



# Shaming by international organizations: Mapping condemnatory speech acts across 27 international organizations, 1980–2015

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## Abstract

In the face of escalating conflicts or atrocities, international organizations (IOs), alongside non-governmental organizations (NGOs), often vocalize public condemnation. Researchers have examined NGO shaming, but no extant literature has comparatively explored if, how and why IOs shame. This article fills this gap. We conceptualize IO shaming as condemnatory speech acts and distinguish between the agent, targets and actions of shaming. We theorize how compliance and socialization are motives that lead IOs to shame. Empirically, we use new data on more than 3000 instances of IO shaming, covering 27 organizations between 1980 and 2015 to examine empirical patterns across the three dimensions of agents, targets and actions. We find that the majority of IOs do employ shaming but to varying degrees. Global, general-purpose IOs shame the most and regional, task-specific IOs the least. IOs mainly shame states, but there is a rise in the targeting of non-state and unnamed actors. While many condemned acts relate to human rights and security issues, IOs shame actions across the policy spectrum. These findings indicate that IO shaming is driven by compliance and socialization motives and that it is a wider phenomenon than previously recognized, suggesting possible avenues for further inquiry.

## Keywords

Condemnation, human rights, international organizations, security, shaming, speech acts

## Introduction

When conflicts escalate or terrorist attacks and other atrocities come to the attention of a global public, media headlines are soon flooded with reactions from various political actors. Among the actors that vocalize public condemnation in the face of such events are

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international organizations (IOs). IOs, such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), have condemned nuclear tests in North Korea,<sup>1</sup> electoral fraud in Gambia,<sup>2</sup> the practice of virginity tests<sup>3</sup> and the economic blockade of Cuba.<sup>4</sup> IOs shame to varying degrees and in various contexts. Some actions and actors are frequently condemned by IOs but others are rarely publicly decried. Certain IOs are vocal and shame frequently, while others are typically silent and scarcely criticize. This variation raises several questions: Which IOs tend to shame, who do they shame and what actions are shamed? What can these patterns tell us about IOs' motives for shaming?

No extant literature has comparatively explored if, how and why IOs shame. This article fills this gap. We demonstrate that IOs engage in shaming in world politics. Empirically, we provide the first systematic comparison of shaming by IOs. Specifically, we examine shaming across 27 IOs from 1980 to 2015. We analyse acts of shaming adopted in the policy output (for example, resolutions, decisions or communiqués) of the highest political decision-making bodies. Our original data cover more than 3000 instances of public condemnation, allowing us to better understand the dynamics of IO shaming.

Theoretically, we conceptualize IO shaming as distinguishable from other forms of condemnation available to IOs. While IOs have a variety of policy tools that can portray criticism, such as economic sanctions, membership suspension or even military action, shaming is primarily a communicative, rather than material, tool of public condemnation. Focusing on political, non-technical shaming, we distinguish between its three main dimensions: *agents* – who shame; *targets* – who are shamed; and *actions* – what is shamed. Building on previous research, we identify two key motives – compliance and socialization – that help to account for why IOs shame.

We arrive at four core findings about the dynamics of IO shaming. Firstly, we find that several IOs employ shaming, albeit to different degrees. In our sample, the UN and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) are the most active agents of shaming, far outstripping other IOs. Secondly, IOs shame all types of actors, but states are the most common target and, more recently, we see an increase in shaming of non-state actors and unnamed targets. Thirdly, IOs shame acts concerning a variety of issue areas. While human rights and security are the most common issues, shaming occurs in other domains. Fourthly, the empirical patterns suggest that IOs employ shaming in order to both induce compliance and to socialize actors. Neither motive on its own fully accounts for the variation in shaming across agents, targets and actions that we observe. While we reveal patterns of shaming that point to a complex set of motives, future research is necessary to determine whether other motives contribute to condemnation and to discern the conditions under which each motive is dominant and how they interact.

Our findings have two general implications. Firstly, our data suggest that shaming is a broader phenomenon than conventionally assumed, extending to a variety of agents, targets and actions. Extensive research considers non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be agents of shaming (e.g., Hafner-Burton, 2008; Murdie and Davis, 2012; Murdie and Peksen, 2013; Ron et al., 2005). This article illustrates that IOs can also be shaming agents. When shaming, IOs target not only states, but also non-state actors, and even unnamed, non-specified actors. Human rights violations are not the only actions condemned, but also shaming addresses a wide range of actions in various policy fields.

Secondly, shaming is one of several policy tools, including sanctions or membership suspension, available to IOs to demonstrate criticism. Research on IO performance therefore warrants closer attention to how shaming has an impact on IO performance, on the one hand, and on the other hand how shaming compares to other policy tools.

This article progresses in four steps. We first conceptualize IO shaming and theorize how compliance and socialization motivate IOs to shame. Secondly, we describe the data used in our empirical analysis and how we measure shaming by IOs. Thirdly, we present our empirical analysis, which relies upon a variety of descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations to reveal key patterns in IO shaming across agents, targets and actions. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of our main findings and their implications for research.

## **Shaming by international organizations**

While a growing literature studies naming and shaming, it largely focuses on the naming and shaming of human rights atrocities by NGOs (Hafner-Burton, 2008; Murdie and Davis, 2012; Murdie and Peksen, 2013; Ron et al., 2005). In particular, scholars examine what factors influence if and how NGOs shame (Ron et al., 2005) as well as what effects shaming has on human rights practices (Hafner-Burton, 2008; Murdie and Davis, 2012; Murdie and Peksen, 2013). Additional research has studied whether human rights shaming affects the distribution of foreign aid (Lebovic and Voeten, 2009) and the flow of foreign direct investment (Barry et al., 2013).

