal rights of their LGBT citizens (see chapter 1). Despite similar top-down pressure, however, the degree of legal equality for LGBT individuals – not to mention social attitudes towards homosexuality – differs markedly across the region, with the situation particularly difficult in the states of the EU's Eastern Partnership. The aim of this chapter is to suggest that the failure of Europeanisation – understood here as the adoption of EU laws and values – to liberalise attitudes towards sexual minorities in Central and Eastern Europe can be explained in large part with reference to the nation. In line with the conclusions of Freyburg and Richter (2010) and Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005) on the need to move beyond rationalist arguments and incorporate ideational factors to explain the relative success or failure of Europeanisation, I argue that in many Central and East European member states and accession countries homosexuality clashes with discourses of national identity, which have greater resonance among the population. The chapter will also demonstrate that EU support for LGBT equality can also have a negative impact on attitudes towards non-heteronormative individuals in states that are neither EU member states nor candidate countries in that nationalist politicians use the EU's more liberal position towards LGBT rights to draw a boundary between the 'decadent West' and 'traditional East' for their own social and political purposes. The analysis will focus in particular on the case studies of Latvia, Serbia and Russia to show that in each case the marginalisation of LGBT individuals is legitimised with calls to 'the defence of the nation'.

The first part of the chapter will examine the nature of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe and why nationalism emerged as such a major component of the post-communist transition in much of the region, before going on to examine the perceived relationship between nationality and homosexuality from the perspective of various actors at different levels of analysis. The main body of the article will focus on the supposed threat posed by homosexuality to

the continued existence of the nation and to national norms and values as well as the politicisation of homophobia by nationalist politicians to scapegoat LGBT citizens in the name of the nation.

Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe

Unlike in Western Europe, where nations emerged out of largely centralised states, the proto-nations of Central and Eastern Europe were usually subject communities of large multi-ethnic empires, where 'the frontiers of an existing state and of a rising nationality rarely coincided' (Kohn 1967: 457). As the local intelligentsias in Central and Eastern Europe who took up the nationalist ideals were often isolated from the ethnically heterogeneous aristocratic elites, on the one hand, and the illiterate peasantry, on the other, they mobilised popular support by appealing to shared culture, myths of common descent and common ancestry, infusing the idea of the nation as a political community with ethno-cultural characteristics and thereby making a shared identity a political imperative (Smith 1996: 140-1). While the division of Western and Eastern Europe into civic and ethnic nations is useful to understand how European nations emerged, such a clear division is no longer credible from an academic perspective. While it would be wrong therefore to suggest that ethnicity plays no role in the national identities of Western nations, the idea of nations as natural communities united by shared biology, culture and history is however particularly dominant in political discourse in Central and Eastern Europe, as Franjo Tuđman, former President of Croatia, demonstrates quite clearly:

> Nations […] grow up in a natural manner, in the objective and complex historical process, as a result of the development of all those material and spiritual forces which in a given area shape the national being of individual nations on the basis of blood, linguistic and cultural identity, and the common vital interests and links of fate between the ethnic community and the common homeland and the common historical traditions and aims. […] Nations are the irreplaceable cells of the human community or of the whole of mankind's being. This fact cannot be disputed in any way. (in Spencer and Wollman 2002: 27)

This understanding of nations is not restricted to nationalists such as President Tuđman but is a view shared by most everyday citizens. Among academics, the prevailing view is that nations are socially constructed (Suny 2001; Gellner 1996; Hobsbawm 1995; Breuilly 1993). Even theorists who emphasise the pre-modern roots of contemporary national identities, such as Anthony Smith, admit that '[t]here is, at least in the case of historically well-preserved *ethnie*, a choice of motifs and myths from which different interest groups and classes can fashion their own readings of the communal past to which they belong' (1996: 179). Of course, the success of a social construction is that is seems

natural. And, outside of academia, the dominant view is that nations are natural communities, united by shared biology, culture and history, stretching back centuries if not millennia and marching forward towards a common future (Gil-White 2001). Before we go on to discuss the impact of nationalism on perceptions of homosexuality in Central and Eastern Europe, we must first understand why nationalism became such a key component of social and political life after 1989.

The collapse of communism led simultaneously to dramatic new gains for liberal democracy and a resurgence of nationalism. The antipathy of communism towards both democracy and nationality ensured that both were embraced as the legitimating principles on which the new sovereign states of Central and Eastern Europe would rebuild their societies (Linz and Stepan 1996). Although democracy and nationalism do share some of the same aims, their conflicting logics soon became apparent and the commitment of many former communist states to the principles of democracy was frequently undermined by an upsurge in nationalist feeling, with ethnic politics emerging as a major component of the post-communist transition throughout much of Central and Eastern Europe. So why was this?

