

Tensions and Transformations of Sexuality in the International System*

Sexuality has long been a field of regulation, resistance, and reform, both within and beyond national borders. In the wake of global transformations—economic, technological, cultural, and political—it has become increasingly urgent to revisit how sexuality is constructed, contested, and codified in international arenas. These conversations, although intimate and often local in appearance, are inextricably entangled with broader systems of power and politics that govern the global order. It was in recognition of this complex interdependence that the editorial committee of the journal *OASIS*, in collaboration with guest editor Professor Laura Sjoberg, decided to dedicate issue number 42 to the theme: “Tensions and Transformations of Sexuality in the International System.”

The decision to focus a special issue on this topic arose from an increasing awareness of the need to engage sexuality as a fundamental—yet underexplored—dimension of International Relations. While V. Spike Peterson (2010) highlighted the

importance of sex in global politics by arguing that “making states is making sex,” and Cynthia Weber (2016) argued that the study of global politics has neglected the breadth and depth of the importance of sexuality in global political structures and processes, much of the work that has been done along these lines has been centred around Global North practices and written by Global North scholars. The importance of sexualities in global politics knows no such bounds: attention to sexual international relations *globally* provides a much broader set of questions to consider. We see this reflected in contemporary global conversations at the intersections of gender studies, political science, and international law, which have increasingly turned toward issues of embodiment, desire, gender identity, and sexual rights as not only matters of social justice but as critical concepts and dynamics in global politics. From the weaponisation of sexual violence in conflict zones to the politicisation of HIV/AIDS in migration contexts to varying State investments

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in reproductive control, sexuality has become central to both the architecture of State power and the strategies of non-State actors. In this context, we envisioned this special issue as a platform to bring together multidisciplinary and transnational perspectives that interrogate how global forces shape—and are shaped by—sexual norms, practices, and identities.

Our aim with this issue is threefold. First, we seek to highlight sexuality as a lens through which international systems and institutions can be critically examined. Second, we endeavour to create a space for scholarly interventions that decentralise Eurocentric, heteronormative, and cisnormative narratives by incorporating voices and case studies from diverse cultural, regional, and geopolitical contexts. Lastly, we aim to catalyse ongoing dialogue between academic, policy, and activist communities working at the nexus of sexuality and international affairs. In doing so, we hope to not only expand the intellectual boundaries of international studies, but also contribute to more inclusive, responsive, and ethically grounded understandings of global dynamics.

The process of assembling this issue began with an open call for articles, distributed widely among academic networks worldwide, but with a focus on the Global South (Asia, Africa and Latin America). The call invited scholars to explore the ways in which sexuality is implicated in global transformations—as a subject of regulation, as a field of resistance, as a set of practices, and as a creative space. The enthusiastic

response to our call confirmed that this topic resonates across disciplinary and geographic boundaries. Submissions addressed an impressive array of themes, from the international governance of reproductive rights to the impact of global capitalism on traditional sexual practices; from the sexualisation of diplomatic figures in the media to the challenges faced by queer migrants navigating hostile border regimes.

The articles selected for this issue reflect a deliberate effort to span both the empirical and the theoretical, the historical and the contemporary. Some contributions investigate specific policies and their effects on sexual rights, such as the criminalisation of same-sex relationships in postcolonial legal systems or the treatment of gender-diverse asylum seekers in international law. Others offer more conceptual interventions, exploring, for example, how discourses of sexuality are mobilised to uphold or challenge state sovereignty, or how bodies are rendered legible—and violable—within the matrices of war, peace, and diplomacy. In each case, the authors draw our attention to how sexuality is not a marginal or private affair, but a key axis through which power operates in the international system.

At the heart of this issue lies an inquiry into *how the current international system has recast the politics of sexuality*. The neoliberal turn has commodified sexualities and restructured intimate lives in line with market logics, while at the same time giving rise to new transnational solidarities among LGBTQIA+ communities, sex workers, and feminist movements, amongst

others. Digital technologies have intensified these dynamics, offering platforms for both visibility and surveillance, and liberation and control. The contributions in this volume examine these paradoxes closely, revealing how digital economies, migration flows, and security agendas collectively transform the lived experiences of sexuality across the globe.