At times, this scholarship includes IOs, meaning formal intergovernmental, multilateral and bureaucratic organizational structures established to further cooperation among states (Martin and Simmons, 2012). For instance, some studies include the UN Commission on Human Rights (now the UN Human Rights Council) alongside NGOs when testing the effects of human rights shaming (Hafner-Burton, 2008; Krain, 2012; Lebovic and Voeten, 2009). A few other studies are exceptional. Kelley (2012) studies IO shaming in the context of election monitoring and Sharman (2009) looks at the ‘black-listing’ of tax havens by IOs. More recently, some scholarship has looked at shaming through IOs’ peer-review mechanisms (Carraro et al., 2019; Terman and Voeten, 2017). Despite these few exceptions, research on the politics of shaming has not placed IOs at the centre of analysis.

The dearth of research on shaming by IOs is surprising for three reasons. Firstly, early understandings of shaming envisioned a role for IOs. Notably, Keck and Sikkink (1998) illustrated that IOs are crucial to the ‘boomerang effect’ that enables shaming to translate into behavioural change. Secondly, most observers of IOs can easily identify instances when IOs have condemned particular behaviours. Thirdly, the potential implications are significant. How and why IOs use shaming speaks to broader concerns and questions about the mechanisms that IOs use when attempting to bring about change in international affairs.

When responding to escalating conflicts or atrocities, IOs typically have several policy options, including economic sanctions, military force and membership suspension. Shaming is another policy option available to IOs. We conceive of shaming as a ‘speech act’ (Austin, 1975) or a formal statement of condemnation promulgated in the policy output of an IO. Shaming is therefore distinct from other IO policy tools because it is not

a material policy but a communicative one. IO statements of condemnation closely approximate what scholars define as NGO shaming: condemnation that is primarily a communicative tool (Risse et al., 1999) or a publicity tactic that shines a spotlight on a bad behaviour (Hafner-Burton, 2008).

For our purposes, shaming by IOs is characterized along three dimensions. The first dimension concerns who shames, or which actors are the *agents* of shaming. We assume that agents will differ in terms of whether they are regional or global IOs, meaning states from more than two world regions are members. Agents may be general-purpose IOs, having broad mandates covering several policy areas or they might be task-specific IOs that operate within few policy areas (Lenz et al., 2015). Along this dimension, we can determine which IOs tend to use shaming and whether they share characteristics that make them more likely to shame. The second dimension addresses who is shamed; that is, when IOs shame who is the *target*? We distinguish between member states, non-member states, non-state actors and unnamed or non-specified targets. A focus on the targets of shaming sheds light on the actors that IOs condemn and whether certain types of actors are targeted by IOs more than others. The third dimension relates to the *actions* being condemned, or answers the question of what is shamed, including anything from economic, trade and development policies to human rights violations and military actions. Differentiating the actions shamed allows us to identify variation in the behaviours that are condemned. There may be other dimensions to shaming, such as linguistic markers or how shaming is communicated. We set these aside because they do not provide analytical leverage over the question of motives on the basis of our data. With the dimensions of agent, target and action, however, we are able to generate clear observable implications to discern motives.

### Why shame?

Why do IOs shame? Previous research in international relations portrays condemnation, including sanctions and shaming, as policy that is aimed at either inducing compliance or socializing. For example, Wallensteen and Grusell (2012: 207) approach UN ‘smart sanctions’ as policy that is pursued ‘to achieve member state compliance’. Sharman (2009: 594) describes ‘blacklisting’ by IOs as a ‘new compliance tool’. Other literature suggests that condemnation is better viewed as an ‘instrument of socialization’ (Audie, 1996), which ‘helps to clarify norms and achieve conformity’ (Adler-Nissen, 2014: 149). Against this backdrop, we consider how these two motivations – compliance and socialization – account for the dynamics of IO shaming.

Firstly, IOs may shame actors to cause reputational damage that will compel them to comply with commitments. Previous research shows that reputation can have a bearing on an actor’s inclination to comply with obligations because noncompliance can generate social costs (Brewster, 2009; Simmons, 2000; Tomz, 2007b). From this perspective, we assume that IOs, either through their national representatives or internal bureaucrats, recognize that political actors are concerned with their reputation and that noncompliance can cause damage to an actor’s social status, especially if others are aware of failures to comply.

Shaming equates to calling out non-compliers, harming their reputation. IOs will therefore use shaming with the expectation that it has reputational costs that actors want

to avoid. Shaming is likely to affect an actor's reputation through two paths. It may affect one's reputation vis-à-vis international audiences. Among other things, a decline in international social status can put future possibilities for cooperation at risk. The status of actors' reputations today can cause others to doubt the credibility of their commitments (Crescenzi et al., 2012). Concerns for future cooperation thus can incentivize compliance in order to reduce international audience costs. Also, shaming can raise domestic audience costs. Citizens care about their state's international reputation (Tomz, 2007a), and acts of condemnation on the international stage can embolden domestic opposition and therefore incentivize changes in behaviour. For these reasons, IOs may see shaming as a device for improving compliance by striking at a non-complier's reputation among international and domestic audiences.

Generally, if noncompliance motivates IOs to condemn publically, we would expect to observe a few core patterns in shaming by IOs. IOs with broad mandates (i.e., general-purpose IOs) and larger memberships (i.e., global IOs) will shame more often than those with narrow mandates (i.e., task-specific IOs) and fewer member states (i.e., regional IOs). The former set of IOs tend to have a larger set of commitments and actors with obligations, and therefore a greater likelihood of noncompliance subject to possible shaming. Also, we would expect the primary targets of shaming to be member states, seeing as these are the actors who typically make binding obligations within the purview of an IO. We would also expect shaming for compliance purposes to name the transgressors, as naming is important for inflicting reputational damage. In terms of actions, we would expect IOs to express condemnation of actions that clearly violate international obligations, perhaps even calling the actions failures to comply or violations, including in technical areas or issues relating to low politics (e.g., environment, crime, culture).