The nationalist forces that emerged after 1989 did not appear *ex nihilo*. To understand the resurgence of nationalism in the post-communist period, we must first examine the factors which (inadvertently) fuelled nationalist feelings during the communist era – even if such feelings could not be freely manifested. Firstly, we have to remember that the communist modernisation programmes encouraged urbanisation, industrialisation, mass education, increased literacy and social mobility – all factors which, according to the leading theories of nationalism, promote national awareness (Gellner 1996; Hobsbawm 1995; Smith 1996). This was particularly evident in the USSR where, through the establishment of 15 Soviet Socialist Republics, the regime created *quasi* nation-states with their own territories, names, constitutions, administrations, legislatures and cultural and scientific institutions. Furthermore, the system of personal nationality meant that everyone had an official ethnicity. Individuals were unable to choose their own nationality, based on their language, residence or identity, but had to take that of their parents (Brubaker 1999). Everyone knew their ethnic identity. There were no grey areas, the boundaries were clear. Therefore, as Brubaker explains, 'the Soviet regime pervasively institutionalised […] territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality as fundamental social categories. In so doing, it inadvertently created a political field supremely conducive to nationalism.' (Bru-

baker 1999: 17) Moreover, the nationalism that emerged was specifically ethnic in nature. Basing nationality on descent and not residence or language precluded the development of civic identities.

Despite Marxism's antipathy towards nationality and its characterisation as 'false consciousness', communist citizens did define themselves primarily in national terms, an unintended consequence of the regimes' attempts to do away with civil society (Suny 1993). Communist parties throughout the region banned or tried to ban all intermediary associations, as they did not want any challengers to their power and as it was far easier to control an atomised society of individuals than organised collectivities (Schöpflin 1993). The resultant absence of collectivities such as classes, status groups or professional associations meant that national affiliation provided the only seemingly 'natural' bond between individuals that was available. Over the years, therefore, the relative 'dominance of the national discourse defined its constituents almost exclusively as subjects of the nation, effacing the multiplicity of possible identities' (Brubaker 1999: 160).

While, during state socialism it was communist ideology that helped the state and its citizens make sense of the world, the discrediting of Marxism-Leninism in the late eighties and the early nineties meant that the people of Central and Eastern Europe had no cognitive, ideological or organisational patterns to interpret the world around them or guide their decisions about whom to trust or with whom to co-operate (Mole 2013). And it was particularly during the period of unprecedented social, economic and political upheaval triggered by the collapse of state socialism that the people of Central and Eastern Europe sought stability, cohesion and 'familiar norms in an attempt to maximise predictability in an uncertain world' (Inglehart and Baker 2000: 28). However, as the absence of firmly established political and legal institutions meant that the newly sovereign states were unable to provide social cohesion on the basis of shared citizenship rights for all members of the state, aspiring political leaders sought instead to generate solidarity and at the same time to legitimate their claims to power by appealing to ethnicity and 'historical rights'. In the absence of civil society, they were left unchallenged to do so. Ethnicity could be sold to the electorate as a response to the universalism and artificial cosmopolitanism associated with the externally imposed communist system. In the context of the economic and political uncertainty characterising the post-communist period, nationalist politicians argued that shared ethnic identity granted the titular nationalities of the states of Central and Eastern Europe the right to the state's political, economic and material resources and entitled them to exclude members of the out-

group. Where no shared identity existed, members of the titular nationality questioned 'why people who define themselves differently but live side by side with them and whose solidarities they cannot rely on should be politically or economically or culturally favoured' (Schöpflin 2000: 39). While difference was largely defined in ethnic terms, non-normative sexuality was also seen as a dangerous marker of non-conformity, as we shall see later.

Nationality/homosexuality

The first thing to make clear when discussing the relationship between nationality and homosexuality is that there is, of course, no *a priori* relationship between nationality and homosexuality (Weeks 1992). The relationship between sexual categories and the meaning ascribed to them is culturally and historically contingent. As Jeffrey Weeks explains, 'homosexuality, like all forms of sexuality, has different meanings in different cultures – so much so that it becomes difficult to find any common essence which links the different ways it is lived' (1992: xi). The fact that certain societies are more supportive of LGBT equality than others, for example, shows that it is impossible to find a meta-level explanation for the meanings ascribed to homosexuality that holds across space and time; sexual categories and the meanings assigned to them are constructed by institutions such as the Church, the family and secular institutions, including parliaments but also the law and especially medicine.[1] Institutions such as these 'produce and/or reproduce ideologies and norms, which define social expectations' with regard to acceptable sexual mores and behaviours (Stuhlhofer and Sandfort 2005: 5). Attaching specific meanings to homosexuality and excluding others is achieved through the establishment of a specific discourse that 'constitutes and organises social relations around a particular structure of meanings' (Doty 1996: 239). With a focus on the discursive construction of the relationship between nationality and homosexuality, I will show how specific meaning is attached to non-heteronormative sexualities by nationalist political subjects for social and political purposes. While my main argument is that homophobia is manipulated by nationalist politicians (see section on 'Political homophobia' below), I acknowledge that the latter draw on non-subjective discourses of nationality and homosexuality to ensure greater resonance; here I am using non-subjective discourse in the Foucauldian sense of a discourse, the first usage of which cannot be traced to a specific subject but which over the years has become common knowledge, a taken-for-granted 'truth' (see Foucault 1978). It is non-subjective discourses of nationality and homosexuality I shall discuss first.

