

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Genesis of LGBTI Diplomacy and Reshaping International Relations

At Stockholm Pride in Stockholm, Sweden, July 2019, a young Ugandan woman explained to the audience that her Ugandan father knew that she was a lesbian before she did. In reaction, “he came home one night and tried to light me on fire . . . he told me I was going to hell and tried to kill me. . . I fled my country that night and cannot return home.”¹ Another Nigerian man at Stockholm Pride in a public forum shared how “a mob broke into my home and killed my partner before my eyes. . . I fled my house out the back door, and barely escaped with my life; I had to leave my country after that day.”² Uganda and Nigeria are two of more than seventy countries globally that outlaw same-sex relations.³ The Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni decries homosexuality as “disgusting,”⁴ and Ugandan lawmakers proposed the death penalty for homosexual acts again in October 2019.⁵ In response to Uganda and other countries with official violence and discrimination against LGBTI people, many other liberal democracies began to raise LGBTI issues in diplomatic engagements.⁶ Some governments grant asylum to LGBTI persons persecuted in their home countries, threaten to condition foreign assistance funding, or even go so far as severing bilateral relations with a country based on their human rights record. Conditioning foreign assistance based on LGBTI rights abuses, granting asylum based on LGBTI human rights abuses, and raising LGBTI rights in formal diplomatic engagements constitute relatively new issues of concern in international affairs. Lydia Malmedie observes that only since the early 2000s have LGBTI

rights issues been considered topics that should be of concern in diplomatic relations and part of European Union (EU) foreign policy.⁷ Historically, governments have not addressed domestic human rights practices in other nations. Thus, understood as an infringement on sovereignty, human rights concerns are a relatively new focus of foreign policy.⁸ While LGBTI people have been killed, tortured, and stoned to death for centuries in numerous countries throughout the world, leaders in countries such as the United States, Sweden, and other liberal democracies remained silent on domestic affairs related to LGBTI people.

When I worked within the US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) from 2005 to 2016, there were constant internal battles among interagency stakeholders regarding if and when—if at all—to raise human rights abuses with foreign leaders. Raising concerns regarding foreign leaders torturing political dissidents and condemning ethnic or religious violence was taken into consideration with other foreign policy interests, namely security and economic ties to the country. LGBTI persons in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Jamaica, and other countries have been beheaded, subjected to corrective rape, and victims of sanctioned mob killings for decades.⁹ Yet these specific human rights abuses against the LGBTI community were not part of any diplomatic agenda. After a great diplomatic battle in the United Nations (UN),¹⁰ in 2010 the UN General Assembly's Third Committee approved including the LGBTI populations as a specific marginalized group subjected to global patterns of violence.¹¹ By including LGBTI populations in UN documentation and other countries' foreign policy agendas, relations between countries can now become predicated on how a country treats this minority group. Conceptualizing LGBTI populations as a specific marginalized group now includes this population in the multibillion-dollar international foreign aid industry. Despite contestation of LGBTI rights, as of 2021 in contemporary foreign relations, governments will now end trade agreements and withdraw foreign assistance to punish foreign governments where societies allow for official and societal violence against LGBTI populations.

This book analyzes how governments advance human rights in diplomacy, specifically concerning LGBTI rights. It examines how and why LGBTI rights became a fundamental doctrine of human rights to be promoted abroad. Specifically, it examines Sweden and the United States as two central players in global LGBTI diplomacy. Sweden's policy adoption of LGBTI rights into its foreign policy was first in the world in 2005. Sweden remains a significant international aid donor. The United States followed suit in 2011 and is the largest player in the sector of human rights

and humanitarian aid. Domestically, Sweden exhibits high acceptance rates of LGBTI equality norms.¹² On the contrary, LGBTI acceptance remains a relatively contested issue in the United States. Despite these differences, Sweden and the United States both promote LGBTI rights as part of their broader human rights foreign policy agendas. This book examines the catalysts in each country for institutionalizing the rights of LGBTI populations into their respective foreign policies. The policies of these two countries matter globally; the actions of these two governments, specific policies and programs to support global LGBTI organizations, have been replicated in the EU and UN and impact normative foreign policy around the world.

Through primary and secondary source evidence, *From Pariah to Priority* identifies the central factors for emerging LGBTI foreign policy agendas as nongovernmental organizations (NGO) advocacy; insider government-allied leadership; national interest; transnational activists; and sensitizing international events, namely Uganda's law implementing the death penalty for homosexual acts in 2009. The role of NGO advocacy and social movements in shaping governments' agendas is a focus of this study. Similarly, building coalitions with insider-allies and promoting movement goals toward equality inside the government is also central to this analysis.

