

From Orientalism to Homonationalism: Queer Politics, Islamophobia and Europeanization in Kosovo

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Abstract

This paper investigates the convergence of European Union enlargement strategies and queer politics in the production of Islamophobia in Kosovo. Through a reading of recent homophobic attacks in Kosovo, it examines how the incorporation of LGBTI politics into the EU enlargement assemblages generate a representational praxis of queer communities in Kosovo under threat by Muslim extremists. This paper proposes that the Europeanization of LGBTI rights depoliticizes queer communities and singles them out for protection as victims of Islamic fundamentalism by creating binary and exclusionary Queer/Islam divisions that prevent the emergence of intersectional solidarities and subjectivities such as queer and Muslim. In this context, European financed 'coming out' projects gain a new meaning in Kosovo, one where the promotion of visibility for certain queer subjects works simultaneously to expose Muslim 'extremists'. Queer acceptance in Islamophobic times, then, becomes the ultimate test of who can and cannot become European citizen.

Keywords

Kosovo – EU enlargement – Eastern Europe – homonationalism – Islam – queer – orientalism

Queer¹ political formations in Eastern Europe have increasingly become another discursive space where EU multicultural citizenship is negotiated, often at a

1 For the purpose of this article, I am using the term *queer* as an umbrella to include all non-heterosexual and gender-variant people.

junction of simple opposites between secular/religious, modern/traditional, patriarchy/gender equality, and east/west binaries. In the last decade, European and American queer and feminist scholarship has challenged these binaries by examining the ways in which queer communities are normalized, depoliticized and co-opted into hegemonic neoliberal structures through the exclusion of other identitarian dimensions, such as class, race, and religion. Puar's work on how sexual rights become complicit with the US hegemony by a "discursive tactic that disaggregates US national gays and queers from racial and sexual others," or *homonationalism*, is one of the most pertinent examples of this critique (Puar 2007: 39). Schulman (2011) employs the concept of *pink-washing* to capture Israel's "deliberate strategy to conceal the continuing violations of Palestinians[''] rights through promoting LGBT emancipation, while Scott's (2011) work on *sexularism*, or the notion that only secularism is compatible with sexual rights, constitutes another example of a disruption in the unsuspecting discourse on sexual rights and citizenship.

More recently, this body of scholarship has been applied to explore the EU enlargement as a gendered and sexualized process of creating multicultural citizenship by isolating the struggles of sexual rights communities from the struggles of other marginalized groups. Kulpa, for instance, calls this process *leveraged pedagogy*, a "hegemonic didactical relation where the CEE [Central and Eastern Europe] figures as an object of the West/European 'pedagogy,' and is framed as permanently 'post-communist,' 'in transition' (i.e., not liberal, not yet, not enough), and homophobic" (Kulpa 2014: 431–48). In the last decade, as the European Union has come to recognize and inscribe certain homosexual lifestyles and identities into EU citizenship,² certain queer communities tend to be singled out by the EU as sexualized vulnerable 'others,' as victims in need of protection and the intervention of the EU to gain political agency and citizenship. This representation of queer communities depicts them in need of paternalistic guidance before they acquire full political agency, meanwhile allowing the EU to position itself as the container of progress and modernity to be aspired to by all, particularly those populations identified as potential members of the EU. Attacks on queer communities in Eastern Europe are then contextualized in the discourse of post-conflict populist politics and post-socialist³ religious revivalism, where long transitions characterized by unemployment, corruption, and poverty have produced a nationalist and religious-right populism that endangers the freedoms of queer citizens. The successful 'transition' from post-socialist and post-conflict

2 See, for instance, the latest guidelines issued by the Council of the European Union.

3 For the purpose of this article, I am using the term *post-socialist* as an umbrella to include both current post-socialist conditions and their socialist precursors.

societies, in addition to subsequent accession and assimilation into the European Union, is the teleology through which the EU, in cooperation with local political elites, structures the new politics of belonging. Queer rights discourse thus becomes one of the most significant spaces where anxieties around Europeanization take place.

The tendency in most of the scholarship on the Europeanization of queer rights in Eastern Europe has been to adjust complex post-socialist realities and frequently group all experiences together under a broader critique of post-socialist 'transition' and 'Europeanization' studies. While there are many similarities in how queer rights discourses have been incorporated into the overall European Union eastern enlargement processes, decolonizing queer critique in Europe requires not only merging the post-colonial with the post-socialist critique of Europeanization,⁴ but also exposing how Islamophobia figures in mainstream queer rights debates in the 'center' as well as in the 'periphery' of Europe. El-Tayeb (2012: 80), for instance, notes how the "Othering of Muslims, including queers, is a European phenomenon, that in fact the Europeanization of the continent's nation-states is in no small part manifest in a shared Islamophobia and a framing of immigration as the main threat to the continental union".