Importantly, this issue does not treat sexuality as a static category but rather as a dynamic field of political contestation. Several articles problematise the binaries of male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, and public/private that have historically dominated international policy and theory. By interrogating these categories, the authors highlight how sexuality is not merely a matter of identity or behaviour, but a site of ongoing negotiation involving institutions, ideologies, and imaginaries. This theoretical sensitivity enriches our understanding of how sexuality becomes a vector for international engagement, whether through cultural diplomacy, human rights litigation, or global governance mechanisms.

Taking a closer look at our special issue, the first section, titled “(Re)Thinking Gender Identities in Decolonial Contexts”, invites readers to engage with decolonial reimaginings of gender identity by drawing on Andean ontologies, enactive cognitive theories, and evolving feminist internationalisms in Latin America. These contributions challenge Eurocentric academic orthodoxies, bringing forth situated knowledges from Abya Yala that highlight resistance, re-existence, and self-determination.

By centring Indigenous cosmologies and embodied subjectivities, the authors explore how trans and queer identities confront and dismantle the structures of transphobia, gender normativity, and epistemic violence.

This section opens with the article “La Pacha es Traka: una conversación sobre ontologías andinas para gestar políticas sexuales transnacionales anti-transfóbicas” written by Julio César Díaz Calderón, and Sandra Díaz Santisteban, an independent scholar from Peru. This powerful and poetic dialogue between two activists unpacks how Andean worldviews can serve as ontological foundations for forging anti-transphobic transnational sexual politics. Through concepts such as “La Pacha es Traka,” the authors explore new grammars of resistance, rooted in ancestral participation, cross-border activism, and a decolonial reconfiguration of public health narratives and solidarity economies.

Next, Érica Julieth Farfán Velandia and Juan Carlos Valderrama Cárdenas from Uniminuto in Bogotá, Colombia, contribute the article “Comprensiones enactivas en torno a la identidad de género: corporalidades emergentes en un contexto globalizado”. Drawing on enactivist philosophy, they present identity as a dynamic interplay between the body and environment. Their work highlights how individuals navigate and reconfigure gendered embodiment in a globalised world marked by competing cultural norms and expectations, providing a framework that rejects essentialism and embraces relational, embodied cognition as a lens for understanding identity diversity.

Closing this section, Gabriela M. Kyrillos, from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brasil, and Rosângela Schulz, from the Universidade Federal de Pelotas in Pelotas, Brasil, present “Da onguização a um novo internacionalismo: as transformações nas articulações feministas transnacionais na América Latina no século XXI”. This text traces the evolution of feminist organising from NGO-influenced frameworks toward a “new internationalism,” exemplified by grassroots digital and territorial mobilisation such as *Ni Una Menos*. The authors explore how feminist movements in Latin America are reclaiming political space through hybrid forms of organisation that transcend national borders while remaining rooted in local struggles.

The second section, “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Through Global Feminist Lenses”, takes on the challenge of conceptualising violence not merely as interpersonal, but as a structural and systemic phenomenon. The articles included here investigate how international normative frameworks both address and obscure the realities of gendered violence, particularly when examined through decolonial and intersectional feminist perspectives. The section critiques the colonial, patriarchal, and heteronormative logics embedded in global governance and calls for a more situated and plural understanding of violence against dissident bodies.

It begins with a thought-provoking chapter from Veronica Slaviero, from the Universidad de Granada in Spain, Laira

Rocha Tenca, from the Universidade de Brasília in Brazil, and Jéssica Melo Rivetti, from the Universidade de São Paulo, also in Brazil, titled “Violence Against Women in Politics: Reflections on its International Conceptualization in Dialogue with Decolonial Feminist Thinking”. Through the lens of feminist theory from Abya Yala, the authors question the universalism of existing international treaties on political violence against women. They explore the case of Marielle Franco, and other dissident political figures, to argue for a geopolitically grounded and epistemically inclusive approach to defining and combating gendered political violence.

Following this, Dulce Daniela Chaves from the Universidad Nacional de La Plata, in Argentina, offers a compelling investigation in “*Bush wives* o Esposas del Monte: relaciones forzadas y dinámicas de poder generizadas en conflictos armados no convencionales”. Drawing from gender theory and conflict studies, Chaves examines the phenomenon of forced conjugal relations within armed groups, particularly in non-conventional war settings. Her work highlights how gendered violence operates both during conflict and in post-conflict reintegration, and how the figure of the “bush wife” invites a reconsideration of international humanitarian law through feminist lenses.