Secondly, IOs may use shaming to socialize actors. A wide range of research argues that IOs have social power (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004) and contribute to the socialization of political actors in world politics (Bearce and Bondanella, 2007; Checkel, 2005; Greenhill, 2010). According to this view, socialization is a process of social learning, 'inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community' (Checkel, 2005: 804). It occurs primarily through the use of moral discourses and acts of communication, argumentation and persuasion (Risse and Sikkink, 1999: 13).

Recognizing their social influence, IOs may use shaming as a socialization device. Shaming socializes by framing and publicizing information about actions, couched in a moral discourse to signal which behaviours are or are not socially appropriate (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Risse, 2000; Risse et al., 1999). While expressing validity claims about a norm, shaming also conveys identity-related arguments (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Katzenstein, 1996). It denounces norm-violators and makes them feel shame or embarrassment because it communicates how their behaviour fails to conform to standards of appropriateness for an identity they aspire to have. Simultaneously, shaming leads those doing the shaming to identify more strongly with each other and enhance their own collective understanding. In other words, shaming 'constructs categories of "us" and "them"' (Risse and Sikkink, 1999: 15).

Socialization as a motivation for IO shaming leads to a few observable implications. IOs with strong collective identities most likely will shame for socialization purposes. This is because socialization promotes as well as reflects collective identities (Risse and

Sikkink, 1999; Wendt, 1994). Regional IOs typically are associated with strong collective identities (Hemmer and Katzenstein, 2002) and regional cooperation constructs shared identity (Acharya, 2001). Secondly, the targets of shaming are likely to be diverse. While compliance motives will lead to a focus on shaming member states, we would expect socialization to go beyond member states. In addition to member states, socialization will target non-members, non-state actors, such as terrorists, foreign fighters and armed groups, and sometimes even unnamed, non-specified actors (for example, the UN often condemns all violence against women, without specifying any particular actor). Shaming of these actors occurs to shame norm-violators *and* to reaffirm a community's identity. Thus, statehood or naming is less pivotal than when shaming for compliance purposes. Similarly, socialization motives would tend to be directed towards 'constitutive norms' – rules that define the identity of an actor – as opposed to 'regulative norms' – which specify standards of behaviour (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Katzenstein, 1996). We assume that constitutive norms tend to be concentrated in the policy areas typically associated with high politics (e.g., security, human rights, etc.) because they more often speak to issues of existential importance for states and other actors, as opposed to issues such as education, environment or industry.

From our perspective, IOs, especially when examined through their principal inter-governmental decision-making bodies, involve multiple interests. Thus, compliance and socialization are likely to both contribute to IO shaming. They need not be mutually exclusive. This is not to say that one motive cannot dominate in discrete instances. Indeed, one IO may use shaming predominately for compliance reasons, while another does so in order to socialize, or an IO's motives may vary over time and instances. Also, IOs may have additional motives for issuing public condemnation. For example, IOs may shame in order to self-legitimize.<sup>5</sup> We focus on compliance and socialization because these motives are generalizable: all IOs confront dilemmas of compliance and socialization. Also, existing research suggests that shaming serves these purposes. There is less consensus on shaming as it relates to, for example, self-legitimation. Lastly, as we show, compliance and socialization speak to a large share of shaming.

## Data

We operationalize IO shaming as publicly adopted decisions by principal interstate decision-making bodies that condemn undesirable activities by states and other actors. We select a sample of 27 IOs and gather available data in the period from 1980 to 2015, as reported in Table 1. This sample is based on a stratified random sample from a list of 182 IOs drawn from the Correlates of War International Governmental Organization (COW-IGO) Dataset (Pevehouse et al., 2004), corrected for perceived political importance and fit with parallel datasets (Hooghe et al., 2017; Tallberg et al., 2014). It provides a suitable starting point for a comparative analysis of IO shaming practices. Firstly, it has a wide geographic scope, including the paramount global organization, the UN, and key regional organizations in all major world regions. The geographical distribution across IOs of different types is broadly reflective of that of the global population. Secondly, it includes both general-purpose IOs with broad policy agendas, such as the AU, and task-specific IOs that focus on a narrow set of issues, such as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

Table I. Total international organization (IO) shaming cases, 1980–2015.

IO	IO body	Data since	Shaming cases	Average membership size
UN	United Nations	1980	1,700	178
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation	1980	944	50
OAS	Organization of American States	1980	72	34
OAU/AU	African Union	1980	63	50
CoE	Council of Europe	1980	54	35
CommonW	Commonwealth Secretariat	1980	53	49
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization	1980	39	20
WHO	World Health Organization	1980	35	176
CARICOM	Caribbean Community	1980	21	13
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	1980	18	8
SADC	Southern African Development Community	1980	15	12
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	1980	13	173
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	1994	8	54
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum	1980	6	11
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation	1989	5	18
CAN	Andean Community	1980	2	4
IWC	International Whaling Commission	1980	2	54
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union	1989	1	5
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	1980	1	166
ILO	International Labour Organization	1980	1	164
EFTA	European Free Trade Association	1980	0	5
ICC	International Criminal Court	2002	0	105
NAFO	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization	1980	0	14
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement	1997	0	3
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development	1980	0	28
SCO	Shanghai Co-operation Organization	1996	0	6
WTO	World Trade Organization	1995	0	122
	General Assembly			
	Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers			
	General Assembly			
	Assembly of the African Union			
	Committee of Ministers			
	Heads of Government Meeting*			
	North Atlantic Council			
	World Health Assembly			
	Ministerial Councils			
	Summit			
	Heads of State and Government			
	General Conference			
	Permanent Council / FSC			
	Heads of State and Government			
	Leaders' meeting			
	Commission			
	Commission			
	Presidential Council			
	Council			
	General Conference			
	Ministerial meeting			
	Assembly of State Parties			
	Fisheries Commission			
	Free Trade Commission			
	Council			
	Council of Heads of Member States			
	General Council			

Note: The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group is included after it was established in 1995.

