CHAPTER 7

Trump's Crooked Cross: How US-based Christian Fundamentalist NGOs are Transforming Sexual Politics in Africa and Re-configuring the Nation-State

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Introduction

In May 2023, Uganda passed into law one of the most vicious Anti-Homosexuality Acts on the continent, launching a severe crackdown on gays, lesbians and everyone suspected of homosexuality.[1] In July 2023, Ghana followed suit and approved a bill in the government increasing the penalty and scope of offence for LGBTQIA+ people (Coleman, Ako, and Kyerematen 2023). Maunganidze and Cohen (2023), writing for the Institute for Security Studies, report that, in 2023 alone, at least six African countries (Kenya, Ghana, Namibia, Niger, Tanzania and Uganda) 'had taken steps to tighten their anti-homosexuality laws, and others could follow suit'. This signifies a major regression from the progressive sexual and human rights politics Africa had seemed to be adopting over the past few decades. This chapter concerns itself with this regression. It argues that the re-emergence of anti-homosexual politics on the continent is a response induced by the political shifts in line with the populist resurgence in Euro-America (Lotter and Fourie 2020). It advances this argument by building on Christian fundamentalist ethics that have undergirded the NGO industrial complex in Africa. Through deploying homopopulism and homonationalism, as developed by Puar (2007), the paper not only interrogates the making of homophobic nation-states in Africa, but also the role of international (family-centred) NGOs in transforming sexual politics on the continent, and how this transformation refashions sexual politics into tools of statecraft, shaping ideas of 'nation', rights and citizenship.

Banerjea (2023: 14) explains that initially, the concept of homonationalism encouraged us to 'understand how queer is complicit with an imperial nation state and then, later on, to see how the US nation-state uses acceptance and tolerance of LGBTQIA+ rights as a meter to test and assess degrees of national sovereignty'. Since then, however, the concept has been redeployed numerously to interrogate various interconnections between 'activism for LGBTQIA+ civil rights, the emergence of the global queer subject, pink-washing, and imperial politics' (Schotten 2016, as cited in Banerjea 2023: 15). So, in essence, its main contribution is to think critically about the linkages between queer subjects and the nation-state in a transversal mode of shifting global political ideas. By combining homosexual politics and nationalism, its thick yet simple framework allows us to investigate terms of 'inclusivity and exclusivity' of LGBQTIA+ bodies in a nation-state, or rather, in the re-making of a nation-state in the current populist-nationalist political age. It uses terms of '"acceptance" and "tolerance" for gay and lesbian subjects as the barometer by which the legitimacy of, and capacity for, national sovereignty is evaluated' (Puar 2013: 24).

Lotter and Fourie (2020: 177) build on this idea by developing the concept of homopopulism, not only to ground homonationalism as a framework for understanding queer mobility in Africa, but also to expand it in order to explain how 'queer logic underpins the rise of populist nationalism across Europe and North America'. By deploying Queer International Relations (IR) theory alongside Puar's homopopulism, they demonstrate how queer subjects in Euro-America are co-opted in right-wing national-populist politics to reject queer subjects from the global South through the invocation of 'fear-based patriotism' (Lotter and Fourie 2020). It is this invocation of fear, or rather, what they term 'politics of fear' and 'politics of queer', that forms the central focus of this chapter's debate (Lotter and Fourie 2020). This chapter re-imagines this 'fear-based patriotism' within recent African national-populist politics, positing that, firstly, the 'politics of fear' is used to construct a universal 'other' who is deemed not to fit the traditional definition of a citizen and therefore poses a threat to the fabric and survival of a nation. Secondly, it recreates 'fearful sovereign subjects' who, as the Ugandan Anti-Homosexual Bill 2023 stipulates, have 'a duty to report homosexual activities' or face up to six months in jail for their unpatriotic behaviour[2] (Banerjea 2023: 18). The politics of fear, therefore, not only mobilises citizens into supporting the government's creation of a 'homophobic country'

but also employs sexual politics as a tool of statecraft (Nyanzi 2023).

The paper comprises three parts. Firstly, I tie together the rise of national-populist politics in America with the legitimation of Christian fundamentalist ethics in contemporary politics. I argue that not only has this given way to interest groups that can lobby governments in a particular direction, but it has also given rise to the powerful NGO industrial complex whose reach and influence extend far beyond the United States. Secondly, to tease out the NGO industrial complex, I turn my attention to an American NGO, Family Watch International, which has been at the forefront of lobbying against homosexual rights and sexual education in the United Nations (UN), while actively funding and campaigning for the adoption of these policies in African governments like Uganda, Namibia and South Africa. Finally, I link the influence of this NGO on African governments with the rise of Anti-Homosexual Bills not only to explain how Christian fundamentalists are transforming sexual politics in Africa and re-configuring the nation-state, but also how the re-emergence of these homophobic bills is in line with the populist-nationalist resurgence in Euro-America.