In exposing the convergence of Islamophobia and queer rights discourses in Europe among migrant and Muslim communities however, these studies often overlook how Muslims in the 'periphery' of Europe become targets of Islamophobia through queer rights discourses embedded in EU enlargement politics. Similarly, studies of how queer rights projects have been incorporated in the EU enlargement discourse in post-socialist Eastern Europe, such as Ayoub and Paternotte's (2014) *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe: A Rainbow Europe?*, while examining how the EU instrumentalizes queer rights in the service of EU enlargement, neglect the differences of how these discourses figure in Muslim majority countries in Eastern Europe. Moreover, studies of how Islamophobia figures in gender and sexual rights in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, such as Massad's (2004) critique of the Gay International and its implications in neo-colonial formations, also discount the experiences of Muslim communities in Eastern Europe. This disregard may be in part due to dominant spatial and temporal configurations of Muslims in the Balkans as being outside colonial histories and Middle Eastern geographies. Seeking to extend these analyses to the Balkans, I look at how Islamophobia figures in queer rights discourses in Kosovo in the larger EU enlargement processes.

4 For more on this, see Rexhepi (2016).

The case of Kosovo, where the continued presence of an EU supervisory mission (EULEX) with executive powers, combined with the precarious nature of Kosovo's sovereignty, provides a glaring example of European homonationalism. While Kosovo is the only country in the Balkans to recognize gay marriage (Fowler 2014) and include provisions against discrimination based on sexual orientation in its constitution (Zuin and Apostolidis 2008),⁵ it consistently rates as one of the most homophobic societies in Europe. What accounts for this stark contrast between the desire of the Kosovo governing structures and EU-oriented elites and the pervasive homophobia in the population at large?

This paper examines how certain queer political formations in Kosovo are incorporated in the Europeanization discourse and singled out to be brought under EU protection as a vulnerable sexual minority. I argue that through Orientalist representations of the Balkans as the space of 'ambiguous particularity' (Todorova 1997), neither East nor West, queer identities in Kosovo are depoliticized and constructed as vulnerable victims of the 'transition' that can only be liberated either by moving to Europe or bringing Europe home. In both instances, they are represented as outsiders to their immediate geographies; their representation, as victims under siege by the very communities they live in, renders them already modern and European, in contrast to the rest of their communities, which are depicted as traditional, backward and religious. Queers in Kosovo then come to emblemize a Europe under siege that must be liberated. The attempt of the EU to save queers in Kosovo is a self-referential mission to save itself from its own homophobic past while maintaining the binaries of tradition vs. progress in the process of enlargement that allow the EU to stand for progress and modernity. These "hegemonic conceptions of progress," Butler (2008:1) argues, "define themselves over and against a pre-modern temporality that they produce for the purposes of their own self-legitimation". I argue that EU conceptions of progress operate through various NGOs that validate the multiplication of European sexualities in the enlargement process by articulating them against local 'repressed' sexualities and backward Muslim cultures. Examining this multiplication of sexualities by European NGOs in Romania and Albania for instance, Woodcock (2004: 11), for instance, argues that these sexualities are "privileged as primary and political forms of identification ... in the form of the heterosexual/homosexual binary" and can "damage existing, more subtle, networks of communication of sexualities and identities".

The goal of this paper is not to question the rights of queer individuals and communities to identify with the EU-sponsored gay rights politics but to

5 Protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was also incorporated into Kosovo's anti-discrimination law. See: Fauchier (2014).

examine how some of these projects become complicit in various forms of Islamophobia and how suggestions that queer rights are only compatible with European values may undermine and/or silence alternative sexualities, subjectivities and living in difference strategies. I do not intend to speculate about alternatives to the current state of affairs but to rather take apart, as Halberstam (2013: 6) suggests, “the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls” so that we can “reshape desire, reorient hope, reimagine possibility and do so separate from the fantasies nestled into rights and respectability”. In other words, the compliance of critique of queer rights with hegemonic formations does not require the interpellation of alternative or non-normative sexualities, as this “incitement to discourse,” as Foucault reminds us (1999), may want to contain, catalogue or co-opt alternative sexualities and subjectivities in the registry of already-existing epistemologies on sexuality and rights. Inviting-in, disidentifications, imperceptibility and invisibility may be just some of the living strategies queers are utilizing to confront the normative liberal politics of coming-out and visibility to avoid being absorbed into neoliberal governmental technologies.

I begin by discussing how Kosovo queer narratives are incorporated into the ‘return to Europe’ paradigm, considering how the EU singles out queer communities from other marginalized groups, particularly Muslim communities as the archetypical European ‘other.’ I then examine how the organization *Kosovo 2.0* utilizes Orientalizing and homonationalist strategies as a measure of Kosovo’s belonging in- or outside of Europe, by locating queer subjects in the European enlargement discourse and separating them from those deemed anti-European. I call this process EU-washing. Subsequently, I examine how the queer rights discourse becomes a disciplining measure through which Muslim communities are policed in the production of a homogenized representational mandate for Islam in Kosovo. Finally, I argue that the dominant political discourse on European integration in Kosovo is represented as the only way to rescue this society from its religious and poor others and fully recover the Kosovars as Europeans from their non-European, be it socialist or Ottoman, past.

