



Homosexuality as a cultural battleground in the Middle East: culture and post-colonial international theory

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ABSTRACT

The culture wars over homosexuality in the Middle East are studied here in the context of the theoretical debate on culture in International Relations and, more specifically, through a critical examination of postcolonial international theory. The paper argues that, although postcolonialism can offer a useful framework, it also has, in its poststructuralist variants, significant limitations in addressing the controversial issues surrounding homosexuality as cultural battleground in the Middle East. These limitations derive from an unconvincing interpretation of the relationship between the Middle East and modernity; and a problematic approach towards moral agency. The paper serves a dual purpose. Through the use of the empirical material, it furthers the debate within postcolonial international theory by bringing evidence to bear in support of its humanist or materialist strands. The theoretical discussion, in turn, by highlighting the intertwining of culture and power in the debates on homosexuality, strengthens the case for respecting homosexual rights in the Middle East region.