The resurgence of national-populist politics in America

Though the early twentieth century European wars were fought on fascist and racist ideologies, the re-emergence of these ideas and their influence in global North politics in the last century can be attributed to the Euro-American fatigue with the globalisation upheld in the post-Cold War neoliberal order (Worth 2019). This does not mean the far-right nationalist-populist politicians in Northern countries are in opposition to neoliberalism per se, as they, in fact, benefit from and embrace the capitalist ethic embedded within the neoliberal order. Rather, as Worth (2019) further argues, what they resent are the ideals and perceived excesses that this order seems to foster, such as multiculturalism, race and gender equity, freedom, global integration and migration. The argument these populists usually make is that these ideals have fractured the 'family' and thus subverted 'national culture', and are therefore the unwanted social consequences of the neoliberal order (Worth 2019).

The 2007/8 financial crisis was an embodiment of this contradictory structural meltdown brought about, in many ways, by the limits of capitalism as enshrined in this neoliberal order (Worth 2019). The response to this

breakdown was rather startling. Firstly, the global North, led by a capital driven Euro-American order implemented 'a succession of policies linked to forms of austerity utilised as an attempt to maintain the principles of the prevailing [neoliberal] order and subsequently, of continuing the presiding governing logic of neoliberalism" (Worth 2019: 1). Though this effort, in many ways, turned the tide, it failed to address the systemic limitations that had led to the crisis in the first place; rather, it ensured seamless transfer and continuity of such operations in the immediate post-crisis phase.

A second development worth noting is that a decade on from the crisis, efforts to ensure sustained continuity of this order were met with 'the emergence of new political movements that [were seeking] to contest the management of the manner in which such continuity might progress' (Worth 2019: 2). This means that there was lingering widespread discontent in America, not over the crisis itself, but also in how the crisis and its aftermath were being handled. As a result, a new politics emerged with radical ideas of how this could be achieved. Although a lot has been reported about the number of civic and hate groups, political parties and politicians that emerged at this moment[3], both in the global North and South (Worth 2019: 1), it was Donald Trump's emergence in 2016 that tipped the scales and really woke the sleeping dogs. He ascended through a campaign littered with populist themes such as anti-immigration, anti-government, White nationalism, 'rule of law', etc. (Worth 2019: 2). He mobilised right-wing networks on ideas dangerous not only for their overt hatred and for intolerance of vulnerable groups, but also for their push towards extreme right politics, which often operates on antiquated racist philosophies and vigilantism.

The Trump 1.0 moment (2016—2021), therefore, arriving immediately after the post-neoliberal crisis, as pseudo-opposition to the neoliberal order, is symbolic not only for shifting political discourse and praxis towards the radical populist right, but also for globalising intolerance and hatred of vulnerable groups, fostered by the legitimation of fundamentalist narratives and arguments in mainstream politics. This continuum has equally characterised the ongoing Trump 2.0 period, which began in January 2025.

Although one might argue that this ideological shift was primarily a phenomenon of global North politics, its effects have not been limited to those regions. Instead, the introduction of radical right ideas into international politics has influenced the political climate of the global South as well[4]. This has contributed

to a new kind of North–South dualism in the international order, where ideas originating in the North shape domestic politics in the South. As a result, there has been a resurgence of radical right populism in several African countries, a trend that often encourages intolerance and hostility towards vulnerable groups, such as queer communities. This ideological transfer is embedded in the North-South dialectic and upheld in institutional relations between these two regions. These political and ideological shifts in the North enabled a convergence of far-right discourses and rhetoric that were once marginal but have increasingly moved into the mainstream (Worth 2019: 173).