As of 2021, approximately sixteen countries incorporate LGBTI rights as a formal aspect of their respective foreign policy.¹³ An illustration of this policy is when countries such as Brunei proposed death by stoning for homosexual acts, many leaders within this small group of nations made public statements of condemnation against Brunei officials.¹⁴ These countries also funded urgent assistance to local human rights groups in Southeast Asia. Similarly, at times governments withdraw parts of their foreign assistance in response to another nation's official persecution of LGBTI citizens. In 2017, Egyptian security forces rounded up, harassed, beat, and arrested numerous people presumed to be LGBTI.¹⁵ In response, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson withdrew "\$95.7 million in foreign assistance and withheld a further \$190 million in military assistance directly addressing the crackdown on LGBT Egyptians."¹⁶ LGBTI rights diplomacy impacts a host of bilateral agreements, including economic relations. An example in the European context was seen when human rights advocates from countries such as Sri Lanka pressured EU countries and the United States to use the EU trade negotiation process to influence their own country to reform and decriminalize homosexuality in Sri Lankan law.¹⁷

Promoting LGBTI rights in foreign policy introduces a new set of principles and moral standards that regulate international relations according to emerging human rights norms. LGBTI rights in foreign policy represent

the evolution of a principle in human rights that formerly did not impact international affairs. Relationships that were once tenable and acceptable were reevaluated according to the new standards, such as the United States' and Sweden's bilateral relationship with Uganda. Thus, understanding the genesis and reasons for countries to implement a policy is of critical importance to foreign relations.

Evidence in this research is derived from numerous primary sources and academic literature. It is also underpinned by my professional experience working in the US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. For years in this role, I drafted statements from the State Department against human rights abuses across the Middle East, mainly in North Africa and Gulf countries. I worked to craft policy and programs in response to events, such as a nation beheading human rights activists, hanging LGBTI citizens, or stoning women. I conducted diplomatic meetings in Jordan and across North Africa, discussing labor rights, honor killings, torture, and larger human rights concerns. From 2011 to 2016, I served as the senior editor of numerous State Department human rights reports in the Middle East.¹⁸ I also served as a contributing editor to the International Religious Freedom reports and Tracking in Persons reports during this time.¹⁹ This practitioner experience provides the basis for detailed knowledge in this study of how governments document human rights abuses and later respond to state violence through human rights diplomacy.

LGBTI Rights in the Context of International Human Rights

Universal human rights were codified into international law in 1948 with the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).²⁰ Yet how human rights—as arms of foreign policy and its implementation—impact bilateral relations, international norms, and sovereignty is an ever evolving process. Human rights scholar Alison Brysk assesses the central purpose of human rights diplomacy and asserts, “principled states build global governance; they reshape the meaning of sovereignty to implant a slowly emerging legitimacy norm—universal human rights.”²¹ While human rights are an important aspect of contemporary international relations, the very concept of what is considered to be a universal human right is not static.²² Foreign policy engagements include the elevation of women's, disability, ethnic, and religious minority rights.²³ LGBTI rights are the most recent set of human rights to be integrated into foreign affairs discourse. Diplomacy is necessary

for the actualization of human rights.²⁴ Diplomats and government actors raising human rights in international affairs institutionalize new norms in government relations.

This book seeks to illuminate the workings of diplomats promoting human rights in foreign countries that are often obscure to the general public. A great deal of diplomatic work is done behind closed doors in what is known as “quiet diplomacy.”²⁵ For example, a country may be enticed to stop discrimination against a minority population through an economic and trade incentive. A group of political prisoners may be released, or widespread arrest of LGBTI advocates may cease as a result of a diplomatic negotiations that include investment for an infrastructure program, for example. Outside observers may not have any idea that seemingly unrelated actions of a government are correlated and that human rights diplomacy has taken place behind closed doors. LGBTI rights is often a politically controversial issue in many regions of the world. At times, quiet diplomacy is the preferred method to gain results while avoiding publicly naming and shaming another nation. Conducting quiet diplomacy may allow foreign government officials to ‘save face’ and subtly reform their nation’s human rights issues while circumventing political and societal opposition in their country. Inherent to the craft of quiet diplomacy is a lack of public documentation, press, or knowledge of results of human rights promotion from efforts behind the scenes. As such, there is not a great deal of press or academic scholarship analyzing quiet diplomacy because outsiders lack access to internal, often classified, workings of foreign ministries. From an insider, practitioner perspective, this book seeks to shed light on the sometimes nebulous process of conducting human rights diplomacy.

The second major gap in academic research on human rights diplomacy is the tension between the state as both a promotor and abuser of global rights. The majority of scholars often focus on governments as one of the central abusers of human rights.²⁶ Cynthia Burack asserts how the “academic critical humanist left” has unexpectedly become deeply critical and skeptical of US government-funded LGBTI rights promotion, whereby observers may believe the left-wing political spectrum of the United States would be the base of supporters for this issue.²⁷ On the right-wing side of the political spectrum in many countries there is open opposition to any progressive government policies on LGBTI rights. Scholars often decry the hypocrisy of governments promoting human rights outside their borders when their own countries’ human rights record is not perfect.²⁸ However, no country has a perfect record on gender equality; therefore, promoting LGBTI rights globally will inherently reveal an element of hypocrisy the world over.

Human rights promotion from governmental foreign policy institutions receives much less attention by scholars and activists. And yet it is a pillar of diplomacy that is a multibillion-dollar industry of the international development aid sector. Millions of people's lives globally depend on international donor aid. The aid funding is critical for fledgling LGBTI organizations in the Middle East, Africa and other regions; this aid can provide emergency funding to human rights activists in imminent danger. Foreign governments are sometimes the only source of funding and support for local LGBTI activists. External evaluators of the Swedish government's work documented that in some places the survival of organizations and individuals working on LGBTI human rights is the result of Swedish government financial assistance.²⁹ In parts of the world where LGBTI equality is violently contested, LGBTI civil society and the existence of civil society organizations are often enabled only by means of foreign governmental support. Yet funding for human rights and democracy is just one aspect of international humanitarian assistance.