Thirdly, the sample captures variation in terms of membership characteristics, identities and institutional rules to enable a more representative sample of the universe of IOs.

IOs often contain a multitude of organizational bodies and institutional arrangements, and any of these bodies could shame, from statements by formal representatives to the reports of technical working bodies. We focus on the principal interstate decision-making bodies, such as the Assembly of the AU and the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In the international realm, these bodies typically provide the strategic direction of an organization, set the agenda for subsidiary organs and often hold responsibility for compliance monitoring, both with regard to specific policy legislation and to foundational norms and statutes. While we recognize that several of these decision-making bodies have subsidiary organs that engage in shaming of their own,<sup>6</sup> they provide the appropriate place to study the type of political, non-technical shaming that is our primary interest.<sup>7</sup> The principal decision-making body also reflects, more than any other body, the collective will of the membership. Another reason to focus on interstate decision-making bodies is that they are relatively comparable. As argued by Blake and Payton (2015: 388), because these bodies are nearly universal across IOs, they provide ‘a point of comparison across IGOs and increase the validity of the data collected because we can be confident that we are collecting data on IGO organs that perform largely similar roles within their institutions’.

The identification of principal decision-making bodies was made on the basis of provisions in the founding treaty of each respective IO. In cases where more than one body exists at the same level – typically multiple ministerial councils for different issue areas – we code all bodies as one. For the UN, we select the General Assembly, because in comparison with the Security Council, it has a more representative membership, a larger output and covers a wider range of policy issues, encapsulating the multi-issue nature of the organization.<sup>8</sup>

For each IO in our sample, we gathered the full text of all of the principal forms of its policy output, such as all resolutions and decisions. We sourced the data from official electronic archives, supplemented where necessary with direct contact with secretariats, repository libraries and secondary literature. The observation period spans from 1980 to 2015, sufficiently long to reveal long-term trends from the Cold War era until today. Our data contain some missing values for the most recent years, mainly because the data have not yet been released. In total, the dataset contains some 20,000 policy acts.

To measure shaming, we identify all instances where IOs’ policy output publicly reproaches an actor for some undesired action. We select these provisions or clauses based on a short dictionary of condemnatory operative terms conventionally used to signal reproach in international policy-making and diplomacy.<sup>9</sup> The two key operative terms are ‘condemns’ and ‘deplores’, which are standard formulations in international law (Chesterman et al., 2008; Szasz, 2002), employed by a wide range of IOs and have remained in consistent usage since at least the creation of the UN in 1945 (Castaneda, 1969). This operationalization generalizes an approach adopted in studies of human rights shaming (for example, Hafner-Burton, 2008; Lebovic and Voeten, 2009), which have similarly relied on condemnation clauses, and it is in line with scholarship on international law, which recognizes that shaming is inherent to the usage of ‘condemns’ in operative paragraphs (Koremenos, 2016: 255). By requiring that a clause include an

explicit condemnation, this operationalization provides a tough criterion, which facilitates coding reliability and leaves little room for subjective interpretation.

For each shaming attempt, we categorize the identity of the shaming agent, the target being shamed and the action for which it is being shamed. The shaming *agent* is the IO adopting the decision that contains a condemnation clause. Among *targets*, we identify IO member states based on Correlates of War IO data (Pevehouse et al., 2004). Non-state actors include civil society organizations, private enterprises, insurgents, terrorist groups and private individuals. In cases where shaming targeted actors attempting coup d'états, we coded the actor as a member state if the coup succeeded (and power was transferred to the coup-makers) but as a non-state actor if the coup failed. Non-specified targets cover instances where shaming is directed against an activity or phenomenon in general, without attributing culpability (at least not in clear terms) to a specific target. We specify *action* based on a list of global governance topic codes previously developed (for details, see Lundgren et al., 2018). The list covers 18 major policy topics, such as human rights and security, and more than 100 more specific sub-topics.

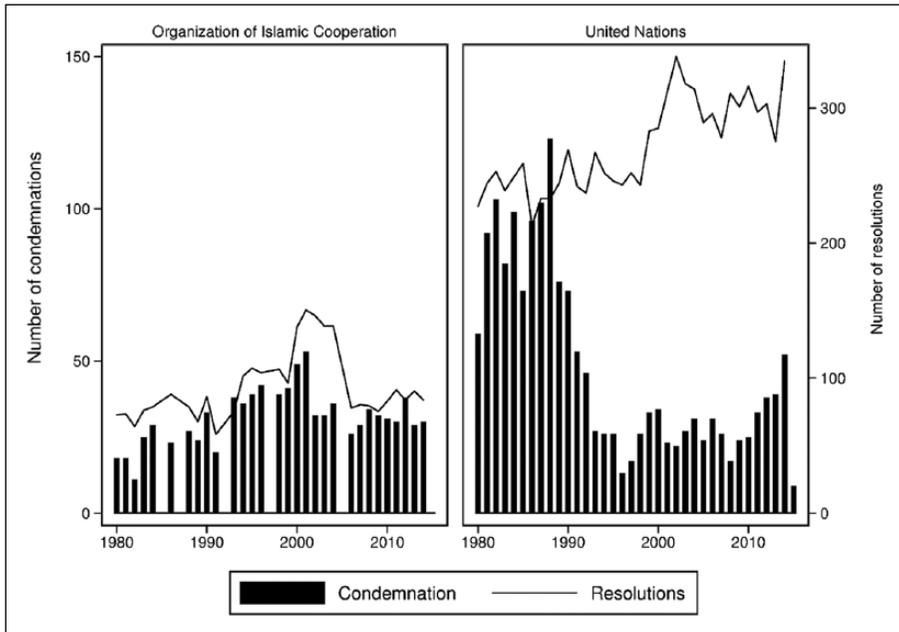
### **Empirical analysis: International organization shaming across agents, targets and acts**