Trump's crooked cross: The return of Christian fundamentalists

The Trump 1.0 and later 2.0 moments opened a broad church in politics where, for the first time in some time, all right-wingers found themselves in one room, praying to one God. From neo-Nazis to the Ku-Klux Klan, from white nationalists to anti-government groups, from anti-Islamic, racist, fascist and homophobic groups to Christian fundamentalists, all had finally found a common ground and a unifying devil to prey on: the social consequences of neoliberalism. According to these groups, neoliberalism had not only wreaked havoc on the economy but had also done far worse for the family and the nation (Luscombe 2020). As a result, renewal and restoration politics emerged, embodied in the 'Make America Great Again' slogan, which, interpreted otherwise, was a spiritual moment of revival for Christian fundamentalists. This was confirmed by Trump's faith advisor, Pastor Paula White Cain, who stated: 'I do believe that President Trump was God's answer to so much prayer… and he was appointed [by God] to lead America' (Luscombe 2020; Jaffe-Hoffman 2023). Whether this belief is true or imagined, it galvanised a mass mobilisation that delivered not only the Trump 1.0 administration, but also the Trump effect, ethic and style in contemporary politics.

'Christofascists' and the Trump presidency

Although Trump has at times declared himself to be 'the chosen one', thereby normalising his populist antics as a moral crusader, it is the Christian fundamentalists who have legitimised his position and influence in the larger Christian fraternity (McCarthy 2019). Not only have they manufactured the idea that the United

States is somehow specially favoured by God and his angels, but they have also created the notion of 'God-fearing' politicians, and weaponised religion as a political instrument (McLaren and Jandrić 2019: 306). This notion of 'God' in politics and the Presidency has its complications and relies on a pseudo-spiritual basis, which this chapter will not engage with fully because of space limitations. However, it would be fair to mention that, though the United States Presidency is usually contested over brutal ideological and policy clashes, its central and unifying contract lies in the upholding of white power and supremacy.

But how exactly do you slip that through into modern politics? How do you normalise the antiquarian philosophies upon which that belief is founded? The real answer is r*eligion*. You use *religion* to evoke the notion of white supremacy and logic, with all its racist, homophobic and hateful vitriol, as God-ordained will. An organisation that has for decades acted as a vehicle for this ideological girding in United States politics is known as 'The Fellowship' or, rather famously, 'The Family' (McLaren and Jandrić 2019). Its work is usually in the shadows and unknown to the public. McLaren and Jandrić (2019: 306) refer to it as 'a "Christomonist" or "Christofascist" network of evangelical Christians [which, though it] is based in the USA, has worldwide reach and is designed to convert world leaders to Christianity'. In the US, however, another of its functions has been to deliver presidencies and colonise administrations through Christian fundamentalist ideals.

Organised interest groups in the church, family and nation tripartite

The legitimation of Trump by the Christian fundamentalists played a huge role in normalising the hatred, homophobia and racism he represented and perpetrated. This is not only because of the complex ties between the Church and the State, which are subtly pronounced in the United States, but mostly because of the contested tripartite between the Church, Family and Nation (Laycock 2006). This has been used to frame national ethics, morality and collective identity in nation building across the world. While England and Russia, among others, have state churches—the Church of England and the Russian Orthodox Church respectively—the United States has Christianity as an undergirding religion in national identity, in the form of thousands of variant practices of the Christian ideology. This notion of 'religious liberty' has opened the door to many contested

debates about religion and its place in society (Laycock 2006: 519). It has also facilitated the rise of 'organised interest groups' who, though springing from Christian traditions supported by churches, advance their views through political influence and litigation if necessary (Laycock 2006).

Laycock (2006: 514), argues, the evangelicals and their 'organised interest groups' emerge from this gap, which, in many ways, was instituted in the United States Constitution through a 'separation of the Church and the State' to prevent the possibility of the government using its 'coercive power to support or oppose religion, either on its own initiative or at the request of a church'. But has there been a separation? Have the lines been clearly drawn? Wolfe (2017), mentions how in the same year that Christian affiliation became a norm in American presidential hopefuls like Jimmy Carter in 1976, a religious right leader, Jerry Falwell, claimed that 'the notion that religion and politics should be kept apart was invented by the Devil to keep Christians from running their own country' (Falwell 1976, cited in Wolfe 2017). As a result, the legitimation of Christianity and Christian ideology within politics and the presidency became normalised. Simultaneously, the rise of evangelicals and their interest groups enabled them to have access to the levers of the State, consistently influencing and lobbying for their policy interests while policing national morality and ethics. Ultimately, the Church, the family and the nation became interconnected, all orbiting the same space linked by the power and influence of 'organized *[sic]* interest groups'.