Proportionately, the Swedish government funds some of the highest levels for international human rights promotion compared with other governments.³⁰ Sweden's allocation reflects a higher proportion of Sweden's gross national product (GNP) to foreign aid than any other nation.³¹ More than 30 percent of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency's (SIDA) programmatic works is allocated explicitly for funding human rights and democracy programs. Human rights are also included indirectly in funding toward cross-sector fields, such as equal access to public health.³² Sweden's large contribution to international development aid allows for significant influence over norms and policies of the EU and UN institutions, which is discussed further in the Swedish chapter.

In contrast, in 2019–2020 the United States allocated approximately 2.3 percent of its Economic Development and Development Fund toward democracy, human rights, and labor.³³ Yet, in actual numbers, the United States remains the largest humanitarian donor in the world. Humanitarian and human rights donor aid from the United States funds more humanitarian assistance programs than any other country in the world. The work from Sweden and the United States, respectively, has been a critical norm entrepreneurial role and the largest players in the international community. Thereby, Sweden and the United States are important case studies in the general field of international development, specifically for these governments' unique roles in the new aspect of LGBTI diplomacy in foreign policy.

To be certain, Sweden and the United States are not the only influential countries in the new field of LGBTI diplomacy. Other countries have

also been critical actors in elevating global norms in LGBTI human rights. Among others, Brazil, the Netherlands, Spain, and Norway have served in pioneering roles in the UN in diffusing global LGBTI equality norms.³⁴ For example, Brazil's leadership in the UN helped bring international resolutions, bolster NGOs, and set new standards for human rights agendas with regard to LGBTI rights.³⁵ Multilateral agencies are also engaged in addressing LGBTI discrimination globally. The former president of the World Bank in 2014, Jim Yong Kim, in response to Uganda's proposed death penalty law, stated, "My view is that the fight to eliminate all institutionalized discrimination is an urgent task."³⁶ There are many global players across sectors of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), private foundations, and multilateral institutions engaged in elevating the global norm of LGBTI rights. This book analyzes two governments among a variety of stakeholders in the emerging field of LGBTI diplomacy.

While humanitarian spending is dwarfed by military expenditures in most countries, *From Pariah to Priority* assesses foreign policy spending on human rights as a new spectrum of diplomatic strategies with growing influence in international affairs. It has only been since the early 2000s that LGBTI populations have been considered by foreign affairs institutions as a distinctly vulnerable group, in need of both human rights protections as well as humanitarian donor aid specifically because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.³⁷ Further challenges arise in foreign cultural contexts where individuals may not label themselves with the "LGBTI" Western-constructed categories: a woman in Nigeria may have sex with other women but not label herself as "lesbian." Stoum asserts that without using the LGBTI human rights vocabulary, individuals may not be "visible" to foreign ministries or able to acquire donor funds for their community.³⁸ These categorizations, and the answer as to who is covered by that funding, which populations are deemed deserving of human rights protections, and who counts as true beneficiaries of international human rights funding and programs have enormous implications for foreign relations and international law.

This book addresses how Uganda and other nations with similarly repressive laws have become a central battleground for the conflict between LGBTI equality and anti-LGBTI beliefs. Onapajo Hakeem and Christopher Isike argue that LGBTI rights have become a fault line issue between nations, straining relations between the West and some African countries.³⁹ This book contextualizes analysis of conditioning and withholding foreign aid based on human rights and examines the potential unintended consequences.⁴⁰ At times, conditioning aid can lead to a backlash against the

very community these sanctions aim to protect. Thus, withdrawing aid or cutting bilateral ties with another nation based on normative values is a highly contested aspect of modern foreign policy. As seen in the case of sanctioning South Africa's apartheid regime with regard to racial equality, long-standing relations can be called into question based on changes in the international community. These evolving global norms impact how states create military and economic alliances. With shifting norms, LGBTI rights have become an aspect of consideration in international relations.

Global Trends of LGBTI Rights

Scholars recognize the movement for LGBTI equality as one of the most rapid, successful reforms of any social movement across liberal democracies.⁴¹ The pace of some societies transitioning from considering diverse sexual orientation and gender identities as a mental illness to legalizing same-sex marriage was historically swift compared to other human rights movements. However, LGBTI rights are not on a clear trajectory for global acceptance, and some regions in the world move to further restrict basic rights. Phillip Ayoub demonstrates how LGBTI rights are increasingly contested on the world stage.⁴² As of 2021, political trends reveal a regression of rights in Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Russia.⁴³ Researchers have found a strong correlation between countries that uphold LGBTI rights and those that also adhere to broader democratic values.⁴⁴ Julie Dorf, a leading LGBTI advocate, asserts that LGBTI rights can be considered as "the canary in the coal mine," where restrictions on individuals in terms of freedom of association, speech, or expression often start with a crackdown on LGBTI groups.⁴⁵ While rapid reforms were made on LGBTI laws and policy in the last few decades especially, these reforms are being called into question in many countries globally.

