“Gay Spring + Arab Spring = New Global Security Regime? : Securitizing the Queer Intersections of "Feminist" US Foreign Policy, Humanitarian Militarism, and Brotherhood Populism”

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This essay marks a first attempt to assess the logics behind attempts by US and UK diplomats and policymakers in 2011-2012 to forge a global security paradigm that both establishes bold new humanitarian protections for LGBT minorities worldwide and that launches relationships of trust and cooperation with newly elected Islamist leaders in the Arab world. In this proposed new global security regime, two pariahs of the late twentieth-century international order suddenly found redemption and recognition. Gays and Islamists were thrust together as strange bedfellows, rendered hypervisible as nodes of a proposed new hegemony. Although mainstream forms of LGBT globalism and “moderate” (West-leaning) Muslim Brotherhood politics may seem on the surface to be worlds apart, evidence presented here will demonstrate that they began to operate in the same sphere of international relations. This proximity is due to the fact that in the last two decades, the policy agendas of both global movements had become structured by common commitments to family-focused privatization, populist moralization, and humanitarian forms of patriotic militarism. In this context of this queer convergence, this essay provides cultural and political analyses of two forms of radical resistance that raged against this approximation between humanitarian liberalism and Islamist populism. I assess the American Islamophobic film “Innocence of Muslims” and the violent demonstrations it stirred in September 2012. And then I analyze a set of breast-baring protests wherein a new brand of feminist militancy attempted to shock the global public into re-securing the boundary between liberalism and Islamism. I argue that these two quite distinct sets of responses attempted to reestablish firm binaries between the West and Islam and between the humanitarian and moralitarian; but in doing so they ignored or masked the policy logics and new geopolitical trends that brought neoliberals and Islamists together. In order to highlight more interesting and truly counterhegemonic forms of resistance, I underline the queer security logics of some of the youth, labor, and gender-driven demonstrations and occupy movements of the “Arab Spring” revolutions of 2011. These offered, and continue to offer, more promising alternatives as they challenge, if not explicitly, the political terms and securitization logics of this emerging international agenda that would marry a certain kind of sexuality protection to a certain kind of Islamist sovereignty.