FWI is one of the groups that has emerged from this gap. It began as an interest group focused on promoting and protecting the family and family values, but has since grown into an influential NGO that lobbies the government in support of conservative and homophobic legislation in the United States. Their affiliation with The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (LDS), also known as the Mormon Church, has shaped their ideological foundation and policy interests, which are firmly rooted in Christian fundamentalist ideologies such as anti-LGBTQIA+, anti-feminism and anti-Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) (Ipas and Empower 2023; Kaoma 2012; Cullinan, Geloo and Haidula 2020). The rise of this organisation was centred on their 'concern for the family and family values against emerging threats' (Ipas and Empower 2023; Kaoma 2012). The weaponising of 'values under threat' has served a very important function in creating a universal 'other' to galvanise global support around the politics of fear and the politics of queer, as Lotter and Fourie (2020)

argue. The organisation has consistently opposed and influenced any policy that tries to humanise homosexuality and CSE. While they hold some influence in the United States, shared with other Christian right-wing interest groups, it is at the UN where they have waged their frontal assault against the 'global sexual rights' regime. Furthermore, they have extended their influence and lobbying efforts to Africa, where they have access to high-ranking officials through both the UN and African Union (AU) (Kaoma 2012).

The UN, as a global governance institution tying together the global North and global South, has become a battlefield for conservative versus progressive ideas. It is no surprise, therefore, that the political shifts in line with the populist resurgence in Euro-America play themselves out fully in this institution. Organised interest groups and NGOs, which often operate under conservative ethics, have turned their full attention to its operations and various caucus negotiations to promote specific ethical values globally. This is effected by casting the UN as a devious platform advancing 'Western' 'human rights talk' and a 'global sexual rights' regime, which are seen as threats to the traditional family structure (Marshall 2011). The next section of this paper investigates the workings of the FWI in the UN and Africa to influence anti-homosexual bills, block funding for CSE programmes and influence language on gender, sexual freedom and rights.

Family Watch International: Standing for family values worldwide

On its website, the Arizona- based NPO FWI has as its slogan 'Standing for the Family Worldwide…Working in countries around the world promoting policies and programs *[sic]* that strengthen the family, protect the interests of children, and provide the best outcomes for women and men'[5]. This statement highlights the ostensibly noble mission the organisation claims to advance. On closer inspection, however, one starts to see how the material misleads. In addition to the website—which is littered with 'FWI's Powerful Education Tools', policy briefs, resources from the experts on family issues and short clip documentaries covering topics like 'The Porn Pandemic', 'War Against Sexuality Education Agenda' and 'Understanding Same-Sex Attraction'[6]—the NPO also has a Facebook page boasting at least 4000 likes and 4300 followers who passionately engage with its posts and page content.

Founded in 1999 by the long-time anti-LGBTQIA+ and anti-choice

activist, Sharon Slater, the NPO describes itself as an 'international educational organization *[sic]* in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations"[7]. It further states it is 'a critical and exciting worldwide movement to preserve and promote the family, traditional marriage, life, parental rights and religious freedom' (Marshall 2011). What seems to make this organisation distinct, though, is its focus not only on the UN, but also on developing countries where it actively funds and lobbies for policy change on issues of LGBTQIA+ rights, children's rights and sexual and reproductive rights, while grooming upcoming politicians and diplomats on how to negotiate the UN (Marshall 2011). On its website, it claims to have members and supporters in 170 countries[8]. Furthermore, one of its main goals is to demonstrate 'how the UN system is being manipulated to influence national laws that promote abortion, prostitution, homosexuality, promiscuity and the sexualisation of children' (Marshall 2011).

Sharon Slater, whose ideological tutelage seems to guide the direction of this organisation, is not only a Mormon with deep Christian fundamentalist beliefs[9], but also an influential negotiator and leader in the NGO and policy arena. She has positioned the organisation to operate both in domestic policy and international outreach, 'with an intense focus on Africa and the UN' (Marshall 2011). Her constant attacks on LGBTQIA+ individuals, whom she insists are 'prone to disease', 'significantly more promiscuous' and 'more likely to engage in paedophilia', have become keystones in policy positions in the countries where the organisation has members and supporters. Equally, these unqualified assumptions have become solid arguments in populist anti-queer messaging (on the continent) under the guise of protecting children from being indoctrinated into the 'sinister global rights revolution' that seeks to undermine the traditional family, weaken religious values and sow gender confusion UN' (Marshall 2011). The convenient invocation of a 'sinister global rights revolution' has also legitimised this organisation's poisoned lobbying at the UN where its promoters easily 'cast advocates of women's and gay rights as villains', while advancing the debate on the 'evils' of U.N. "human rights talk" and "hidden agendas" behind various proposed actions [on topics of gender, sex, and homosexuality]' (Marshall 2011).