The aim of our empirical analysis is to identify broad patterns in IO shaming across agents, targets and acts. We begin by investigating which IOs shame and which do not, and how patterns have changed over time. We then turn to an examination of the targets of IO shaming and then the actions that IOs shame. Throughout, we examine and discuss whether and how the evidence provides insights into the underlying motives.

#### **Agents: Who shames?**

While some IOs do not engage in shaming (including the EFTA, North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)), a wide range of IOs across all geographic regions do employ shaming as a strategy. Our data demonstrate that 20 out of the 27 IOs in our sample have engaged in shaming since 1980 (Table 1). However, there is a significant degree of variation with regard to the frequency (in terms of the yearly occurrences) and overall amount of shaming. One group of IOs infrequently shame (e.g., Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and OSCE), one group regularly employs shaming but at low or medium levels (e.g., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and AU) and a final group employs shaming commonly and consistently. This latter group consists of two IOs, the UN and the OIC, which together generate the lion's share of the shaming in our sample and have multiple instances of shaming in most years. The UN represents 55.4% and the OIC 30.8% of IO shaming, leaving the remaining 18 IOs to account for only 13.8%.<sup>10</sup>

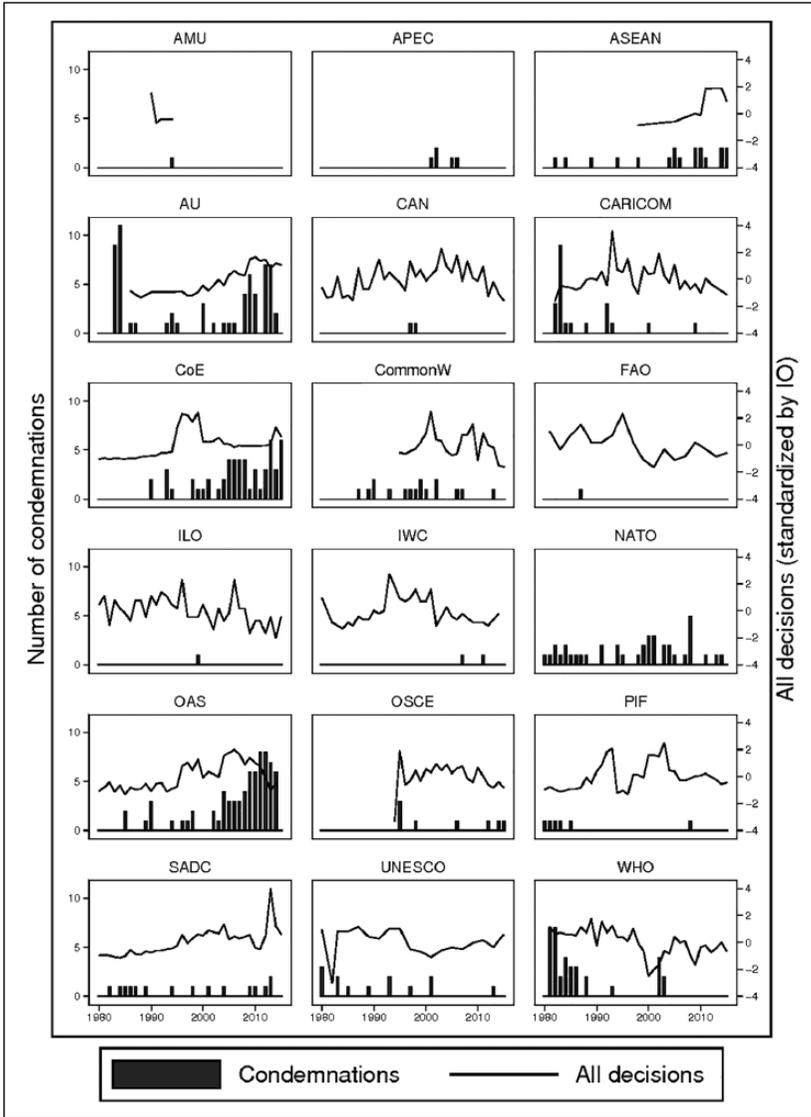
Figures 1 and 2 depict temporal patterns in shaming by IOs. An examination of these patterns suggests that the OIC engages in shaming at a relatively stable rate: the proportion of condemnations in relation to overall output of policy acts is practically constant across time, at an average rate of four condemnations per five resolutions (Figure 1). In comparison, shaming by the UN General Assembly displays temporal variation. It occurs



**Figure 1.** Organization of Islamic Cooperation and United Nations condemnation 1980–2015, by organization.

with high frequency in the 1980s, approximately one condemnation per resolution, but drops distinctly around the end of the Cold War to about one condemnation per four resolutions. Among the other IOs, the AU has a jagged temporal pattern, with high levels in the 1980s and the 2010s, whereas shaming by NATO is relatively constant across time (Figure 2). Some IOs used condemnation mostly during the 1980s (CARICOM and WHO), whereas the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Council of Europe are the only IOs for which we find a sharp increase in shaming around 2000. Figures 1 and 2 also reveal that the frequency of shaming acts corresponds to the overall policy-making activity of IOs in some cases (e.g., the OIC, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Organisation of African Unity (OAU)/AU after 1985), but not for all (e.g., the UN, OAS).