Kosovar Queers Under Siege

... Kosovar gays are forced to live in the world that they can see and hear just across the way in Western Europe. They can look across at what people in other European societies have been able to achieve, but it is solace and torment in equal parts. They have the unpleasant choice of staying locked up

in their dark houses staring across the divide, or they can make a run for it, across the dangerous bridges, dodging the snipers that exist all around them.

AMBROSE 2009: online

EU civilizational discourse works selectively through the inclusion of those groups that are deemed compatible with 'European' values and the exclusion and othering of those groups that are deemed 'non-European' or 'anti-European' (Kovacevic 2008; Kuus 2004; Tekin 2005). As a result, accession of countries into the European Union can only occur once the main antagonistic actors are fully neutralized into the broader discourse of unification with Europe, particularly, it seems, those countries with a majority Muslim population.⁶ These measures, be they explicit or implicit directives coming from various EU offices, are undertaken as preemptive actions to compensate for any potential security deficit that may result from bringing majority Muslim countries into the European Union. Islamic practices come to be seen as barriers to the development of a modern European citizenship, particularly in Kosovo where homophobic religious outbursts are often equated with potential threats to national security, and Europeanization in debates that frame religious communities as traditional and backward elements that endanger the secular and EU future of Kosovo—in the process ignoring the existence of intersectional subjectivities such as queer Muslims. What makes queer subjects more absorbable in the Europeanization process in a way that Muslims are not?

Similarly, local elite platforms of European multi-ethnic and multicultural nations informed by European demands have been shaped in the 'return to Europe' or 'reunification with Europe' pattern. This discourse suggests that the history of Kosovo was not a constitutive part of European history; rather, it was subjected to a 'non-European' authority (i.e., the Ottoman Empire or Socialism are both assumed incompatible with European values) and therefore this historical experience is rendered void, or a burden that must be addressed as a prerequisite for 'reuniting with Europe.' Proving *Europeanness* then not only becomes the *sine qua non* of EU integration processes but constitutes a disciplinary measure that allows the EU to intervene in the internal affairs of Kosovo to help it reach "European standards" (Ker-Lindsay and Economides 2012). Moreover, when anti-discrimination measures are adopted, political elites justify such stipulations by invoking EU regulations and mandatory legal harmonization

6 For instance, in 2009, the Young Federalist European Movement accused the EU of creating Muslim ghettos with its visa policies when the EU approved new visa regimes that allow Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Serbian citizens to travel into the EU but not Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, and Turkey—all majority Muslim countries. See: Birca (2009).

as the main reason and impetus behind these changes. By so doing, these moderate liberal discourses have been directly feeding into the increasing resistance towards sexual rights being read locally as another external imposition of the European Union into the internal affairs of Kosovo.

As the European liberal order has reproduced itself along with its contradictions, it has frequently reduced local sites of European enlargement in the Balkans to depoliticized spaces. This is particularly the case in instances where EU enlargement coincides with liberal peace-building missions, such as in Kosovo, where the local is almost always viewed as peripheral, subaltern, and pre-modern.⁷ The search for the local in European enlargement projects is generally constructed under initiatives that seek to strengthen local 'civil society' or create one that conforms to the model desired by the EU. A recent EU project in Kosovo, "Challenging homophobia: Building support systems for LGBT people in Kosovo," which provided €140 422.00, is one such example. The project was designed to "strengthen the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform, in particular by supporting the interests of LGBT people, their representation in public life and their political participation" (European Union Office in Kosovo 2014).

These projects are always shaped in a 'problem-solution' imperative, decontextualized and depoliticized, removed from any other factor of marginalization. The EU presence in Kosovo is thus centered on coming-out politics and the construction of a specific queer subject, one that corresponds to the EU queer rights narrative. This approach, as Manalansan argues, produces same-sex practices that do not fall into the Western category of liberation through coming out, homophobic or pre-modern (Manalansan 2003: 478). Moreover, Manalansan (2003: 478) also points to the spatial and temporal configurations of the gay liberation narrative and its universalizing claim centered in the idea that pre-modern homosexual practices can only discover political agency and modern subjectivity through a developmental narrative, where "gay gains meaning according to a developmental model that begins with an unliberated, 'prepolitical' homosexual practice and that culminates in a liberated, 'out', politicized 'modern', 'gay' subjectivity". Similarly, by singling out 'gays' who can be liberated through 'coming out,' the EU not only engages in distancing same-sex and trans communities from the context of their own societies, but also makes intersectional issues such as class, ethnicity, and religion invisible, and fails to account for the various complexities of overlapping subjectivities.