The dividing line of rights is not a clean division between the Global North and Global South. While laws are rapidly changing globally on LGBTI equality, as of 2021, approximately seventy-two countries still outlaw same-sex relations; eight nations implement the death penalty for homosexuality, including Saudi Arabia and Pakistan; the death penalty is periodically proposed by parliaments in other nations.⁴⁶ Russia sanctions state-sponsored violence against its LGBTI citizens.⁴⁷ Homophobia is on the rise in Poland and Hungary.⁴⁸ On the other hand, in September 2018, India ended the colonial-era ban on gay sex.⁴⁹ Transnational activists and

NGOs work in South Africa to influence progressive reforms to local laws.⁵⁰ Brazil's foreign ministry was one of the first nations to champion LGBTI reforms in the UN.⁵¹ There is a powerful and influential global movement that works beyond borders for equality in all regions. Brunei, for instance, drew the wrath of the international community when it proposed the death penalty for homosexuality.⁵² LGBTI rights are not unique to any continent or region of the world, nor are these rights on a certain linear progression of improvement on any continent.

Human rights diplomacy is not applied evenly across the globe. Some countries that sanction violence against LGBTI people, such as Brunei, garner great international attention; other countries with equally draconian laws draw no attention from the international community at all. As is common with a new law from a small country—as defined by GDP, reputation, and power in the international system—larger powers in the international system are quick to voice harsh condemnation.⁵³ By contrast, old laws in place for decades in countries such as Nigeria or Pakistan do not draw the same ire. These countries also have more economic and military power to leverage. Saudi Arabia, for example, a powerful economic and security ally of many Western nations, largely gets a pass on human rights criticisms. The US government typically issues only the meekest of statements when the country beheads human rights activists, hangs LGBTI citizens, or stones women.⁵⁴ Conversely, if the US government has strained ties with a nation, such as Iran, human rights may be elevated to a central issue of concern to shame the other country.⁵⁵ The same human rights abuse does not gain equal attention or response from one country to the next. Human rights abuses can sometimes be completely ignored by the international community. Other times, abuses by a dictator and gender-based violence from a totalitarian regime can sometimes become the justification for military intervention.⁵⁶ The importance of the bilateral relationship in economic or security terms is often the key variable for the prioritization of human rights diplomacy.

Countries that have institutionalized LGBTI rights diplomacy take into account the strategic relationship in foreign engagements. The application and implementation of LGBTI diplomacy needs further academic and policy investigation. This book focuses not on the application of LGBTI diplomacy, but rather on the genesis of LGBTI diplomacy. *From Pariah to Priority* uncovers the unexpected institutionalization of LGBTI rights in US human rights foreign policy and the process of policy reform in Swedish foreign affairs agencies.

Swedish and US diplomats work to elevate LGBTI equality as a universal norm. And yet, in the early 2000s, when both nations began internal discussions to reform their respective foreign policy, public opinion toward homosexuality in the two societies varied widely. According to the World Values Survey,⁵⁷ at the time of Sweden developing its first LGBTI policies in 2006, Sweden exhibited one of the lowest rates of public resistance against homosexuality; only 4 percent of the population responded that homosexuality was “never justifiable.” Comparatively, the United States reported the highest rate of rejection of homosexuality, with 35 percent of the population responding that it was “never justifiable.”⁵⁸ Yet the two countries began to pursue relatively similar foreign policy goals to promote LGBTI equality around the time of the data collected. *From Pariah to Priority* examines the key factors that influence two countries’ foreign policy reforms despite domestic differences of social acceptance of LGBTI equality. It analyzes social movements in each country and the key domestic and international factors that influenced that policy development.

Definition of LGBTI Human Rights Foreign Policy

In this section, I present an original definition of “LGBTI diplomacy.” For the genesis of this definition, I use original data collected for this book from interviews, content analysis of policies and programs, participant observation of LGBTI events, speeches, and official documents of diplomatic efforts to promote global equality. I use my diplomatic experience implementing human rights programs in North Africa and the Gulf as a pragmatic basis for how LGBTI diplomacy is conducted, directly and indirectly, publicly and through quiet diplomacy. LGBTI human rights diplomacy is diverse and targets across sectors. Randy Berry, the first US special envoy for the human rights of LGBTI persons, conducted LGBTI diplomacy by meeting with faith-based religious leaders, business partners in the private sectors such as Deloitte and IBM, lawyers and judges, ministers of labor and education, foreign ministries, presidents, and prime ministers, as well as by cementing relationships with NGO leaders and LGBTI civil society organizations.⁵⁹ I also piece together academic literature in the fields of human rights and international relations to create this conceptual definition of LGBTI diplomacy. I define LGBTI human rights diplomacy as *global policies and programs with the long-term goal of promoting the social, political, and economic equal rights of LGBTI persons.*

This book uses the UDHR as the foundational document determining international human rights; the UDHR’s definition of human rights

undergirds this study.⁶⁰ As of 2019, the UN defines human rights as “rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.”⁶¹ LGBTI equality is still contested in the UN and not included in the UDHR. Signed in 1948, leaders who crafted the UDHR did not conceptualize same-sex relations as a right. Francine D’amico and other scholars recognize the contemporary challenge that remains in defining LGBTI protections as an international standard.⁶² Given that challenge, LGBTI rights are conceptualized according to the internationally recognized Yogyakarta Principles, which cover a range of political, economic, cultural, and social rights as related to LGBTI persons.⁶³ Beyond marriage equality, global activists are currently advocating for comprehensive reforms for LGBTI equality, such as nondiscrimination in housing, the right to privacy, and protection from medical discrimination.