In summary, the majority of IOs engage in shaming, but some do not, and there is considerable variation in the scope of shaming across IOs. One pattern that emerges from the data is that global IOs shame more than regional IOs and general-purpose more than task-specific IOs (Table 2). These factors appear to interact, so that global, general-purpose IOs shame far more than regional, task-specific IOs. In fact, Table 2 reveals that global, general-purpose IOs account for 88% of all instances of shaming that we observe. This pattern most likely relates to IOs’ motivations to address noncompliance. Given their broader mandates and larger memberships, these IOs typically have more commitments to monitor and more states with obligations that are potentially subject to shaming. At the same time, the data implies that socialization also motivates shaming. We observe



**Figure 2.** International organization (IO) condemnation 1980–2015, by organization. See Table 1 for abbreviations.

Note: Data on the number of adopted policies is based on the aggregated sum of different policy instruments (see Sommerer et al., 2018) and z-standardized for each IO. Data is missing for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

that some regional IOs that are often attributed with a strong collective identity (such as ASEAN and CARICOM) are among the group with low to medium amounts of shaming (Table 1). This suggests that IOs with a strong internal identity may be more prone to

**Table 2.** International organization (IO) shaming by IO mandate and geographic scope, 1980–2015.

	Global	Regional	Total
Task specific	109 (APEC, NATO, UNESCO, IWC, ILO, WHO, WTO, ICC, FAO)	62 (OSCE, EFTA, NAFTA, CoE, NAFO)	171
General purpose	2697 (UN, OIC, Commonwealth)	198 (AU, SADC, PIF, ASEAN, SCO, AMU, OAS, CARICOM, CAN)	2895
Total	2806	260	3066

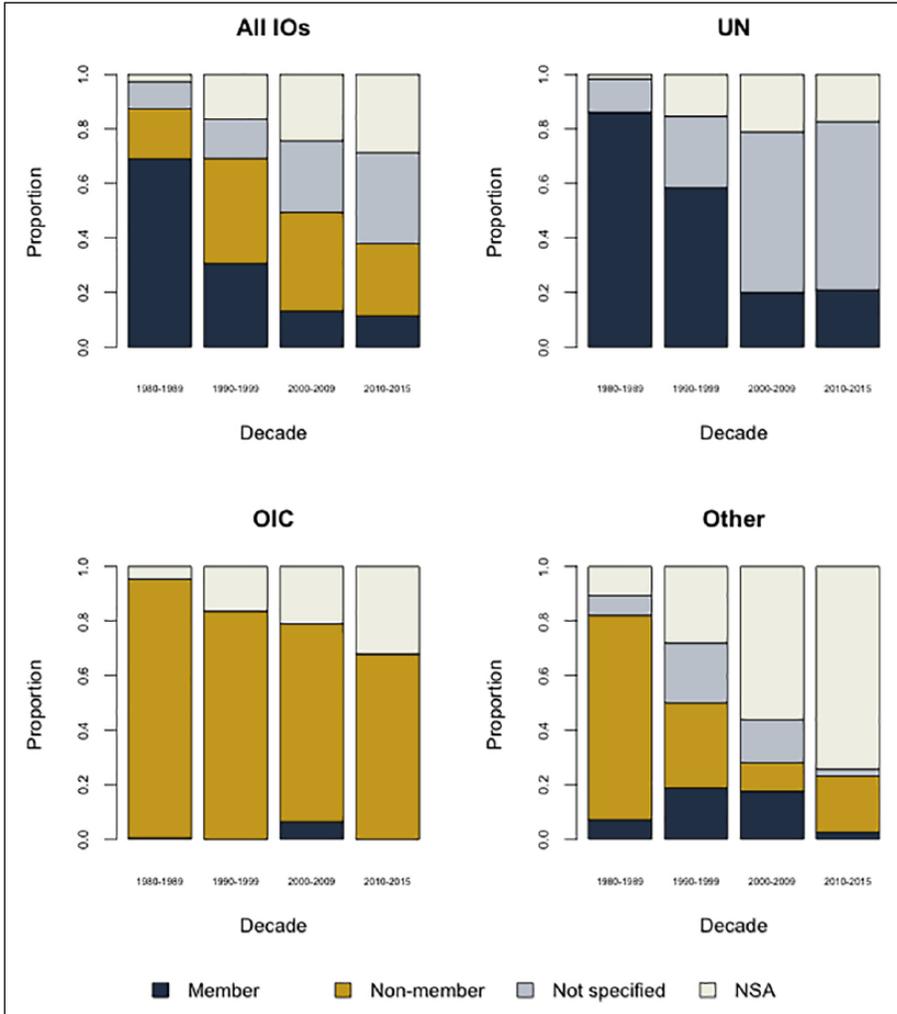
Note: Our definition of global IOs includes IOs with member states from more than two world regions (e.g., OIC: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America). The classification of general-purpose/task-specific IOs is taken from Lenz et al. (2015). See Table 1 for abbreviations.

shaming. Also, two of the IOs that most frequently rely on shaming, NATO and the OIC (for example, both have shaming acts in most years, see Figures 1 and 2), both employ shaming mainly against outside targets and commonly to demarcate against perceived external enemies. This suggests that in addition to compliance concerns, regional IOs rely on shaming for socialization.<sup>11</sup>