To return to the nature of national collectivities in Central and Eastern Europe, the belief in the nation as an extended kin group, united by shared biology, culture and history, can be maintained only by naturalising the patriarchal family and associated public and private roles of men and women to ensure ethnic continuity as well as internal homogeneity and a clear demarcation from the Other (Yuval-Davis 1997).[2] Analysing the above tropes in turn, we will see how the presence of individuals performing non-heteronormative sexualities are perceived as a threat to the continued existence of the nation.

Continued existence of the nation

Given their emphasis on a shared bloodline and common descent, ethnic nations are more likely to have a patriarchal gender order and absolute rules on sexuality (Nagel 2000; Nagel 2003). The ethnic continuity of the nation is maintained by means of the patriarchal family, underpinned by heteronormative and patriarchal conceptions of masculinity and femininity. The most important role that women can play in the nation is that of the mother, producing sons (and daughters) for the nation and inculcating in them the ethnic language and culture, while men act as defenders and decision-makers. While this hierarchical relationship first emerged in the private sphere, it is then used to justify men's control of the public sphere and the articulation of the public as superior to the private (Pateman 1988: 91-92). The nuclear family with its naturalised hierarchy between masculine and feminine and public and private is thus felt to be essential for the nation's past, present and continued future (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989: 7).

Regarding the reproduction of the nation, it is not just about women having babies but having the *right kind* of babies (Pryke 1998: 542). To ensure that the nation is reproduced in its desired form, the 'ethnosexual frontier', to use Joane Nagel's term, is 'surveilled and supervised, patrolled and policed, regulated and restricted' (2000: 113). As Anthias and Yuval-Davis argue (1989: 10):

> Often the distinction between one ethnic group and another is constituted centrally by the sexual behaviour of women. For example, a 'true' Sikh or Cypriot girl should behave in sexually appropriate ways. If she does not then neither her children nor herself may be constituted part of the 'community'.

While in reality the ethnosexual frontier is porous and elastic, considerable effort is put into ensuring that the purity of the national community remains unadulterated (Yuval-Davis 1997: 23). Responsibility for maintaining cultural boundaries lies almost exclusively with women, who are expected to perform traditional gender roles and cultural practices as a means of 'establishing markers of difference in the family and for the nation' (Novikova 2002: 330). In extreme cases, women who cross this frontier are at risk of being branded traitors (Nagel 2003: 141).

As the focus on the biological reproduction of the nation presupposes it to be heterosexual, gays and lesbians – by not having children – undermine the idea of the nation as a unified collectivity with a communal future, a view taken to extremes by former Polish President Lech Kaczynski, who argued that 'widespread homosexuality would lead to the disappearance of the human race' (Gal 1994: 269).[3] Moreover, the fact that homosexual sex is not procreative also means that it is seen as purely for pleasure and thus decadent – a very selfish, un-national value, one often ascribed to the threatening Other (Healey 2001). The construction of gay men as weak and effeminate and lesbians as strong and masculine thus confuses the patriarchal gender order and the public and private roles of men and women central to most ethno-national discourses. As such, lesbians often face considerable hostility, as they do not reproduce the role of mother in the heterosexual nuclear family and thus fail to pass on the traditions and cultural norms vital to the myth of the historicised national collective (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989: 7). To nationalists, any woman thought to be putting her sexual interests before the priority of national biological and cultural reproduction is considered an outrage (Gal 1994: 262).

Even if lesbians do have children, their contribution to the reproduction of the nation is unacknowledged as the children born are not the result of the traditional nuclear family, thereby weakening one of the key pillars of the nation. In addition, producing 'fatherless' children challenges the national norm of patrilineal naming convention. As Connor explains, 'the sense of kinship among members of a nation explains why surnames often serve as the principal marker of national identity,' identifying those babies who are legitimate members of the national community (1985: 52).[4] In parts of Central and Eastern Europe children are given not just the father's surname but also a patronymic derived from his first name. By removing men from the equation, lesbians problematise the need for this patrilineal signifier of national continuity and thereby threaten the stability of the nation.

