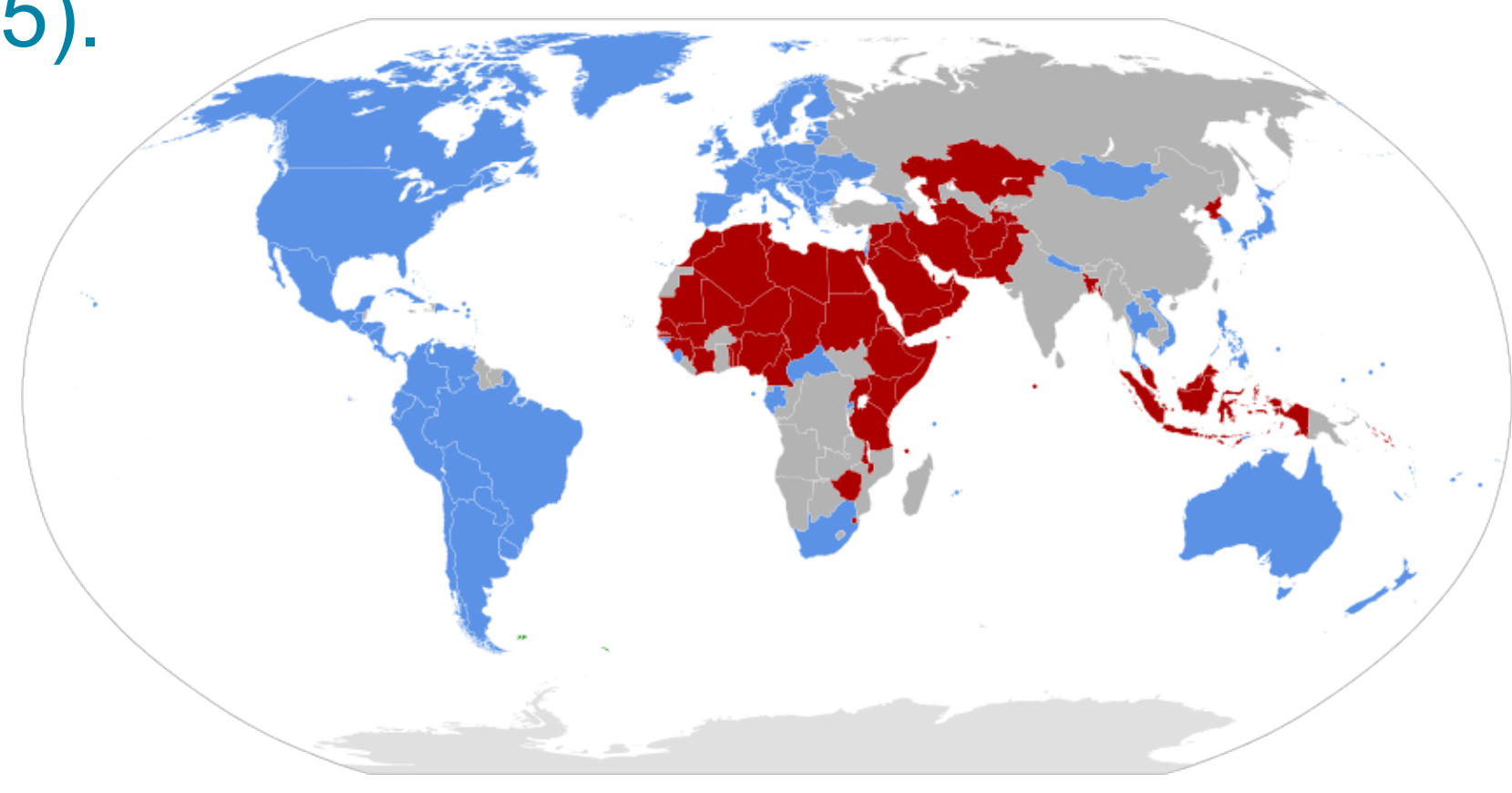


How are states able to resist adopting LGBT rights when various other states are advocating for them?

The Securitization of Transnational Norms: Explaining Immunization against LGBT rights
 Arthur Scalabrini, B.A Political Science, Supervisor: Professor Fernando Nuñez-Mietz, ARIA 2017

Introduction

The LGBT rights norm is currently in a state of polarization: a large group of states (Canada, U.S.A, European Union...) is advocating for its global acceptance, while another (Russia, Uganda...) is resisting the norm and advocating for its rejection (Symons, Altman, 2015).



Blue: These 96 states have signed a United Nations General Assembly declaration or resolution in support of LGBT rights.
 Red: These 54 states signed a 2008 statement opposing LGBT rights delivered in the United Nations.
 Grey: These 44 states have expressed neither official support nor opposition to LGBT rights.

Objective of the Research

This research project seeks to illuminate the ways by which these anti-LGBT rights states manage to prevent the internalization of the LGBT rights norm – the acceptance of LGBT rights as human rights – and uncovers the conditions under which transnational norm advocacy might provoke a backlash and be counter-productive.



Baltic Pride 2013 in Vilnius, Lithuania
 Several Lithuanian Members of Parliament attempted to ban the event through legal means. They made a similar attempt in the previous edition in 2010. In Lithuania, when the LGBT community attempted to increase their public visibility, various lawmakers responded by proposing legislation targeting LGBT activism.