The third section, titled “Locating Gendered Power in the International System”, investigates how gender and sexuality are expressed, mobilised, and contested within the structures of global governance,

diplomacy, and transnational mobility. These contributions reveal how identity is not only a site of resistance but also a vector of political agency, strategic navigation, and sociocultural meaning-making in contexts shaped by systemic inequality.

From the Giga Institute for Latin American Studies in Germany, Carolina Guerrero Valencia opens this section with her article, “La influencia de las primeras damas en las relaciones internacionales”. Through a comparative analysis of Latin American First Ladies, Guerrero unveils how these unelected actors are assuming increasingly autonomous roles on the international stage. From speeches at the United Nations to diplomatic missions abroad, the article documents a quiet yet powerful transformation in executive politics and questions the implications of this evolving role for democratic accountability and gendered power.

Guilherme Passamani from the Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul in Brazil compliments this section with his chapter “Mobilidades transnacionais e trabalho sexual de homens brasileiros na Europa” which explores the experiences of Brazilian male sex workers navigating the European sexual economy. Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, Passamani examines how national identity, sexuality, and economic precarity intersect in the transnational journeys of these men. His analysis illustrates how mobility becomes both a survival strategy and a process of identity formation shaped by heterotopic and marginalised spaces.

The fourth and final section, “Gender Backlash in Contemporary Global Politics”, confronts the rise of anti-gender ideologies and far-right populism, which threaten to reverse decades of progress on gender and sexual rights. These chapters dissect how fake news, hate speech, and glottopolitical strategies are weaponised to construct the notion of a “gender threat,” using sexuality as a proxy for broader social and cultural anxieties.

Ana Helena Rodrigues and Daniela Schettini, from the Universidade de São Paulo in Brazil open the section with their analysis, “Evidências do avanço conservador no Brasil: a resistência ao capítulo de gênero no Acordo Comercial com o Chile”. This article unpacks the fierce political opposition to gender provisions in Brazil’s trade agreement with Chile, illustrating how economic diplomacy becomes a battleground for ideological disputes over equality, sovereignty, and women’s rights.

Next, Andrea Milena Guardia Hernández, from Universidad la Gran Colombia and Manuel Alejandro Rayran-Cortés, from Universidad Externado de Colombia in Bogotá present “Los discursos de la derecha radical frente a la diferencia. El caso del rechazo al lenguaje inclusivo de género en Argentina y España”. Through the lens of glottopolitics, this article explores how the radical right instrumentalises language to reinforce binary gender ideologies. Their analysis shows how linguistic diversity is framed as a threat to tradition and identity, revealing the deep entanglement of discourse, ideology, and political power.

The dossier concludes with “El populista de Havaianas: las estrategias de la ultraderecha para llegar al poder produciendo *fake news*, odio y violencia hacia el colectivo LGBTIQ+ en Brasil” written by João Pedro Silveira-Martins de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona en España. Through discourse analysis and field research, Silveira-Martins documents how the Bolsonaro regime mobilised anti-LGBTIQ+ populism, fake news, and hate speech to secure power. The article reveals the devastating effects of political rhetoric on the lives of queer and trans Brazilians and underlines the urgent need for protective, emancipatory policies.

We have included one final part, outside of the special dossier on sexuality in the international system, titled “Global Power and War Technology: New Logics of International Conflict”, that brings together two cutting-edge contributions that examine the material and symbolic dimensions of power in an increasingly multipolar world. The articles here explore how military strategy, digital warfare, and geopolitical competition are reshaping global order—through both traditional foreign policy tools and emerging technologies that redefine the battlefield and the spectator alike.

Opening this section, Mauricio Lascurain Fernández from the Universidad Veracruzana in Mexico presents the article “Acciones y reacciones: la dinámica de poder en Eurasia entre Estados Unidos y China”. Rooted in a constructivist paradigm, the article offers a nuanced reading of how China interprets U.S. geostrategic

actions—such as the Pivot to Asia, QUAD, and AUKUS—as threats and opportunities within a multipolar world order. Using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) framework, Lascurain analyses a wide range of Chinese academic literature to map perceptions of containment and expansion. He argues that while the U.S. is attempting to preserve its hegemony through strategic containment, China simultaneously experiences these manoeuvres as both challenges to its geopolitical ambitions and as openings created by the West’s relative decline. The article provides a valuable window into the discursive constructions that sustain the cycle of strategic competition in Eurasia.