In response to this 'global rights revolution'—which in many ways bastardises sexual rights and basic human rights for homosexuals—this organisation has

waged a frontal assault, not only on the UN system regarding human rights, sexual freedoms, gender and family, but also on national laws, policies and policing across the developing world regarding homosexuality, gender and comprehensive sexual education. This has led to a significant regression in the progressive steps Africa had taken on these issues since the post-colonial era.

The modus operandi of the NGO and its advocates is clear. They have focused on coaching and grooming high-ranking African politicians and diplomats who become their mouthpieces and foot soldiers, doing the heavy lifting in society and governments. Cullinan, Geloo and Haidula (2020) report that 'For at least a decade, African ambassadors to the UN have been invited to FWI's annual training programme in the US. The focus of the training is on opposing both LGBTQIA+ rights and CSE, which the UN defines as "the education of children and young people about sexual health, well-being and dignity"' (Cullinan, Geloo and Haidula 2020). These training programmes, they further opine, include 'practical sessions on how to negotiate at the UN' (Cullinan, Geloo and Haidula 2020). While much can be said about the training and summits—usually hosted over a weekend in the US—particularly regarding how, for the duration, delegates are paired with a 'genuine traditional family' to give them an experience of the family model the institution proposes, it is the training content that raises the most concern (Marshall 2011).

This because the content is littered with 'scientific and clinical evidence that proves homosexuality is not genetically determined and fixed like skin colour or race and that in many cases, individuals who experience same-sex attraction can be helped by therapy' (Marshall 2011). It is not surprising, therefore, that by the time these politicians are back in their home countries and UN posts, they are solid mouthpieces and evangelists for this organisation, not only ready to push these policies through government but also prepared to start their own organisations as regional chapters, if necessary. An executive director for a Kenyan NGO, Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health, Jedidah Maina, reported that 'between 2010 and 2015, the anti-LGBT movement in Africa was largely white evangelicals from the United States, such as Family Watch International and the World Congress of Families' (as cited in Cullinan, Geloo and Haidula 2020). The anti-queer movement, she argues, has changed: 'It is morphing with new African actors. The conversation is the same, but the actors have changed. These organisations are all fronted by Africans, but the messaging is the same, especially in regard

to CSE, which they claim sexualises children, encourages them to have sex and turns them gay' (as cited in Cullinan, Geloo and Haidula 2020). This has been the FWI's biggest success in infiltrating national governments and parliaments.

The organisation is well represented at the executive level through its observer status at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), where it has heavy input on funding linked to educational projects (Cullinan, Geloo and Haidula 2020). It is also influential at the UN Family Rights Caucus, where Slater is a co-founder and chair (Cullinana *et al.* 2020). While these positions enable the organisation to wield considerable influence both internationally and regionally, its true strength lies in its long list of high-ranking African politicians and diplomats who serve as its primary arsenal and often do the heavy lifting. These individuals are instrumental in advancing the organisation's agenda, both within their own governments and on the international stage. Moreover, the organisation's funding has been increasing over the years, and it has spent more than $54million in Africa since 2007 (Namubiru and Wepukhulu 2020). The organisation has increased its representation at the AU parliament where it not only has observer status, but also a permanent representative, Seyoum Antonios, a well-known anti-LGBTQIA+ activist who is mostly known for his claims that 'homosexuality is an abomination and Africa will be the graveyard for homosexuals'[10].

The re-emergence of anti-homosexual bills, intolerance and violent policing on the continent can be traced directly to the influence of this Christian fundamentalist NGO, which uses its access to high-ranking officials to persuade policy-making structures. While the hostile anti-homosexual bills have a long history in Uganda dating back to 1950[11], their recent passing into law has ignited the anti-queer debate anew. The FWI's fingerprints can be seen on every word in that bill. This cannot be a coincidence. A look at the programme for the 10th Annual Global Family Policy Forum[12], held in Arizona, United States, in 2019, reveals that senior African politicians and diplomats top the list of attendees. The former Zambian ambassador to the AU, Emmanuel Mwamba, the first keynote speaker, gave a speech titled 'Strengthening and Protecting the Family—an African Union Perspective'.[13] Mwamba not only participated in the conference but also returned home to become a vocal opponent of CSE in Zambia (Cullinana *et al.* 2020). Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, then Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, and now President of Namibia, is another high-ranking politician who attended FWI training and afterwards returned home with anti-queer and anti-CSE messaging.[14]