National norms and values

To maintain a clear boundary and hierarchical relationship between the Self and Other, nationalism works to convey the idea of internal homogeneity through shared norms and values, creating positive distinctiveness vis-à-vis other nations and thereby enhancing the self-esteem of the national Self (Tajfel and Turner 1986). According to social psychologists, the perception of internal homogeneity is achieved by categorising the world into distinct nations, accentuating the differences among and similarities within nations and internalising these categories (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Turner 1987). To enhance one's self-esteem through membership of the nation requires individual members to align their beliefs and behaviours with the positive norms and values of the nation and reject those which challenge them. This behavioural conformity furthers the idea of acceptable and unacceptable beliefs and conduct. In his seminal work on nationalism and sexuality, Mosse shows how 'nationalist ideologies which arose in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Europe were associated with attempts on the part of national bourgeoisies to create national collectivities in their own image. This image was grounded in a specific gender division of labour, sexual orientation and ethnicity which involved notions of respectability and appropriate sexual behaviour' (in Charles and Hintjens 1998: 2; see also Peterson 1999). Heterosexuality thus became a taken-for-granted attribute of the nation and dominant group norm, against which actions and beliefs were judged.

Homosexuality is seen not just as deviating from but actually threating the norms on which the nation is built. In terms of nation-building, the presence of gay men threatens the homosocial male bonding required to forge the nation and defend it militarily, while homosexuals are also perceived as not possessing the typically masculine virtues of 'willpower, honour, courage' needed to inspire action in the name of the nation (Nagel 1998: 245). As Mosse argues, the 'ideal of masculinity […] as a symbol of personal and national regeneration' requires a countertype, an Other lacking in masculinity, against which the normative masculine ideal is strengthened and legitimised (1996: 4). These countertypes, of which homosexuals are a key group, do not just represent different types of masculinity but are constructed as 'enemies', whereby the 'line between modern masculinity and its enemies had to be sharply drawn in order that manliness as the symbol of a healthy society might gain strength from this contrast' (Mosse 1996: 67-68).[5] Nations therefore need to distinguish ''proper' homosociality from more explicitly sexualised male-male relations, a compulsion that requires the identification, isolation and containment of male homosexuality' (Parker et al. 1992: 6). While one could argue, according to Mosse, that normative masculinity could not exist with-

out its homosexual countertype, violence towards public manifestations of (what are perceived to be) effeminacy and unmanliness of homosexual men is therefore legitimised with reference to their 'enemy' status.

Furthermore, expressions of non-heteronormative sexuality demonstrate heterogeneity within the nation, challenging the belief in the internal homogeneity of the Self vis-à-vis the Other. By deviating from the norm, gays and lesbians are often branded deviant and abnormal. In Latvia, parliamentary deputy Peteris Tabuns's repeated emphasised Latvians' 'normal principles of morality', which he contrasted with the behavioural norms of homosexual men and lesbians, who are 'abnormally oriented', while former government minister Ainars Bastiks deemed Riga Pride to be offensive because 'an abnormality' was 'proclaimed as a normal occurrence' (Mozaīka 2007: 27, 25). Homosexuality is thus dangerous because it blurs the clearly defined and stoutly maintained 'distinction between normality and abnormality' (Mozaīka 2007: 30), which, according to George Mosse, has always 'provided the mechanism that enforced control and ensured security' (1985: 10).

In Central and Eastern Europe, one of the powerful national norms is religious adherence, a factor which explains opposition to LGBT equality in a number of states in the region. Throughout the centuries the words of St Paul (Romans I: 26-28) and narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis: 18-19) have been used to condemn same-sex practices. Indeed, the main branches of the Christian Church in Central and Eastern Europe have certainly been highly vocal in their condemnation of non-heteronormative sexuality. The current position of the Catholic Church to homosexuality is closely tied to procreation. Same-sex acts are considered sinful in that sexuality is presented as being 'naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children' (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2353). Homosexual acts thus 'close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.' (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2357) The position of the Orthodox Church is equally unequivocal. At the August 2000 Sacred Bishop's Council, the Russian Orthodox Church adopted 'The Basis of the Social Concept', setting out the Church's position on a range of social issues. The chapter entitled 'Problems of bioethics' makes it clear that:

> The Orthodox Church proceeds from the invariable conviction that the divinely established marital union of man and woman cannot be compared to the perverted manifestations of sexuality. She believes

> homosexuality to be a sinful distortion of human nature. … While treating people with homosexual inclinations with pastoral responsibility, the Church is resolutely against the attempts to present this sinful tendency as a "norm" and even something to be proud of and emulate.