Argument

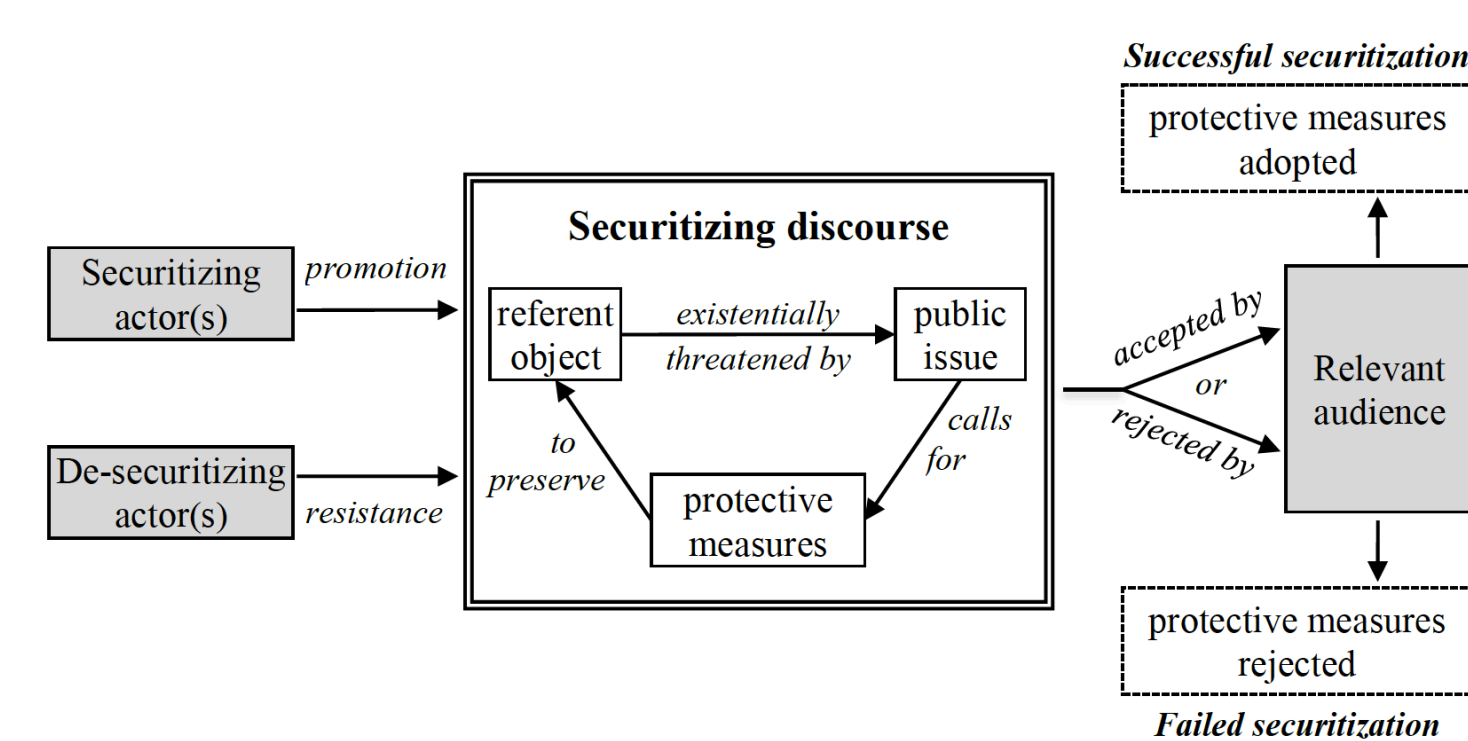
The research project demonstrates that resistance to LGBT rights diffusion occurs now through norm immunization – the creation of legal barriers by a state with the purpose of fending off a transnationally diffusing norm by blocking its local advocacy.

In the last decade, legislation designed to impede advocates of LGBT rights became a cross-national phenomenon. Various states have enacted so called “gay propaganda” laws forbidding LGBT activism and contrary to basic human rights, such as freedom of expression and assembly.

The research project shows that these states’ lawmakers succeed in enacting such detrimental laws by securitizing LGBT rights.

What is securitization?

The theory of securitization explains the process by which some actors are able to construct some issues into matter of “security”. They politicize the matter to an extreme by constructing it as a security issue, which then enables extraordinary means to be used in the name of security.



Method

The research project relies on discourse analysis, cross-national comparative analysis and process tracing in case studies of Russia, Hungary, Lithuania, Ukraine, Moldova, Algeria, Nigeria, and Uganda. Interviews of relevant local actors were also conducted.

Key Findings

“Immunization against LGBT rights is undertaken through a process of securitization, in which non-traditional sexual orientations and gender identities are **discursively constructed as a foreign existential threat to the national identity**. Thus, turned into a threat to the state’s national identity” (Nuñez-Mietz, 2016).

“Law makers in these states enact a discourse according to which:

- Their country is imperiled by LGBT rights, a foreign, transnationally diffusing, and culturally degenerative norm
- Special legislation curtailing the promotion of this norm is necessary to protect the national identity” (Nuñez-Mietz, 2016).

As a result, they are able to pass so-called “gay propaganda” laws, which go against their international human rights obligations.



Petras Gražulis is a Lithuanian Member of Parliament who has introduced most legislative proposals to ban “gay propaganda” in Lithuania.

He designed the pants shown in the picture to show his disgust for homosexuality, “a curse from Europe” in his own words.

This type of discourse exemplifies the way homosexuality is constructed as a foreign (Western European in the present case) threat.

Why is this project relevant?

This project is important by attempting:

- to explain why LGBT rights have still not reached global acceptance and remain polarized.
- to inform strategies to push the norm forward, so that these states internalize LGBT rights.
- to inform strategies of desecuritization that would deconstruct the current understanding of LGBT rights as a threat to national identity.

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