Human rights in foreign policy aim to globally promote the fundamental principles of human rights as defined by the UDHR and follow-up international human rights treaties. As related to human rights in diplomatic engagement, this book leverages Brysk’s definition of humanitarian internationalism as “a variety of cooperative, value-oriented foreign policies. . . values promoted may be labeled human rights, democratization, building civil society, protection of civilians, peace promotion, global humanism, or human security.”⁶⁴ Human rights diplomacy is the application of human rights norms and principles into a value-based normative foreign policy.

The study of LGBTI rights as they relate specifically to foreign policy is a relatively new field for social science inquiries. Most contemporary studies problematize the application of categorization of gender or sexual identities in international relations norms,⁶⁵ in post-colonial contexts, or in diverse cultural contexts. Scholars have called for the need for increased systematic comparisons and further analysis on institutional gender dynamics in diplomacy.⁶⁶ Women have long been barred from foreign ministries representing double institutional barrier for lesbians. Known as “the marriage ban,” most Ministries of Foreign Affairs required women to quit their jobs if they married. This ban was in place in the US Department of State until 1978. Towns and Niklasson explain how, unlike men, women had to choose between marriage and a foreign-service career.⁶⁷ From Turkey to the Netherlands to France to India, married women were removed from service in foreign policy positions.⁶⁸ Ann Towns and Birgitta Niklasson provide evidence of the gender disparities in leadership positions globally in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, asserting how gendered patterns in leadership continue to impact power, status, and foreign policy outcomes.⁶⁹ Historically, foreign

policy agendas have been crafted by heterosexual elite men in most societies, shaping the priorities and agendas from their vantage point.

Academic analyses have yet to create an analytical framework from a diplomatic context to examine LGBTI rights within foreign policy. As such, there is not yet a common definition of “LGBTI-rights diplomacy” in human rights or diplomatic academic literature. Furthermore, from a pragmatic policy perspective, the implementation of LGBTI diplomacy is often carried out indirectly, where programs may support the long-term goal of equality but have the short-term appearance of addressing another issue or human rights broadly. Rule of law or freedom of assembly may be the issues addressed by a program that also seeks to elevate LGBTI rights groups’ freedom to assemble and organize. Because diplomats work in places where human rights programs can be risky and even dangerous, manifestations of promoting LGBTI rights are not always directly related explicitly to LGBTI rights. For example, diplomats may work with human rights lawyers to improve general documentation of human rights abuse cases in Lebanon or assist NGOs in expanding their organizational capacity in Kyrgyzstan.⁷⁰ The Swedish government funded programs directly toward freedom of expression that also led to the financial support of LGBTI civil society groups working to improve freedom of expression in their country.⁷¹ In Latin America, diplomats and advocacy groups worked to bolster tourism by LGBTI travelers from foreign countries.⁷² The long-term goal may include promoting LGBTI equality, but the near-term output manifests as a general human rights development program. In academic analysis, there is a dearth of examination and contextualization of indirect and direct funding from bilateral and multilateral institutions. Burack astutely addresses scholars’ pervasive view of the state as a monolithic entity.⁷³ Burack’s 2018 study presents the most comprehensive contemporary examination of US government programs, policies, and interventions for LGBTI people in foreign engagements.⁷⁴ She also addresses how many US-based activists lack awareness of US-funded programs seeking to support LGBTI groups globally, which was affirmed in my participant observations for this study. Scholars often document only the most public-facing LGBTI diplomatic programs,⁷⁵ ultimately lacking a contextualization of the internal multilayered, direct, and indirect programmatic approach. As Special Envoy Randy Berry asserted, “If police infrastructure is being used to go after LGBT(I) people, you’re using resources that could be against terror.”⁷⁶ Berry notes here that programmatic work may be directed toward police training and general rule of law improvements for the long-term goal of curbing police brutality toward LGBTI individuals. Similarly, in response to violence toward trans Columbians, deputy assistant

secretary of the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Dan Baer focused diplomatic efforts in Bogotá on general freedom of association. Baer stated, "the Colombian government's protection of freedom of association that allows LGBT advocacy groups and other nongovernmental organizations to operate freely allows it [local groups] to adequately respond to the problem."⁷⁷ Bolstering NGOs improves the capacity of LGBTI advocacy organizations, as well as other human rights groups in the country. Indirect programming leads to a conceptual challenge of encapsulating the wide range of diplomatic efforts that work toward the long-term goal of improving LGBTI rights. Given that empirical challenge, for the purposes of this study, I again define LGBTI human rights diplomacy as *global policies and programs with the long-term goal of promoting the social, political, and economic equal rights of LGBTI persons*.