Furthermore, by positioning itself as the key ally of the queers in Kosovo, the EU incorporates the local queer communities into what Papantonopoulou

7 See: Richmond (2009).

calls the ‘cycle of debt’ (Papantonopoulou 2014: 281). Utilizing the concept of the economies of gratitude, where material capital is exchanged for affective/moral capital, in her study of transgendered subjects, pinkwashing and Israel, Papantonopoulou (2014) notes that in “the Zionist economy of gratitude, the transgender subject is perpetually indebted to capitalism and the West for allowing her to exist” (281). The EU develops a similar cycle of debt through the financing of projects, such as those mentioned above, that proliferate the idea that queers in Kosovo are indebted to the EU for protecting them from and allowing them to exist in their own communities. In the case of Kosovo, the economy-of-gratitude paradigm takes on an additional feature whereby the government also capitalizes on the ‘cycle of debt’ incurred by the queer communities towards EU integration.

The support for the LGBT community by the government in Kosovo is employed both as a measure of defense and as proof of Europeanization. The modality of defense here is deployed to distance the Kosovars from their already-perceived non-Europeaness—by virtue of their religion and socialist past—and to reaffirm their Europeaness by embracing queer rights as loyalty and conformity to the European project. Moreover, local NGOs are also engaged in reaffirming their European belonging through the promotion of queer rights. In Kosovo, the aim of the *Kosovo 2.0*, a non-governmental media organization funded mainly by European and American sponsors and run by Kosovar Besa Luçi and Dutchman Joan de Boer, is to “breach ethnic and moral taboos and boundaries” and change “the worldwide image of Kosovo” (Free Press Unlimited 2011, online). Thus, unlike “Kosovo 1.0,” which may have stood for a traditional, post-socialist, and post-conflict conceptualization of Kosovo, *Kosovo 2.0* seeks to rescue Kosovo from its own past by producing a new, updated Kosovo, one that is synchronous to developments in Europe. The organization’s promotion of their magazine’s issue on sex came under attack in 2012 by ‘fundamentalist religious people.’⁸ The debate that followed the attacks centered around queer rights and the secular-religious divide. Responding to the attacks, one Kosovar reporter wrote: “Taliban Albanians are a disease in our society. If left untreated and you intervene late, just like cancer, it is unlikely there will be a cure for it. Such militants aim to slaughter reason” (Quinones 2013).

Similarly debates around queer rights are frequently framed in the context of ‘us and them,’ in other words, the educated, modern and the uneducated, uninformed, patriarchal Muslims who refuse to be part of Europe. Thus, local queer narratives are employed to police ‘extremists’ as a patriotic duty of the nation in the ‘return to Europe’ narrative. This discourse then allows for the EU

⁸ See, for instance, Heiland, Comet, and Reintke (2013).

to engage in a *homocolonialist* project, rendering “resistant populations inferior in relation to superior Western values rather than simply being populations that are ‘lagging behind’ Western development” (Rahman 2014: 274). Homocolonialism, however, is not simply deployed to produce the EU as an exceptional space of progress and modernity, but also to free Europe from its own association with violence, extremism, and homophobia by dislocating them outside the imaginary borders of Europe. As Kosovo is conjoined in the geographical imagination of Europe, its struggle with violence and extremist Islam is externalized further east. Thus, it is argued that Islamic extremism comes from the Middle East through Islamic organizations that infiltrated Kosovo after the conflict. For example, in the *Kosovo 2.0* magazine issue on religion, Robelli argues that “in Kosovo, Islamic organizations became active during the chaos that ensued after the war ended in 1999, mainly under a humanitarian disguise,” creating a conflict between local “tolerant Islam practices for centuries and the new religious guardians that were indoctrinated in foreign countries” (Robelli 2012: 44).

By suggesting that the extremist and violent forms of Islam have nothing to do with ‘traditional’ Islam in Kosovo, traditional Islam in Kosovo is separated from the other more violent movements of Islam that come from somewhere else. This claim not only reduces Kosovar Muslims to being mere observers of larger changes in the Muslim world and not a constitutive part of them, but it also locates Kosovo outside of the Muslim world while not incorporating it fully in the European one, marking it as a space supposedly free of violence and extremism. This in-betweenness of Muslims in the Balkans, which Todorova (1997) refers to as *particular ambiguity*, calls for full secularization of Muslims and produces secularism as a universal phenomenon, fully separate from its Christian and European roots. The defense of secularism is then also equated with the defense of queer subjects. Muslim communities are then called on to prove their Europeanness by articulating a discourse on Islam in Kosovo that does not pose a threat to Europe, one that is ‘tolerant’ and ‘European.’ Political formations guided by Islamic principles, such as the Levizja Bashkohu in Kosovo, come under continuous attacks for fear of them wanting to challenge the secular nature of the state by questioning the rights of queer communities. In an interview, an editor of *Kosovo 2.0* notes that:

Levizja Bashkohu has openly come out for the protection of certain traditional moral values and we fear that these religious movements in general, who are against the minimalist Islam of our traditional practice, can be more active in their reaction to secularism, against the rights of the LGBT community.