### Targets: Who is shamed?

Our second dimension of shaming concerns the targets of condemnation. Our data suggest that different types of actors are subject to IO condemnation: states (67%), non-state actors (14%) and unnamed, non-specified targets (19%). With a few exceptions, however, IOs largely refrain from shaming other IOs. As illustrated in Figure 3, target selection varies considerably both across IOs and across time. Both the UN and the OIC predominantly shame states, but the UN only shames member states (likely a function of its near-universal membership), whereas the OIC frequently targets non-member states, at a rate not matched by any other IO in the sample. In fact, there are only a handful of cases where the OIC shames its own member states; the vast majority of its shaming is directed towards non-members, such as Israel. Among the other IOs, shaming is distributed more evenly across the different targets, with non-state actors and non-member states providing the top two categories.

Figure 3 also demonstrates clear temporal shifts in the selection of principal targets. One pattern is the increased targeting of non-state actors – predominantly terrorist and rebel groups – which is observed for nearly all IOs in the sample. For example, in the 1980s, shaming in the UN General Assembly mainly targeted member states, with very few condemnations of non-state actors and other targets. Over time, however, the amount of shaming targeting non-state actors has increased to nearly a quarter of all UN General Assembly condemnations, making it as common a target as member states. The OIC displays a similar development, with a consistent growth in the share of shaming that targets non-state actors, to reach nearly a quarter of all cases in the 2010–2015 period.



**Figure 3.** International organization (IO) condemnation by target, 1980–2015. UN: United Nations; OIC: Organization of Islamic Cooperation; NSA: non-state actor.

A parallel temporal pattern is the increased condemnation of unnamed or non-specified targets; in other words, general shaming that does not specify culpability for a given act. These cases often relate to condemnations of problems that are widespread, systematic and operating at the level of groups or individuals, such as discrimination, racism or certain human rights violations. However, they may also relate to specific situations where an actor is not identified for strategic reasons. This pattern is observable among most IOs, but particularly striking in the case of the UN, where the non-specified target category grew from 12% in the 1980s to 62% of all condemnations in

**Table 3.** Most frequent targets of international organization condemnation.

Target	Type	N	Shamed by
Israel	Country	899	OIC (52%), UN (41%), WHO (4%)
South Africa	Country	503	UN (88%), OIC (6%), AU (2%)
Terrorists	NSA	148	UN (41%), OIC (21%), NATO (13%)
USA	Country	43	OIC (81%), UN (7%), AU (5%), CoE (5%)
Serbia	Country	40	UN (85%), OIC (8%), NATO (5%)
India	Country	39	OIC (98%), OAS (2%)
'Non-Islamic countries'	Country	29	OIC (100%)
Hindu extremists	NSA	25	OIC (100%)
Iraq	Country	19	UN (90%), CoE (10%)
France	Country	17	OIC (88%), PIF (12%)
Taliban	NSA	14	UN (100%)

NSA: non-state actor; see Table 1 for other abbreviations.

recent years. The OIC is a counter example, only rarely issuing condemnations without an identified target.

Table 3 exhibits the most common targets. While some actors are frequently targeted, variation in the overall distribution of targets is striking. The named targets comprise around 50 different countries and a high number of diverse non-state actors, including al-Qaeda, Hindu extremists and Pope Benedict XVI. It includes states with very different characteristics, from small and weak states such as Fiji and Madagascar to great powers, including the USA, the former Soviet Union, Japan, France and even IOs, such as the European Union. Two countries, Israel and South Africa, attract a very high number of IO condemnations and together represent a large proportion of the IO shaming that we identify. Some targets are 'owned' by a particular IO, that is, a single IO represents all or most of the shaming of this particular target. These include India (condemned almost exclusively by the OIC)<sup>12</sup> and Iraq (condemned mainly by the UN). Others are subject to more general condemnation, drawing criticism from several IOs at the same time. This is seen most clearly in the case of apartheid South Africa and the increasing condemnation of terrorism since the early 2000s.

These empirical patterns reflect compliance and socialization motives. Compliance motives would lead us to expect IOs to target member states, as these are the actors who typically make binding commitments in world politics. A large share of shaming before 1990 reflects a compliance logic dominating shaming activities of IOs. However, the increased targeting of non-members and non-state actors, as well as unspecified actors, suggests that socialization has evolved to be a strong motivation for why IOs shame.

### *Actions: What is shamed?*

The third dimension of shaming concerns the actions or events that are subject to IO shaming. Table 4 summarizes the distribution across different policy issues areas, revealing that a wide variety of issues are targeted in IO shaming. Overall, shamed events cover