LGBTI diplomacy is often conducted bilaterally. However, influential multilateral policies and programs are an important part of this study. Namely, the flagship multimillion global funding mechanism called the Global Equality Fund (GEF) supports transnational and local civil society groups working to promote the human rights of LGBTI people.⁷⁸ Launched in 2011, the fund is managed by the DRL in partnership with co-donors including the governments of Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, as well as private funders such as the Arcus Foundation; the John D. Evans Foundation; the Norwegian LGBTI Organization; the National Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People (LLH); the MAC AIDS Fund; and Deloitte.⁷⁹ The United States and Sweden are the most significant stakeholders for the GEF; Sweden puts immense resources of its international aid toward the Global Equality Fund. The United States manages the GEF for all parties through the US Department of State, thus providing the bulk of human resources to monitor and evaluate the progress of LGBTI programs globally. The GEF supports these global LGBTI programs through:

- Emergency protection of persons or groups against the threat of violence,
- Advocacy against discriminatory laws that criminalize LGBTI status,
- Ending explicit and implicit forms of discrimination in the workplace, housing, education, and other public institutions, and

- Community awareness and support for the human rights of LGBTI persons⁸⁰

These sources, coupled with the original data collected in this book, academic analysis, as well as my diplomatic experience implementing human rights programs, are the basis for the conceptual definition of LGBTI diplomacy. Yet, despite being a multibillion-dollar sector of the international aid realm,⁸¹ human rights diplomacy receives minimal attention from scholars and activists.

Introduction to the US Case

Scholars document how the United States historically lags behind its European counterparts on domestic LGBTI reforms.⁸² Despite the slow pace for domestic reform, since the Obama administration the United States has made rapid and unexpected reforms to its foreign agenda. As of 2017, the United States became “an important force and perhaps even the biggest player in international SOGI human rights advocates and assistance.”⁸³ That assistance began in 2011 under the Obama administration, and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, when Obama signed a presidential memorandum four days before International Human Rights Day, stated:

The struggle to end discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTI) persons is a global challenge, and one that is central to the United States’ commitment to promoting human rights. I am deeply concerned by the violence and discrimination targeting LGBTI persons around the world, whether it is passing laws that criminalize LGBTI status, beating citizens simply for joining peaceful LGBTI pride celebrations, or killing men, women, and children for their perceived sexual orientation. That is why I declared before heads of state gathered at the United Nations, no country should deny people their rights because of who they love, which is why we must stand up for the rights of gays and lesbians everywhere.⁸⁴

With that memorandum, the United States inaugurated its formal LGBTI human rights diplomacy. US embassies worldwide have since carried out Obama’s directive through a host of diplomatic engagements. For example, they host LGBTI civil society actors and government officials at

US embassies to discuss LGBTI rights; publicly participate in host country LGBTI Pride events; raise awareness of LGBTI issues in local media; coordinate with other embassies; support domestic LGBTI outreach campaigns in foreign countries; and include LGBTI equality in their overall human rights foreign policy agendas.⁸⁵ These diplomatic engagements continued with the Trump administration, which is analyzed in the final chapter of this book. The US State Department announced in February 2019 that it would continue to work with EU partners and the UN in a global campaign to end the criminalization of homosexuality.⁸⁶ This book examines the factors that influenced US foreign policy reform to include LGBTI rights in its official policy.

The US case study chapter traces the policy transformation process of how LGBTI rights became a part of US foreign policy. From the original evidence collected, the chapter reveals the central factors of influence over US diplomatic reform as NGO advocacy; insider government leadership; negative LGBTI rights trends in Uganda and other countries; and the United States' national identity and international reputation. NGO advocacy is a broad term also investigated in this chapter. NGO advocacy has taken many approaches and tactics. This chapter probes mechanisms of direct protest by NGOs against state policies, examining how advocates garnered support from gatekeeper organizations, through which small, newer LGBTI organizations, founded in the early 2000s, gained legitimacy from larger, older organizations. NGO actors also employed direct institutional advocacy where civil society groups conducted sustained, targeted engagement with foreign affairs agencies and harnessed insider governmental allies. Finally, it analyzes the vital and diverse techniques of civil society groups diffusing political opposition to their cause. This confluence of factors led to the overall shift in US diplomatic engagements that included LGBTI diplomacy.

Scholars recognize that foreign policy goals should reflect entrenched domestic social values and mores of a society.⁸⁷ The very core of diplomatic work is to represent one's country's culture, ideals, and people abroad. Yet while American ambassadors march in foreign LGBTI Pride parades, the LGBTI equality movement faces powerful opposition at home. Some scholars denote the United States as a late adopter of LGBTI rights in foreign affairs as compared to its European counterparts,⁸⁸ while others remain skeptical of the United States' ability to fully implement policies on LGBTI equality.⁸⁹ Herein lies the puzzle for this study: in 2011, when the US State Department formally incorporated LGBTI rights into its human rights foreign policy strategy, those rights were far from an agreed-on norm in the United States. According to the Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, in

2013, 37 percent of the US population believed “homosexuality is unacceptable.”⁹⁰ In 2019, many states continue to ban unmarried couples from adopting, and there is no federal statute addressing employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.⁹¹ In 2018, the Human Rights Campaign, one of the most active and powerful LGBTI rights advocacy NGOs in the United States, found that American LGBTI youth were twice as likely as their peers to be physically assaulted.⁹² Yet even amid evidence of discrimination against LGBTI populations, the United States began to exhibit unexpected leadership in promoting LGBTI rights abroad in 2011.