RUDAKU 2012

By invoking 'minimalist' and 'moderate' Islam as 'traditional' to Kosovo, queer communities engage in defining the type of Islam that is acceptable and 'traditional,' dismissing other forms of Islam as external and foreign. This attempt to externalize 'bad' Islam outside the geographic imaginaries of Europe is not exclusive to Kosovo. There has been a European-wide attempt to construct 'good European Muslims,' particularly among second and third generation Muslim migrants, against the newly arrived Muslims who infiltrate their communities and radicalize otherwise peaceful European Muslims. In the Netherlands for instance, there has been an ongoing debate on training local imams instead of importing them to prevent radicalization under the assumption that foreign imams are not inoculated in Dutch culture and are homophobic. In these processes, queer rights discourse "offer[s] a language for the critique of Islam and multiculturalism—an idiom that underscores an Orientalist discourse that projects Muslim citizens knowable and produces them as objects of critique" (Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkens 2010: 970). These configurations serve the purpose of 'saving' local Islam by purging it from the new foreign intrusions. In an article titled "The Enemy Within: Kosovo's Moral Crusaders," published in *Kosovo 2.0*, Marku writes:

The war is over and another one has begun. Except this time the enemy is more insidious, more difficult to contain and eliminate. This is a war of values, and it will determine the shape that our country takes. If the lesson of history teaches us anything, it's that nothing can be taken for granted. The freedoms that we have, the ones that we fought and waited for, can all be blown away like leaves in the wind unless we draw a line that cannot be crossed. I would like to raise my children in a Kosovo where they can be what they are and say what they believe without fear of intimidation and punishment by those who disagree with them. I hope you do, too.

MARKU 2014

As the Islamophobic language circulating within the EU is appropriated to discipline local Muslims by creating a 'line that can't be crossed,' the symbolic line not only segregates queers from other marginalized groups within Kosovo, but seeks to move Kosovo from its in-betweenness fully within the boundaries of Europe. By locating the threat of extremist Islam outside the Islamic traditions of Kosovo, Kosovo is freed from being perceived as the internal other within the EU. Islam then becomes the marker that binds Kosovo to its non-European past; only by removing and assimilating this mark can Kosovo recover as a European nation free from its Islamic past. The protection and promotion of queer rights serves as an appropriate tool to then 'contain and eliminate' the

new enemy as a necessary measure if Kosovo wants to fully integrate into the EU. A Kosovar journalist noted:

Kosovo, already challenged by a bad image in the world, because of crime and corruption, now has to deal with an additional mark, radical Islam. While this problem is considered present in many other parts of Europe, in the case of Kosovo, which is in the process of integration, it can potentially block the [EU] integration process.

XHARRA 2014

These fears reflect local appropriations of EU anxieties over the integration of Kosovar Muslims into the European Union. While religion is often debated in the case of Turkey's accession to the EU, in the case of Kosovo it is usually made invisible or replaced by debates around post-conflict democratization and multi-ethnic coexistence, and not necessarily the secular-religious divide. This framing also allows for Kosovo to remain under direct EU 'rule of law' missions until such time that the EU decides Kosovo has become European enough to join the EU. It is not surprising, then, that, in 2005, the International Commission for the Balkans argued that:

The real choice the EU is facing in the Balkans is: Enlargement or Empire. The signs of such a debilitating future are already visible in the quasi-protectorates of Kosovo and Bosnia. With no real stake in these territories, international representatives insist on quick results to complex problems; they dabble in social engineering but are not held accountable when their policies go wrong. If Europe's neo-colonial rule becomes further entrenched, it will encourage economic discontent; it will become a political embarrassment for the European project.

AMATO AND INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE BALKANS 2005: 11