In general, social science research confirms that strength of religious belief is the strongest predictor of negative attitudes to homosexuality. Rowatt et al. (2009) and Whitley (2009) explain the link between religious belief and intolerance towards gays and lesbians with reference to conservatism, i.e. there is a strong correlation between religiosity and conservatism and between conservatism and homophobia. Plugge-Foust and Strickland (2000) see the relationship between religiosity and homophobia somewhat differently, arguing that homophobia is an irrational thought process and that Christians are more likely to believe what others would consider irrational. In general, Herek and Glunt found that 'the more often that their subjects went to church, the more hostile those subjects were towards homosexuality' (in Plugge-Foust and Strickland 2000: 241). Even in nations with low levels of religiosity, such as Latvia, religion is used to legitimise the banning of gay pride marches. Aigars Kalvītis, Prime Minister, insisted: 'We are a state based on Christian values and we cannot advertise, let's say, things that are unacceptable to a large part of society. For sexual minorities to parade in the very heart of Riga, next to the Dome Church, is unacceptable'.[6] What the Latvian case shows is that negative attitudes towards homosexuality are not always conditioned by religion *per se* but rather by discourses of religion in identity narratives, constructed as a norm to legitimise a particular understanding of national community (see Ayoub 2014; Hall 2015; Pavasović Trošt and Slootmaeckers 2015).

What the above analysis shows is that the nation is understood as a natural phenomenon, growing out of extended kin groups, united by shared biology, culture, history, norms and values, stretching back centuries if not millennia and marching forward towards a common future. The continuity of the nation as well as its internal homogeneity and clear demarcation from the Other are ensured by means of endogenous biological reproduction, a myth that can be maintained only by naturalising the patriarchal family and associated public and private roles of men and women and, in particular, by controlling women's sexuality. Individuals performing non-normative sexualities are thought to threaten this national narrative by undermining the patriarchal family, failing to adhere to national stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, confusing the public/private roles of men and women, undermining the nation's internal homogeneity and deviating from its shared norms, especially those derived from religious teaching. As a result, ho-

mosexuality and nationality in some parts of Central and Eastern Europe are seen as not just conflicting but mutually exclusive, a belief reflected in a banner held by a protester at Riga gay pride in the summer of 2009, which read 'More gays, less Latvians' (sic).[7] However, the greatest threat that gays and lesbians are believed to pose to the continued existence of the nation is that they fail to reproduce. While this appears to be a genuinely held belief and has real effects on the lives of LGBT individuals, analytically, it is, of course, absolute nonsense. If the birth rate is falling, it is to the heterosexual majority that the nation's opprobrium should be directed. Indeed, the danger that homosexuality is supposed to pose to the nation is challenged by the very national myth which non-normative sexualities are supposed to threaten. If nations have existed for millennia, as nationalists would have us believe, their continued existence throughout the centuries can hardly be said to have been hampered by homosexuality, which has been recorded since the times of the Ancient Greeks.

From an academic perspective, we can see that the meanings attached to the relationship between nationality and homosexuality discussed above were not the result of a specific political project but should rather be understood as a non-subjective discourse. The threat to the nation posed by homosexuality is perceived as 'common knowledge', a taken-for-granted 'truth', and it is this 'truth' that nationalist politicians are able to manipulate to further their own particular ends, as we shall see below.

Political homophobia

I will now turn to subjective discourses of nationality/sexuality to demonstrate how specific meanings are attached to non-heteronormative sexualities by individual subjects in order to create moral leadership and social and political hierarchies and to legitimate particular truth-regimes. Russian President Vladimir Putin's instrumental use of homophobic discourse with the declared aim of defending Russian national values will be particularly illustrative here, as will similar debates in Latvia and Serbia.

As the track-records of nationalist politicians demonstrate, attacking homosexuality can be a very useful strategy for discrediting opponents and shoring up support among nationalist and conservative voters, a sizeable proportion of the electorate in many Central and East European states (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012). It is the alienness of homosexuality and its association with Western values that proves particularly useful to nationalists, allowing them

to construct gays and lesbians as disloyal enemies of the state and reinforcing the idea that homosexuality is a foreign import; in Latvia it was even claimed that homosexuality did not exist until the country joined the European Union.[8] And it is especially when their political positions are felt to be under threat that nationalists will resort to attacking sexual minorities.

In Latvia it was the parliamentary debate in 2006 over the EU's Employment Equality Directive, banning sexual orientation discrimination in employment, that prompted MPs to publicly reject EU norms on LGBT equality. Although, as an EU member state, Latvia was obliged to implement the legislation, the parliament initially voted it down; indeed, Latvia was the last member state of the EU to transpose the directive. The opposition to the law was framed as an attempt to safeguard the continued existence of the nation. During the debate, Janis Smits, Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Commission, all but likened homosexuality to an act of genocide and warned that any MP who voted in favour of the Employment Equality Directive 'should no longer go and place flowers by the Monument to Freedom, because with his vote he will be the same as those people who once tried to annihilate our people' (Mozaīka 2007: 30).