FWI can therefore be seen as an important influence behind the re-emergence of state-led homophobia on the African continent recently. Its activities, particularly in this light, unmask the benign façade of Christian NGOs promoting 'family values', while in essence reproducing the heteronormative conceptions of family, where a father and mother with their biological children is the only legitimate family structure (Arias 2004, as cited in Morrison, Gallardo and Fuster 2023). The contribution of the FWI, particularly in its invocation of heteronormative logics in family making and thus the creation of acceptable and unacceptable citizenry, has united the religious actors with political sectors. It has tied to the hip the role of family making and its contested values with the project of 'nation-state building', which gives oxygen to nationalist populist politics.

Though heteronormativity and heteronormative logics as an analytical framework has been used extensively in scholarly work on geographies of sexuality to capture 'the imposition of certain beliefs about sexuality through social and spatial organization *[sic]*, as well as to make visible the processes that privilege heterosexual attractions and relationships as the default, normal, and superior form of sexuality' (Mkhize and Mthembu 2023: 377). The development of heteronormativity as a theory invited us to think critically about the 'social processes through which heterosexuality is treated as normal whilst treating those that fall outside this standard as abnormal and of lesser value' (Warner 1991, as cited in Mkhize and Mthembu 2023: 377). In other words, it illuminates for us the social tools and procedures on which sexual 'othering' takes place. Demonstrating the normalisation of particular sexualities, while illegitimising others.

This section has sought to map the practical and deliberate interventions of this NGO in reshaping sexual politics in Africa. Having identified the key pragmatic threads of the re-emergence of radical right ideologies, the analysis now turns to its explanation within the nexus of nationalist, Christian fundamentalist and family politics. By deploying homopopulism and homonationalism as analytical frameworks, the following discussion will not only hypothesise that this re-emergence is a response to Euro-American nationalist-populist political shifts, but will also examine the usefulness of the concepts of 'politics of fear' and 'politics of queer' in contemporary statecraft.

Sexual politics in African statecraft: Global North in the Global South

The argument this paper is making is a simple one, although its impact could be far-reaching and demand further engagement with theories other than 'queer', focusing more on statecraft and world-making in the age of nationalist-populist politics. The Global South, within which Africa is categorised, exists in a dialectical relationship with its Global North, meaning the two spheres, while not true geographic antipodes, function as direct theoretical and structural opposites (Mbembe 2012). Mignolo (2011: 166) argues that "The 'Global South' is not simply the land below the equator. It is an ideological concept highlighting the economic, political, and *epistemic dependency* and unequal relations in the global world order, from a subaltern perspective." This implies that, regardless of the different meanings we can attach to the concept, its complex metaphorical nature opens the revolving door of political, economic, religious and other ideologies, where there is constantly a 'North' in the 'South', an 'East' in the 'South', or a 'South' in the 'North', and vice versa.

This revolving door is at the centre of this chapter's argument that the re-emergence of anti-homosexual bills in Africa is in line with the populist-nationalist ideological shifts in Euro-America. The Christian fundamentalist-inspired NGOs from Euro-America are the foot soldiers of Western Christian cosmology. In this work of transforming sexual politics in Africa, they marry politics and theology to reaffirm, firstly, the heteronormative idea of a 'traditional family' being the sole proxy of national ethics and therefore national culture. Secondly, the colonial matrix of power juxtaposes 'gender and sexuality' and 'man and humanity' to imply masculinity as a norm and man as the model of human, qualifying for citizenship and rights (Mignolo 2011:179). Thus, it posits anything opposite as an anomaly that is not deserving of human rights (Mignolo 2011: 179). In this way, they ensure a continuation of Christian influence in nation-making in Africa's post-colonial period.

The article proposes that this revolving door is in many ways suggestive of transatlantic political influence. The theoretical frameworks of Homonationalism and Homopopulism are best placed to nuance this phenomenon not only because they engage Queer International Relations, and thus juxtapose extensive tools of statecraft with sexual politics, but also because they get us to think critically about the invocation of the 'politics of fear' in creating the concept of undeserving

bodies, remaking sovereign subjects and producing homophobic countries.