The neocolonial rule in the EU has become further entrenched in the quasi-protectorates of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, particularly as the initial post-conflict reconstruction legitimacy has begun to wane; through failed economic and peace-building strategies, legitimacy for the continued presence has now shifted to the protection of new minorities. The incorporation of queer rights, in the assemblages of justification for Kosovo's direct supervision by the EU, is a new legitimizing feature that sustains the presence of EULEX. Rahman suggests that the characteristics of such homocolonialist projects are "directed at 'traditional' Muslim cultures as homophobic non-Western 'others' that need to be civilized or modernized but also constructing 'home' Western normative

queer identities" (Rahman 2014: 279). Kosovo is probably the most deliberate attempt to triangulate the promotion of queer rights under a civilizing mission in the periphery while constructing the normative EU-wide queer identity. The mission to save the queers of Kosovo, then, also becomes the mission to save and define the EU. In this context, Kosovo and Kosovars are converted into a EU laboratory that experiments with the construction of a desired EU-wide multicultural citizenship under assemblages of post-conflict and post-socialist peacekeeping and Europeanizing missions. Critical theory in international relations has challenged the foundational narratives of similar international interventions on humanitarian and peacekeeping grounds, as being deeply embedded in the neoliberal order that ignores larger structural problems of conflict, but chooses to deal with conflict in the periphery through a problem-solution imperative. Little attention has been given to examining these missions as gendered or sexualized processes. Particularly, the process by which local political agency is employed by humanitarian missions, to save gendered and sexualized subjects from their own communities, has been under-analyzed.

During the NATO Summit in 2012 in Chicago, Amnesty International undertook a public campaign called "Human Rights for Women and Girls in Afghanistan," and "NATO: Keep the Progress Going!" (Chamseddine 2012). The campaign came at a time when support for NATO's presence in Afghanistan started to wane even among those who had initially shown support for it. The deployment of 'human rights for women and girls in Afghanistan' to invoke a continued presence of NATO in Afghanistan is a striking example of imperialism in the name of 'gender equality' by what Puar calls the "human rights industrial complex" (Puar 2013: 338). While women and children were being portrayed as the victims in Afghanistan, in the post-Yugoslav humanitarian interventions, this became a more difficult marketing tool, as post-socialist spaces, in the eyes of the interventionists, faced less of the problem of women and children and more of the challenge of other minorities. If, in the early aftermath of the conflict, these victims were essentialized through their ethnicity and sometimes gender, in the post-conflict 'stabilization and association with Europe,' the new minorities increasingly became the sexual ones. Atanasoski, for instance, notes how post-socialist imperialism operates through humanitarian ethics rooted in ideological and cultural differences, which then make post-socialist and Islamic nations targets of disciplining violence or *humanitarian violence* (Atanasoski 2013). Thus the hierarchy of victims changes along with the geography of the interventions. In "Revisiting Homonationalism," Puar notes that the "gay and lesbian human rights industry continues to proliferate Euro-American constructs of identity (not to mention the notion of a sexual identity itself)

that privilege identity politics, ‘coming out,’ public visibility, and legislative measures as the dominant barometers of social progress” (Puar 2013: 338). Yet very few studies examine how these identities are proliferated and to what political end, both in the targeted populations and at home. Are they simply utilized to legitimize humanitarian intervention, reforms and regime change of a targeted country or population? Or, do they also serve the purpose of dealing with queer anxieties at home and with re-assuring the EU of its own exceptional progress and modernity?

Kosovo 2.0: The “Sex” Incident

On December 14, 2012, a group of about 100 protestors attacked the launching of the media outlet *Kosovo 2.0*’s magazine issue on sex, shouting “Out faggots,” “They have no place here,” and “God is Great” (Luçi 2013). The previous magazine issue had covered religion, where Robelli, a regular contributor, wrote that:

Foes of the Albanian Muslim tradition and Wahhabi militants seek to incite conflict between different layers of Kosovo’s society, and the demand to allow the wearing of the headscarf in schools is just the beginning. If Wahhabis—or Salafis, as some prefer to be called—succeed in making the state of Kosovo succumb to their demands regarding headscarves, then other demands will follow ... maybe even more radical demands about the covering up of females, or even demands to ban the use of perfume and listening of music, to stone women in cases of adultery, which are all well-known phenomena in Saudi Arabia.

ROBELLI 2013

Explanations for the attacks in the media, and official declarations, have mainly focused on Islamophobic language characterizing Islam as ‘patriarchal,’ ‘backward,’ and ‘religious fundamentalist.’ The “Sex” issue of the *Kosovo 2.0* magazine contained an article on homophobia in Kosovo, where American journalist Seyward Darby writes: “Kosovar society, which thrives on conservative values rooted in history, culture and tenets of Islam (Kosovo’s majority religion), is also largely intolerant of LGBT individuals” (Seyward 2013). The direct correlation that the readings of the incident provide between Islam, as a traditional, conservative, and militant phenomenon, and the perceived danger that this poses not only to the queer community but the secular Kosovar society at large, is employed as a tool to reinforce binary opposites between the

European-oriented secular majority and the backward, religious Muslim minority. Moreover, as already mentioned, these opposites ignore intersectional subjectivities of queer Muslims who identify with both Islam and queerness, or fail to acknowledge the overall complexity of queerness as a space beyond a normalized, theorized, and codified identity.