The perceived 'national threat' in Latvia was a consequence of 50 years of Soviet occupation, as a result of which the desired ethnic conceptualisation of Latvian-ness was threatened by the presence of hundreds of thousands of Russian-speaking, Soviet-era immigrants. To counter this threat, politicians sought to exclude phenomena that would undermine the ethnic reproduction of the nation, and any behaviour perceived to discourage procreation was presented as a threat to the future of the national collectivity. In addition to 'limiting women's reproductive options by working symbolically to delegitimise abortion and empirically to cripple the work of newly established family planning organisations and sex educators,' MPs also sought to demonise sexual practices that failed to produce children, with gays and lesbians a popular target (Rivkin-Fish 2006: 152). In view of the fact that the nation was presented as being in danger of dying out due to the low birth rate in Latvia, the issues of procreation and motherhood shifted from the private to the public sphere, while the resultant emphasis on women's roles as mothers gave 'traditionalist claims legitimacy among broad sectors of the populations' and allowed discrimination against gay men and lesbians to be legitimated in the name of the future of the Latvian ethnic nation (Stukuls 1999: 541).

Attacking homosexuality has been a particularly common political strategy due to the nature of Latvian politics, which has been dominated by the right and centre-right since the country regained its independence. As there has been no left or centre-left presence in Latvian governments since 1991, the adversarial basis of politics is missing. According to Chantal Mouffe, this is bad for democracy:

> A well functioning democracy calls for a clash of democratic political positions. This is what the confrontation between left and right needs to be about. Such a confrontation should provide collective forms of identification strong enough to mobilise political passions .[…] When political frontiers become blurred, disaffection with political parties sets in and one witnesses the growth of other types of collective identities, around nationalist, religious or ethnic forms of identification (Mouffe 2005: 30).

Given that the governing parties in Latvia are all similar from a policy perspective, they need to find other ways to differentiate themselves from their ideological fellow-travellers. As a result, the confrontation between different political positions is replaced by confrontation between 'essentialist forms of identification or non-negotiable moral values' (Mouffe 2005: 30). In other words, in Latvia the battle between right and left has been replaced by the battle between right and wrong. The absence of adversarial confrontation helps us understand why issues of morality, such as LGBT rights or the promotion of nationalist policies, have become *political* issues and why the requirement to transpose EU anti-discrimination legislation failed to result in greater tolerance of non-heteronormative sexualities.[9]

In Serbia it was the political ascendancy of pro-Western reformers in the late 1990s, threatening the power of the nationalist Socialist Party of Serbia, that prompted Slobodan Milosević and his allies to divide political actors into 'patriots' and 'enemies of the state', determined by their rejection or support of LGBT rights, respectively. The instrumental use of homophobia was facilitated by the ethnicisation of Serbian society during and following the violent collapse of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, which had recast gender and sexual norms in highly traditional terms and raised heterosexual reproduction to the level of state policy in a bid to ensure ethnic homogeneity (Bracewell 1996; Veličković 2012). The resultant heteronormative discourses gave rise to rhetorical and physical attacks on 'sexual non-conformity and non-heterosexual practices', which were further legitimised by the Orthodox Church's strong support for the cultural nationalism of the Milosević regime (Kahlina 2013: 8).

Against this backdrop, LGBT rights became a touchstone in the subsequent struggle over the future direction of Serbia – along the nationalist or 'European' path – on the cusp of the new millennium. For nationalists, any Serbian liberal intellectual or NGO fighting for LGBT rights was perceived as '"feminized" and marked both as anti-Serbian and in the service of particular interests' (Greenberg, 2006, p. 334). Even the judge assigned to investigate the murder in 1999 of Dejan Nebrigić, president of the LGBT rights association *Arkadija*, characterised the movement not as a civil society organisation but as 'a gateway for all kinds of sects conducting a special war against our country'.[10]

While Serbia was officially granted candidate status in 2012, there remains considerable opposition to integration into the European Union from various political quarters, and the requirement to transpose EU anti-discrimination directives as well as the expectation that Pride Parades be allowed to take place are seen as an attack on traditional national values. In her analysis of political responses to the introduction of the anti-discrimination law, Stakić identified how opponents legitimised their position by constructing homosexuality as abnormal and degenerate, whereby the law was seen as being 'imposed on the Serbian Government by the powerful Western states, and was aimed at destroying the Serbian nation' (2011: 32). Moreover, reflecting the very close ties between nationality and religion in Serbia, the law was considered illegitimate as it had not been approved by the Orthodox Church. The role of the Church as the ultimate arbiter of Serbian national values was evident in its repeated interventions in parliamentary debates over the anti-discrimination legislation – particularly the articles relating to sexual orientation and gender identity (Stakić 2011: 33). And while the Church officially condemned the violence against the participants in the 2010 Pride Parade in Belgrade, individual representatives, such as Amfilohije Radović, Archbishop of Cetinje, all but legitimised the attacks:

> Yesterday we watched the stench poisoning the capital of Serbia, scarier than uranium. That was the biggest stench of Sodom that the modern civilization raised to the pedestal of the deity. You see, the violence of wrongheaded infidels caused more violence. Now they are wondering whose fault it was, and they are calling our children hooligans. (in Stakić 2011: 39)

In seeking to discredit those who favour closer ties with the EU, therefore, nationalist politicians in Serbia have used homosexuality as a means to divide the political field into 'friends' and 'enemies', the latter encompassing not just those pushing specifically for LGBT rights but – given the association of homosexuality with foreignness – also any

politicians supporting Western-style reforms (see Pavasović Trošt and Slootmaeckers, 2015). The policies of reform-minded activists are either delegitimised by their association with LGBT movements and their Western allies or the activists are discouraged from participating in social and political activity by the threat of violence, itself legitimised by the need of patriots to protect the nation from homosexuality, as the words of Archbishop Radović demonstrate. The construction of a truth-regime whereby only heterosexuals are patriots limits the political agency of LGBT activists and their allies. Homophobic rhetoric and action, legitimised by the need to 'defend national values' in the face of Western decadence, thus proves to be an effective way of dividing and discrediting political opponents and of legitimising authoritarian and anti-reform policies.

In Russia, it was the mass demonstrations in protest against the falsification of the results during the 2011 presidential elections which prompted Putin to seek to reaffirm his political legitimacy by protecting 'traditional Russian values' in the face of alien ideas from the West, such as tolerance of homosexual propaganda (President of Russia 2014). While the Russian Federation is neither a member state nor a candidate country of the European Union, the latter's support for LGBT rights also has an impact on attitudes towards homosexuality in Russia in that nationalist politicians can use the EU's more liberal position towards LGBT rights to draw a boundary between the 'decadent West' and 'traditional East' for their own social and political purposes (President of Russia 2013).

Following a number of regional bills banning the spreading of 'propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations', Putin signed the federal law on 30 June 2013. Under the law individuals and organisations can be fined for disseminating information about 'non-traditional sexual orientations' among minors or promoting 'the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional relationships'.[11] The inclusion of the phrase 'among minors' ensures that practically every public LGBT event will violate the law. In May 2012 LGBT activist Nikolay Alexeyev was convicted for breaching the regional St Petersburg law by picketing St Petersburg City Hall with a banner, which read 'Homosexuality is not a perversion'. Alexeyev's insistence that there were no minors present at the City Hall can be taken as proof that the law was not motivated by a desire to protect Russian children or the Russian nation more broadly but was rather the latest in a series of legislative measures used by the state to intimidate political opponents and to generate an atmosphere of legal disquiet.

Appeals to tradition and 'the symbolic resource of the collective past' have thus provided politicians in Russia with a 'powerful lever for political mobilisation' aimed at strengthening national unity in the face of perceived internal and external enemies (Pecherskaya 2013: 96). According to Wilkinson, homophobia in Russia thus 'functions as a Slavophile political shorthand for national identity and traditional values' (2014: 368). Restricting LGBT rights enables Putin to clamp down on actual and potential opponents and shore up support among the conservative majority. In addition, it has allows him to entrench traditional Russian values in the face of the spread of Western liberal ideas, which he blames for corrupting the nation's youth and fuelling opposition to his rule. And, thirdly, tapping into pre-existing antipathy towards sexual minorities, he has been able to use homosexuality as a lightning rod to divert attention from political corruption and Russia's weakening economy.

To ensure that the traditional values/anti-gay discourse resonates with Russian society, Putin frames it as part of a strategy to ensure the survival of the Russian nation. The survival of the physical nation requires a marked increase in the Russian birth rate, which plummeted following the collapse of the Soviet Union. To achieve this goal, according to Putin in a television interview in January 2014, Russia needs to 'cleanse' itself of gay people.[12] To reinforce its specifically *Russian* identity, the nation needs to define itself against the US and the European Union, rejecting their liberal values. The culture clash between Russia and the West over LGBT rights was evident from the Kremlin-backed human rights report published in January 2014, in which Moscow lashed out at the European Union for its 'aggressive promotion' of the rights of sexual minorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013: 7). It was also apparent in Putin's address in December 2013, in which he defended Russia's conservative values as a bulwark against 'so-called tolerance', which was 'genderless and infertile' (President of Russia 2013).