Inconsistencies between foreign and domestic policy are not new or unique to the United States. Other countries, such as South Africa and Brazil, elevate LGBTI rights in international affairs, despite severe domestic abuses toward women and LGBTI people.⁹³ Forsythe posits that a state’s foreign policy is “the result of a two-level game in which domestic values and pressures combine with international standards and pressures to produce a given policy.”⁹⁴ The history of human rights promotion in foreign policy has been rife with controversy and incongruity with dominant American values. To name a couple of inconsistencies, US diplomats have advocated to improve prison conditions in other countries;⁹⁵ meanwhile the United States has disproportionately high levels of incarceration worldwide.⁹⁶ Additionally, foreign assistance supports ending violence against women globally,⁹⁷ while gender-based violence is a significant problem in the United States.⁹⁸ These examples indicate that promoting LGBTI equality is not the only inconsistency between the United States’ domestic record with its foreign policy. Implementing LGBTI rights in US foreign policy presents a puzzle with regard to domestic levels of acceptance.

LGBTI diplomacy is also an unexpected historical turn given the State Department’s open discrimination and persecution of LGBTI employees from the 1950s through the 1990s. Historically, the State Department had an overt policy discriminating against LGBTI diplomats. In the 1950s, during the McCarthy era, the US State Department fired LGBTI diplomats. In 1953, President Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10450, banning homosexuals from working for the federal government or any of its private contractors.⁹⁹ At the time, government officials actively sought out and removed “commies and queers” from federal service.¹⁰⁰ David Johnson documents how a “Lavender Scare,” the “fear that homosexuals posed a threat to national security and needed to be systematically removed from the federal

government,” permeated the State Department.¹⁰¹ The State Department and other federal agencies in the 1950s publicly shamed and fired those suspected of being LGBTI. In the end, approximately 4,380 gay men and women were discharged from the military and about 500 fired from their jobs with the government.¹⁰² Many of these individuals were merely perceived as gay, with little or anecdotal evidence against them. Until 1975, the US federal government could remove a federal employee for “immoral conduct,” a euphemism often used for homosexuality.¹⁰³ Through the 1980s and into the 1990s, LGBTI diplomats’ careers were at risk if they dared to live openly. In fact, LGBTI individuals were prohibited from serving in the State Department until 1992.¹⁰⁴ On January 9, 2017, former US Secretary of State John Kerry issued a formal apology on behalf of the US Department of State for its role in past discrimination against LGBTI employees and applicants.¹⁰⁵ In his apology, Kerry recognized the transformation of the US Department of State from its history of active discrimination to the promotion of sexual minority rights abroad.¹⁰⁶ Specifically, Secretary Kerry highlighted that “in 2015, to further promote LGBTI rights throughout the world, I appointed the first ever Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons.”¹⁰⁷ Kerry’s acknowledgment signified a complete reversal of policy toward LGBTI employees within the State Department, as well as a shift making the United States the largest international financial contributor to LGBTI global civil society and programs. As the title of this book suggests, this research investigates how one institution, as seen in the case of the US Department of State, can transition from treating a group of people as pariahs to transition within just a few decades to promote equality globally as a foreign policy priority.

This research traces the process of how repressive laws in the United States, mainly commencing in the 1950s McCarthy era, generated a powerful social movement with the long-term goal of reforming domestic and foreign affairs agencies. LGBTI activists engaged in public resistance toward discriminatory federal policies. Over many decades, advocates cultivated increasing public support and built alliances with LGBTI-allied government insiders. From their position of influence, these government insiders were able to override powerful opponents of LGBTI equality by focusing LGBTI rights diplomacy on extreme violence toward sexual minorities. *From Pariah to Priority* provides original data to uncover how advocates and insider allies employed strategic framing and made LGBTI equality more palatable to even conservative legislators. Leaders who may not support marriage equality

will support policies that protect fundamental freedoms, namely preventing people from being killed or jailed due to their sexual orientation in places such as Cuba, Russia, or Uganda. When confronted by the gravity of the problem in many countries, numerous US leaders softened their opposition to certain LGBTI diplomatic frames that centered on ending extreme violence and criminalization, allowing for them to become one of the State Department's mandates.

Uganda plays a central role in explaining how LGBTI rights were institutionalized in the United States and Sweden. In 2009, members of the Ugandan Parliament expressed near-unanimous support for a proposed bill that would have made homosexual acts punishable by death.¹⁰⁸ The Anti-Homosexuality Bill,¹⁰⁹ dubbed by observers as the "Kill the Gays" Bill,¹¹⁰ was a sensitizing event that spurred a global reaction that became a key factor for institutionalizing LGBTI rights in foreign policy. Most social science research focuses on Americans' role and Christian religious leaders' impact on the Ugandan Parliament in regard to changing their laws.¹¹¹ This research argues that in 2009, with the proposal of the "Kill the Gays" law in Uganda, US and Swedish foreign policy institutions were irrevocably changed; without this law, LGBTI diplomacy would not have become institutionalized in these two governments.