What these explanations conceal are also the larger structural issues at play, particularly those related to poverty, unemployment, racism, exclusion, and institutionalized discrimination, but also how the Europeanization of queer rights produces and fuels homophobia in Muslim communities by inscribing certain rights into the EU enlargement project and discounting others, and by utilizing queer rights narratives as a “language for the critique of Islam” (Mepschen et al. 2010: 970). Shows of support for queer communities by European and US ambassadors around the Balkans have become a hallmark of this policy. Following the attack on *Kosovo 2.0*, the US embassy in Kosovo issued a statement condemning the attacks perpetrated by:

a mob of extremists at the launch of the *Kosovo 2.0* magazine on December 14. Violence and threats have no place in a modern democratic state, and the United States will always safeguard and protect citizens’ freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES 2012

The assemblages of modernity and democracy as ‘violence-free spaces’ positions the modern democratic state as the ideal template of civilization that should be emulated, as well as safeguarded under the protection of the United States as its contemporary guardian. Queer political formations are subsequently enrolled in the legitimizing process of the liberal democratic order and the formation of European multicultural politics of representation in the periphery.

After the attacks, the European Union financed a public relations campaign, launching a video called *Stigma* (2014) where one of the most noted Kosovar journalists, Jeta Xharra, hoped that Kosovo “will reach a stage of European civilization where it won’t be homosexuals who hide themselves from public but those who use hate speech and attack them” (Zeqiri 2014). European civilization here, equated with sexual rights and read as the final goal of post-socialist and post-conflict transition, provides a desired future destination that produces the illusion of Europe as a space free of hate speech and violence. EU-financed projects of visibility of violence directed at the queer communities conjure transitioning societies as plagued by violence and in need of assistance from the EU. This further serves the purpose of justifying EU involvement in

the internal affairs of Kosovo. The involvement of the EULEX Mission, in Kosovo, in the local judicial process in prosecuting the attacks is one such example. While the mandate of the EULEX mission is constricted to war crimes and corruption, the organization nevertheless intervened in the prosecution of the attacks on *Kosovo 2.0* (EULEX 2013). The process of selective defense of the queer community over others not only prevents queer communities from building alliances with other marginalized communities, but also demarcates them as more worthy of the protection of the EU under what Puar calls a “parallel process of demarcation from populations targeted for segregation” (Puar 2007: xii). This separation also serves the purpose of creating and strengthening a local liberal European-oriented elite, which then acts as local interlocutors that, in advocating Europeanization as the solution to violence directed towards queer communities, become vehicles of EU expansionism. In this context, there is a dual process at hand: while the EULEX Mission operates on the ground with executive and judicial powers, the local elite serves as a legitimizing agent of the mission. Exploring these dynamics of the international presence in Kosovo, Visoka notes how:

Delivering development aid and building a neo-liberal economy enables international actors to benefit from trade, loans and other investments. Changing regimes and building democracy creates new partnerships, security communities and loyalties, and space for unlimited exploitation. Deploying military troops also serves the purpose of training troops in dangerous terrains, and practicing modern military technology and doctrines. Establishing the rule of law prevents terrorism, organized crime, trafficking and asylum claims.

VISOKA 2011: 100

As neoliberal globalization has sexualized culture, politics and markets, it has produced new methods of controlling the periphery inside and outside EU borders. Attention constantly shifts from one group to another in legitimizing liberal multiculturalism. Haritaworn observes how “the sign of diversity, in this discussion, moves from the racialized body (who becomes the ‘migrant homophobe’) to the sexualized one (who becomes the ‘injured homosexual’ in need of protection from the ‘migrant homophobe’)” (Haritaworn 2012: 138). In this new reality, queer subjects are allowed to seek asylum in the EU and the US, while former detainees of Guantanamo are sent to live in Albania (Golden 2007). Whereas the ‘injured homosexual’ is invited under the protection of the EU, the migrant other is perceived as a threat. One report by the Force Migration Review notes how most Kosovars—believing that if they apply as a sexual

minority their claims for asylum status increase—claim to be queer (Fauchier 2014). In the meantime, over 600 non-queer Kosovars are held in detention centers in Hungary, having been denied asylum in Europe.⁹