The creation of the concept of undeserving bodies

The modus operandi in nationalist-populist politics is to create a universal 'other' through which to mobilise collective anger and outrage that recreate and dehumanise these 'others'. Weber (2016 cited in Lotter and Fourie 2020: 181) notes that 'the Trump 1.0 campaign presented the "radical Islamic terrorist" as a universal threat to US citizens whilst also building upon traditional constructions of racial, sexual and gendered biases in order to figure "the underdeveloped", "the un-developable"', "the unwanted im/migrant", "the terrorist", and some "LGBTQs" as dangerous perversions of and threats to "the real America"'. Weber (2016 cited in Lotter and Fourie 2020: 182) further suggests that the wide support Trump received from right-wing radicals not only delivered his Presidency but 'mobilized them towards creating a coalition of fear-based, misogynistic, Christian, patriotic whiteness'. The Christian evangelicals attributed America's social ills to these undeserving bodies and called for national prayers to protect 'family values', which suggests an indirect moral purge of 'others', and in essence legitimising fascism, racism, xenophobia and homophobia (McLaren and Jandrić 2019). The creation of the concept of undeserving bodies in a nation is therefore both a political and religious project that draws a clear line between the model of a citizen and an opposite undeserving body who is a threat to 'family values' and thus to the national fabric.

Though Lotter and Fourie (2020: 177) developed homopopulism to investigate 'how members of the LGBTQIA+ community in Euro-America are implicated in rejecting queer asylum seekers from Africa by supporting and/or endorsing (colluding with) populist-nationalist (right-wing) entities and rhetoric in the EU and its member states', their approach primarily examines the co-option of queer subjects in the recreation of subjectivities and the construction of the 'other'. In this chapter, I deploy homopopulism similarly to interrogate how African nationalist-populist politicians create undeserving bodies and mobilise the other 'others' through blind and fear-based patriotism. These other 'others' are conditioned into homophobia by framing the nation as gendered—specifically, a heteronormative entity—and thus viewing anyone who diverges from this norm as anomalous within the national fabric. Homopopulism,

therefore, not only illuminates the co-option of queer subjects in rejecting queer asylum seekers in North American nationalist-populist contexts, a process with clear geopolitical implications, but it also helps us understand how citizens are co-opted domestically through patriotism to construct universal 'others' and undeserving bodies.

The creation of a national 'other' is directly connected to the creation of a fearful sovereign subject who, through blind patriotism, has a duty to hate this undeserving and unwanted body. In Uganda, for example, Article 14 of the Anti-Homosexual bill enacted in May 2023 stipulates how citizens have a 'duty to report acts of homosexuality' or face up to six months in jail.[15] It further lays out how landlords cannot even rent rooms to homosexuals, an offence with a conviction not exceeding seven years.[16] Though the creation of fearful sovereign subjects is itself sexualised and gendered to allow for a construction and ordering of the nation in a particular way, its real contributions are mobilising citizens—regardless of class, religion, race and gender—towards a homophobic nation-state where the citizens are in the employ of the state in violating the human rights of homosexuals, in return for admission as 'good' citizenship/patriots (Weber 2016 cited in Lotter and Fourie 2020: 180). The politics of fear, as conceptualised by Lotter and Fourie (2020), therefore alerts us to sexed, gendered and sexualised sovereign subjects who themselves have to perform political 'othering'.

Homopopulism (Weber 2016, cited in Lotter and Fourie 2020) also demonstrates how populist nationalist discourse both in Africa and Euro-America instils notions of who a citizen is, who is undeserving, who must be feared and distrusted, while at the same time authorising the presidency and administration of a fearful sovereign who has a 'duty' to the nation. In these homophobic countries in Africa, the fearful sovereign is male, born in that country, indigenous, heteronormative, able-bodied and a 'God-fearing' Christian. Even women engage in sovereignty and citizenship in these nations as 'mothers of a nation', a gendered and peripheralised position where their role is to give birth to the 'ideal' citizen, while they themselves are not fully citizenised (McClintock 1991).

The weaponisation of sexual rights

The recreation of populist-nationalist ethics in Africa has had its contradictions and has therefore revealed salient fault lines in the neoliberal order. Even though

its adoption owes its seamless transfer from the Global North to the revolving door that ensures unmitigated Western cultural and political influence. To localise these ethics in Africa, populist politicians often need to reframe progressive politics as an enemy of the nation. Worth (2019: 113) argues that the NGOs at the forefront of transforming sexual politics in Africa usually 'present the recognition and advancement of LGBTQIA+ rights as part of a neocolonization *[sic]* project'. This weaponises sexual rights and often leads to homosexuality being cast as a 'Western import', a media-driven trend contrary to the religious and cultural backbone of the country (Agyeman 2019, as cited in Martínez, Duarte and Rojas 2021). This connects the populist project to debates on 'un-Africanness' not only of homosexuality but also of gender and sexual diversity and comprehensive sexual education (CSE).