Leveraging international relations theories concerning sensitizing events such as the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, this book demonstrates how such events can stimulate discursive renewal to reshape policies.¹¹² Discursive renewal is explained by theorists who argue that new events can transform public and institutional discourse, triggering a new approach or policy proposal in response.¹¹³ There are numerous countries with the death penalty for homosexuality. These countries had not drawn sweeping international attention for their laws, as was the case with Uganda's proposed law. Discursive institutionalism helps explain how the Ugandan law in particular was a new event that generated societal and political concerns and caused institutional renewal to shape new decision-making regarding LGBTI rights in foreign relations.

Prior to Uganda's proposed law, American diplomats' focus on global LGBTI abuses had been peripheral. Before then, LGBTI issues were addressed indirectly through international development programs related to HIV/AIDS programs and some gender equality campaigns. The proposed draconian Ugandan law inspired international leaders into a new institutional policy discourse and elevated LGBTI rights as a central human rights issue of foreign relations. It also drew international attention and cat-

alyzed an urgent discursive renewal in both the United States and Sweden. In a historic policy decision, both countries conditioned aspects of their respective bilateral aid to Uganda in response to its new anti-LGBTI law. Sweden conditioned its international donor aid by cutting 6.5 million kroner (approximately \$928,500) of planned aid to the Ugandan government, while continuing to support local civil society and funding nongovernmental programs.¹¹⁴ The United States also took a similar approach, with a historic cancellation of a military aviation exercise and a halting of aid to certain other programs, including the Ugandan police force.¹¹⁵ These actions marked the first time—globally in history—that international donor aid was revamped because of LGBTI human rights considerations.

Conditioning foreign assistance based on LGBTI rights changed global international relations. LGBTI rights abuses are included in negotiations with countries seeking to join the EU, for example. Human rights considerations are included in trade and military agreements with many countries. The Swedish model is used as a blueprint by diplomats in many different nations. In the US case, this practice commenced in 2009 during the Obama administration. Some observers noted that “‘gay rights diplomacy’ became a pillar of the Obama administration’s foreign policy.”¹¹⁶ With the transition to the conservative Trump administration, many advocates and observers postulated LGBTI rights diplomacy to be removed from the State Department’s mandate. However, the Trump administration continued to make aspects of US foreign and military assistance contingent on human rights, including LGBTI rights.

The US case chapter ends with an analysis of the Trump administration and the first few months of President Biden’s administration in 2021. Again surprising to most observers, the Trump administration renewed efforts for a global campaign to end criminalization and violence toward LGBTI persons in 2019.¹¹⁷ It appeared at the time that LGBTI rights diplomacy institutionally survived the first change of administration. In the first year of the Trump administration, the newly appointed Secretary of State Rex Tillerson issued a statement commemorating the International Transgender Day of Remembrance, stating, “The United States honors the memory of the many transgender individuals who have lost their lives to acts of violence.”¹¹⁸ Given the Trump administration’s hostility to transgender people’s rights, this shocked LGBTI equality advocates.¹¹⁹ Similarly surprising to observers, in February 2017, after little more than a month in office, Trump administration officials announced that the State Department’s US Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI people Randy Berry would retain his position. Berry had been appointed during the Obama

administration in 2015. Political observers noted that keeping “Obama’s top gay rights envoy at the State Department stunned LGBTI activists and angered American evangelicals.”¹²⁰ LGBTI rights in foreign policy have been supported and criticized by both ends of the political spectrum. There are numerous factors, however, that make a mandate within the Department of State difficult to reform or remove. The chapter concludes with providing institutional factors and explanations to the Trump administration’s seemingly perplexing actions. Examining a policy’s sustainability in foreign policy is important for new human rights advocacy and modern social movements.

LGBTI equality is challenged globally. Like the United States, more conservative governments in places such as Brazil, Hungary, and Poland dismantled aspects of laws and policies for gender equality. Since 2015, the Swedish political climate has also shifted, calling into question the policy sustainability of LGBTI diplomacy in Sweden as well.

Introduction to the Swedish Case Study Chapter

Scholars have deemed Sweden as a “moral superpower,”¹²¹ and “the gold standard,”¹²² in human rights foreign policy with regard to how Swedish leaders generate and champion new human rights norms. In 2005, the Swedish government made the historic decision to broaden its human rights foreign policy goals to formally include LGBTI rights.¹²³ At that time, other countries such as the other Nordic nations, the Netherlands, and Brazil were contemplating similar policies.¹²⁴ Since then, the Swedish government has provided financial support to fledgling LGBTI civil society groups to aid their struggle for global equality.¹²⁵ On all continents, in countries from Moldova to Uganda, Sweden utilizes its bilateral relationships and leverages its influence in the EU and UN as a large international humanitarian aid donor to end LGBTI human rights abuses.

Central to Sweden’s human rights policy is a feminist foreign policy that prioritizes women’s rights and gender equality that the Swedish Government considered “prerequisite[s] for reaching Sweden’s broader foreign policy goals on peace, security, and sustainable development.”¹²⁶ Swedish Foreign Minister Wallström explained, “striving toward gender equality is not only a goal in itself but also a precondition for achieving our wider foreign development, and security-policy objectives.”¹²⁷ The Swedish government openly and vocally promotes human rights, sometimes at the expense of its bilateral relations. For example, it has strained and even eliminated