Pursuing the attacks on *Kosovo 2.0*, the EULEX mission and the Kosovo state prosecutor charged three people for inciting hatred, “violating the equal status of the citizens of Kosovo, for preventing a public rally and for damaging properties” (EULEX March 3, 2014). The charges for “slight body injuries” were dropped due to lack of evidence. The attack established the queer community, along with *Kosovo 2.0*, as vulnerable victims of their society, and painted the Muslim community as homophobic, extremist, fundamentalist, and a barrier to Europeanization. The perception of the queer community as vulnerable victims allows for further EU intervention in Kosovo, rooted in the heteronormative familial-care scenario, where the child is in need of paternal care before it can gain full political agency and subjectivity (Butler 2008). This teleological process of Europeanization discourse, where the EU comes to represent and protect the queer as a victim of violence, sustains the ‘cycle of debt’ where queers are invited to promote EU integration and discipline those subjects who could endanger this process. How hegemonic powers employ vulnerable sexualized bodies to facilitate neocolonialism at the expense of some ‘other’ is now well established.¹⁰ The choice to single out and co-opt women or queer rights narratives in the process allows for a ‘moral essentialism’ whereby their cooperation with the civilizing mission is undertaken in “order to constitute themselves as good people” (Mindry 2001: 1202). Queer political formations, then, come to embrace Europeanization and legitimize its neocolonial presence in Kosovo, while positioning themselves as outsiders in their own societies. Unlike the rest of the Kosovars, who are still perceived as ambiguous subjects in the Europeanization process, queers are presented as already European. Queer rights become the ‘line’ at the frontier where “identity cannot be negotiated” and where “cohesion is brought within at the price of exclusion of those without” (Hudson 2008: 37). Those ‘without,’ in the case of Kosovo, are extremist Muslims who pose a threat to the vulnerable queer subjects, and therefore must be disciplined. Building on Žižek’s *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Wessels argues that ‘extremism’ is:

a category suggesting excess and improperly disciplined subjectivity. The label of ‘extremism’ indicates an expression of enjoyment that has veered off of the course of legitimate citizenship. The extremist enjoys too much,

9 See, for instance, Global Detention Project (2014).

10 See, for instance, Rao (2012).

takes things too far, but retains the potential of returning back into the boundaries of national belonging.

WESSELS 2011: 7¹¹

The othering of Muslims in Kosovo, however, is not a new phenomenon; it has been a consistent part of the construction of modern nation-states where Muslims are continuously produced as being incompatible with European modernity and European secularism. The nested Orientalist anxieties and Islamophobia of local elites and their EU counterparts cause them to ascertain that when Kosovo joins the EU, its Muslim subjects will be multiculturalized; that is, they must be assimilated to fit a designated identitarian representational mandate compatible with EU multicultural politics.

As integration with the EU is presented as a historical inevitability, so is the assimilation of Muslims. The queer rights narrative here is employed to both articulate 'Europeanness' inside Europe and to legitimize the EU rule of law and police mission in Kosovo, as a Europeanization process necessary for joining the EU. The politics of European enlargement and its engagement with queer rights are rooted in a hierarchy of time, where the already-existing members of EU, having arrived at a time of progress towards queer rights, are now engaging in framing the queer rights discourse in a temporal teleology that positions them as the experts of this progress, teaching the less developed applicant countries on how to arrive there too. Butler (2008: 1) argues that "the way in which debates within sexual politics are framed are already imbued with the problem of time, of progress in particular, and in certain notions of what it means to unfold a future of freedom in time". Moreover, she claims that "hegemonic conceptions of progress define themselves over and against a pre-modern temporality that they produce for the purposes of their own self-legitimation" (Butler 2008: 2). In this context, queer Kosovars, having arrived at this, are deployed as foot soldiers, not only in guiding the rest of their societies towards progress, but in legitimizing and re-assuring the EU of its own achievements in sexual rights.

Conclusion

The case of the attack on *Kosovo 2.0* exemplifies the ways in which liberal 'civil society,' the local government in Kosovo, and the European Union queers pit Muslims in Kosovo as fundamentally against each other. The incident is used

11 See also Žižek (2008).

as a tool to represent queers in Kosovo as under siege, as victims in need of rescue. It also operates to discipline and ostracize Muslim communities in the Balkans as intolerant, backward, traditional, and irrational, while the EU is naturalized as tolerant, progressive, modern, and rational. The EU does not really seem to be concerned about the rights of the LBQT communities (or Muslims for that matter) in Kosovo; rather, it is concerned about policing the symbolic borders of the space of the EU, and utilizing its power (i.e., its rhetoric on democracy and rule of law) to construct and maintain an image of Europe as multicultural, tolerant, and secular. This form of pinkwashing, or what I call “EU-washing,” constitutes a new mode of Orientalist and Islamophobic discourse from a transnational-securitized neocolonial European order: a Europe 2.0. The real threat—the real siege—that queer communities in Kosovo are under is the loss of political agency to an international coalition of powers (i.e., EULEX, UN) that renders them victims to a supposed pre-modern, irrational, patriarchal, homophobic, fundamentalist Islam. The attempt of the EU to save queers in Kosovo is a self-referential mission to save the EU from its own homophobic past, while maintaining the binaries of tradition vs. progress in the process of enlargement that allows the EU to stand for progress and modernity. In addition, the EU not only cleanses its own homophobic relationships to queer communities within the union, both present and past, but it also erases the history of socialism and the Ottoman empire from memory as well. Within its territorial limits Europe maintains a fiction of itself as purified and uncontaminated by—that is, dominant over—the history of socialism and Islam.

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