The Founder of FWI, Sharon Slater, often invokes 'politics of fear' to marshal African politicians towards an anti-homosexual stance at the UN and in training the NGO hosts. In her addresses, she asks questions like: 'Did you know that UN agencies including UNICEF, UN WOMEN, UNAIDS, UNFPA and UNESCO and even the World Health Organization *[sic]* have been hijacked by Western donor countries and have a hidden sexual rights agenda to sexualize African children, to legalize and destigmatize abortion and to mainstream homosexuality and transgender ideology into the laws, policies, and programs of every African country?' (Ipas and Empower 2023), positing progressive policies and movements as a threat to Africanness and therefore to be rejected. In this way, she bastardises sexual rights and sexual education into an anti-African concept.

Homonationalism, therefore, is an intervention not only in queer identity but also in the convergence of sexual politics, racial capitalism and nation-state formations across homophobic and gay-friendly countries (Lotter and Fourie 2020). From the weaponisation of sexual rights, the creation of undesirable bodies, the installation of fearful sovereign subjects, to the creation of state-led homophobia, countries like Uganda, Ghana, Namibia and Kenya are seemingly responding to nationalist-populist shifts happening in Euro-America that find their way to the continent through the influence of Christian fundamentalist NGOs like FWI. This has transformed sexual politics—the politics of fear—into tools of statecraft that can be used to create undesirable bodies, weaponise sexual and human rights, create fearful sovereign subjects who become the state's foot soldiers and, most importantly, create homophobic countries.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the re-emergence of anti-homosexual bills in Africa, as epitomised by Uganda's May 2023 legislation and the six nations that have since followed, has been induced by broader political shifts in line with the nationalist-populist resurgence in Euro-America. To explain this phenomenon, the chapter revisited Donald Trump's nationalist-populist rhetoric and its role in bolstering homophobic Christian fundamentalism within contemporary politics. It further examined the workings of FWI, the Christian fundamentalist, 'family-based', NGO, whose operations in Africa and at the UN have weaponised sexual rights, human rights and sexual education as 'un-African' concepts. The analysis concluded by exploring the impact of these developments on the transformation of sexual politics in Africa, using Homonationalism and Homopopulism as theoretical frameworks to illuminate the dynamics of fear and 'othering' at play.

The conclusions reached in this chapter hold serious implications for the role of sexual politics in worldmaking in the age of transatlantic nationalist-populism, as represented by the Donald Trump 1.0 and 2.0 presidencies. The chapter proposes that if Africa is to move towards emancipatory futures, it will need to embrace deep and progressive democratic practices that are multicultural, feminist, ecological, anti-homophobic and anti-xenophobic, ideals that are not new to Africa. Ultimately, the chapter contends that there is nothing 'un-African' about homosexuality and sexual rights; rather, it is homophobia and misogyny that are 'un-African'.

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Endnotes

1 See the Uganda anti-homosexual bill signed 26 May 2023 with an extended scope of charges and offences which include "Duty to report acts of homosexuality"

2 See Article 14 of the Uganda Anti-Homosexual Bill 2023

3 For an extensive debate on these movements, see the works of Bailey et al. 2017; Seymour 2014; Bieler 2014; della Porta 2015 cited Worth 2019 (page, 1)

4 For a longer discussion on this ideological exchange between North/South, see Worth (2019, page, 66)

5 See FamilyWatch; *https://familywatch.org/*

6 See FamilyWatch; *https://familywatch.org/other-websites-3/*

7 See SPLC (n.d.). *https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/family-watch-international/*

8 See FamilyWatch; *https://familywatch.org/*

9 See https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/family-watch-international

10 See Cullinana *et al.* 2020. In addition, Seyoum Antonios makes these claims on a YouTube video, Wilson, B. (2013). *Africa says No to Homosexuality, by Dr Seyoum Antonios*.

11 See the Uganda Anti-Gay Timeline compiled by the 'Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders' – GLAD

12 See DRAFT Program Outline 2020 Global Family Policy Forum. (2019). Available at: https://gandramartins.adv.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/global-family-policy-program-2020-1.pdf

13 Ibid

14 Ibid

15 See Article 14 of the Uganda Anti-Homosexual Bill 202316