Putin's defence of traditional national values chimes with the Russian belief in its national exceptionalism, which can be traced from medieval Moscow's claim to be the 'Third Rome', through the Slavophiles' insistence on Russia's 'special path' and all the way to Lenin's communist messianism (Duncan 2000). Since the collapse of the USSR, the Russian political elite has been searching for Russia's special mission, and establishing its as the defender of traditional national values against Western decadence and tolerance of homosexuality can be seen as a way for Russia to fulfil its historical destiny. Putin's construction of homosexuality as both non-traditional and thereby non-Russian, in tandem with his rigorous defence of traditional values as the foundation of the Russian nation's greatness, have

therefore successfully legitimised the marginalisation of the country's LGBT citizens. The international outcry these policies triggered was vociferous but only further strengthened the association of sexual minorities with the West. Putin could simply provide this Western tolerance of homosexuality at the expense of Russian national values as further proof that he was right all along.

Conclusion

While it would be wrong to assume that all nationalists are homophobic, it would appear to be the case that ethnic nations, with their greater emphasis on a shared bloodline and common descent, are more likely to have a patriarchal understanding of gender roles and stricter rules on sexuality. As the ethnic continuity of the nation as well as its internal homogeneity and clear demarcation from the Other are ensured by means of endogenous biological reproduction through the patriarchal family and underpinned by heteronormative and patriarchal conceptions of masculinity and femininity, it is also more likely that ethnic nationalists will perceive sexual minorities as threatening this national narrative by undermining the family, failing to adhere to national stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, confusing the public/private roles of men and women, challenging the nation's internal homogeneity and deviating from its shared norms, especially those derived from religious teaching. Again, while it would be wrong to assume that contemporary nations in Central and Eastern Europe are *a priori* more ethnic than anywhere else, the legacies of communism, the effects of the transition from communism and the nature of politics in certain post-communist states have resulted in ethnic nationalism becoming a key component of social and political life in the region since 1989. Taken together, the ethnicisation of politics and the greater antipathy of ethnic nationalists towards sexual minorities have resulted in a situation where attitudes towards homosexuality in many (but not all) post-communist states are more negative than in most (but not all) West European societies, enabling nationalist politicians to exploit pre-existing homophobia for personal political gain.

To return to Freyburg and Richter's (2010) and Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier's (2005) conclusions that EU norms are less likely to be adopted if they conflict with national identity, we can see that the ability of the EU to promote greater tolerance of sexual diversity by means of 'social learning' is hampered by the fact that in many Central and East European members and accession countries non-heteronormative sexualities clash with discourses of national identity, which have greater resonance among the population, while politicians in third-countries can also manipu-

late the EU's tolerance of LGBT individuals as a means of drawing a boundary between the 'decadent West' and 'traditional East' for their own political purposes.

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Footnotes

[1] Indeed, historians of sexuality argue that it was the spread of modern medicine and Freudian psychoanalysis that produced the social categories of homosexual and heterosexual (Schluter 2002: 29). Prior to the late nineteenth century people behaved homosexually or heterosexually - or both - but were never classified as such.

[2] This understanding of the relationship between the ethnic nation and the patriarchal family is an example of a non-subjective discourse.

[3] 'Fury at Polish president gay threat warning', *Irish Independent*, 21 February 2007; http://www.independent.ie/national-news/fury-at-polish-president-gay-threat-warning-56059.html (Accessed on 25 June 2008)

[4] Historically, ethnic minorities in some CEE states, such as Bulgaria, have even been forced to adopt the surname conventions of the dominant ethnic group.

[5] In addition to homosexuals, other countertypes have historically included Jews, Gypsies, vagrants, habitual criminals and the insane (Mosse 1996: 12).

[6] 'Latvia gay pride given go-ahead', *BBC News Online*, 22 July 2005; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4708617.stm (Accessed on 23 June 2008)

[7] 'Flying the flag: why pride is still relevant', *The Independent*, 18 June 2009; http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/love-sex/flyingthe-flag-why-pride-is-still-relevant-1707556.html (Accessed on 20 June 2009).

[8] 'Crucible of hate', *The Guardian*, 1 June 2007; http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jun/01/gayrights.poland (Accessed on 3 March 2010).

[9] For a more detailed discussion of these debates in Latvia, see Mole 2011.

[10] 'Homosexuals join list of enemies of Yugoslav state', Reuters, 6 January 1999; www.asylumlaw.org/docs/sexualminorities/Bosnia-Herzegovina_2_SO_[95-99].pdf (Accessed on 31 August 2014)

[11] The full text is available on the *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Dokumenty* website: http://www.rg.ru/2013/06/30/deti-site-dok.html (Accessed on 14 July 2015).

[12] 'Putin: Russia must 'cleanse' itself of gays, but they shouldn't fear Sochi', *Aljazeera America*, 19 January 2014; http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/1/19/putin-russia-mustcleanseitselfofgays.html (Accessed on 21 April 2015)