Following this geopolitical assessment, Enzo Lenine, Clara Araújo, Beatriz Cardoso, and Agnes Bia from the Universidade Federal de Bahia in Brazil contribute the article “Game Over: Drones, Visualidades e a Gamificação da Guerra”. With a focus on drone warfare in the conflicts between Ukraine and Russia, and Israel and Hamas, the authors apply a visual methodology rooted in post-structuralist international relations and critical security studies. The article interrogates how real-time drone footage and its circulation through mass media generate new visualities of conflict—marked by the detachment and dehumanisation of human targets. These visual artefacts do not merely represent war; they transform it into a spectacle, reconfigured through the aesthetics and logic of video games. The authors argue that this gamification reshapes how violence is perceived,

justified, and normalised in the public domain, blurring the boundaries between reality, simulation, and spectacle.

To close the issue, we turn to two book reviews that reflect on how we understand and teach global politics today. The first, authored by Paula Ximena Ruíz-Camacho, examines “Global Political Economy: Problems in a Transforming International Order”, and co-authored by Jean Marie Chenou, Ralf J. Leiteritz, and Carolina Urrego-Sandoval. In the second, Camilo Ernesto Herrera-Quintero focuses on “El Mundo Visto Desde América Latina: Una Revisión de los Conceptos Básicos de las Relaciones Internacionales”, written by Ana Covarrubias, Carla Yumatle, and Jean-Marie Chenou.

In assembling this volume, we have been guided by the belief that sexuality matters—not only in the realm of personal freedoms but also in the architecture of international order. By exposing the entanglements of sex, power, and policy, this issue contributes to an emergent field of inquiry that refuses to relegate the intimate to the margins of global politics. We invite readers to engage with these texts not merely as academic exercises, but as invitations to re-think how we theorise, study, and act upon the world we share.

As the global landscape continues to shift, so too must our analytical frameworks. This issue of *OASIS* represents a step in that direction—towards a more inclusive, critical, and intersectional internationalism. It is our hope that the articles herein will inspire further research, spark

productive debates, and, ultimately, contribute to a more just and humane understanding of the role sexuality plays in the international system, at the intersections between global and local politics, and in the ways that scholars of the international shape their concepts and empirical studies.

JERÓNIMO DELGADO-CAICEDO, PH. D.
Editor general

LAURA SJOBERG
Guest Editor

This publication is the result of the dedication and efforts of many individuals. I would like to extend special thanks to the leadership of the Universidad Externado de Colombia, whose trust and support have been essential to this project—particularly our President Hernando Parra and our Dean Gonzalo Ordóñez, of the School of Finance, Government and International Relations. This edition would not have been possible without the valuable contributions of Adriana León, editorial assistant at CIPE; María José Díaz Granados M., who ensured the highest editorial standards; and Manuela Alejandra Ramírez, editorial assistant for *OASIS*. My sincerest thanks to each of you.

Finally, as Editor-in-Chief of *Revista OASIS*, it is both an honour and a pleasure to extend my deepest thanks to Professor Laura Sjoberg for her extraordinary contribution to this special issue. Professor Sjoberg’s intellectual generosity and critical

insight have profoundly shaped the vision and depth of this edition. Her participation has undoubtedly set the tone for a collection that challenges, reimagines, and enriches the study of International Relations through the lens of sexuality, identity, and power.

Beyond her scholarly input, Professor Sjöberg's guidance throughout the editorial process has been invaluable. Her ability to bridge rigorous academic standards with a spirit of openness and collaboration has truly inspired us at Revista OASIS. This issue

is a testament not only to her academic leadership but also to her longstanding dedication to building inclusive and critical spaces within the field. We are immensely grateful for her role in bringing this project to life and for helping make this edition a significant and timely contribution to global conversations on gender and international politics.

JERÓNIMO DELGADO-CAICEDO, PH. D.
Editor-in-Chief