**Table 4.** International organization shaming by shamed action.

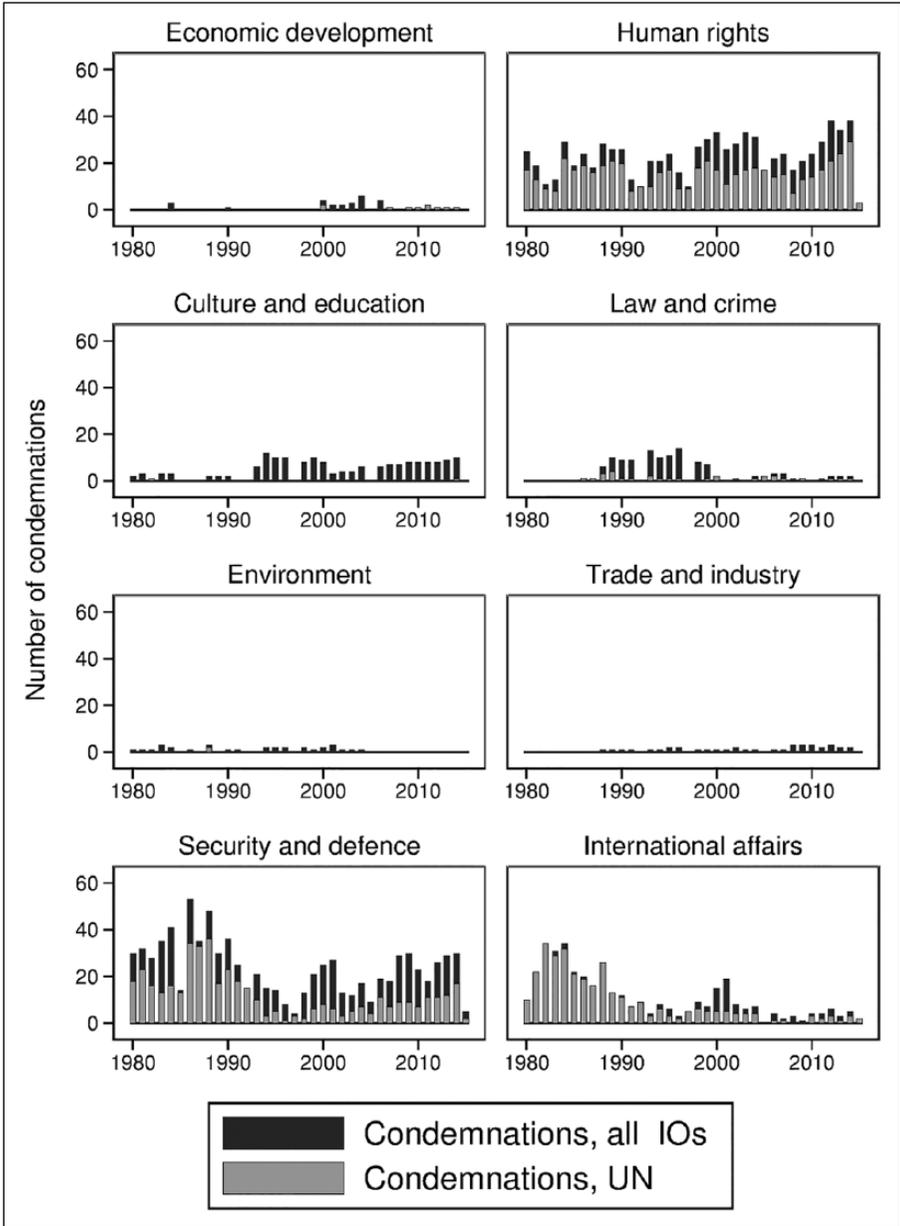
Policy subfield	N	Percent
Human rights	1032	33.6
Security and defence	983	32.0
International affairs	492	16.0
Culture and education	225	7.3
Law and crime	144	4.7
Environment	75	2.4
Trade and industry	48	1.6
Economic development	33	1.1
Other	34	1.1
Total	3066	100

14 out of our 16 policy categories, with security and human rights each receiving about a third of the shaming, while the remaining third is distributed across the other 12 categories.<sup>13</sup> The pattern that emerges is that a handful of policy issues dominate and that about half of the policy issues are of marginal importance, from a shaming perspective, for the IOs in our sample.

In Figure 4, we plot the annual frequency of shaming across the eight most common issue areas. This allows us to examine issue area variation over time. We observe that shaming in the field of human rights has continued to climb, in a jagged pattern, throughout the observed period. In contrast, shaming in the field of international affairs (which includes international law and questions of decolonization) has decreased in a more or less linear trend since the 1980s. For security and defence, we observe a V-shaped trend, with frequent shaming in the 1980s, a dip in the 1990s and a growing trend in the last 15 years, mainly reflecting the increased shaming of non-state actors in civil war and terrorism.

The concentration of shaming in two issue areas marked primarily by constitutive norms – human rights and security – rather than regulative norms reinforces the impression that socialization is an important motive behind IO shaming.<sup>14</sup> Reflecting this tendency, the distribution of shaming within the larger human rights field (Table 5) reveals that the most common form of human rights shaming among the IOs in our sample, after general condemnation of human rights violations, concerns discrimination and violence on the grounds of ethnicity, race and religion. The OIC, perhaps reflecting its denominational membership criteria, represents a large share of public condemnations in this category.<sup>15</sup> Examples of the OIC's extensive reliance on public rebuke include the condemnation of 'the destruction of the historic Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, India, by Hindu extremists' or the 2007 resolution that 'condemns strongly the publication of offensive caricatures of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)'.<sup>16</sup> These would appear to be instances of shaming that are primarily driven by a willingness to underline principles (and their material expression) that are shared internally, among the IO's members.

This does not mean that all instances of human rights shaming seek to promote socialization. There are clear instances when IO shaming appears motivated by compliance



**Figure 4.** International organization (IO) condemnation 1980–2015, by issue area. UN: United Nations.

motives. Shaming of South Africa’s policy of apartheid, widespread among many IOs during the 1980s, provides examples of compliance-oriented shaming in the field of human rights. While shaming of apartheid may be understood to reinforce foundational

**Table 5.** International organization condemnation in the field of human rights.

Policy subfield	N	Percent
General human rights	223	21.6
Ethnic minorities and racial issues	191	18.5
Religious discrimination	187	18.1
War crimes, crimes against humanity	117	11.3
Torture and cruel punishments	84	8.1
Refugees	74	7.2
Political rights	63	2.9
Children's rights	34	3.3
Gender equality and gender-based violence	22	2.1
Indigenous peoples	15	1.5
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights	10	1.0
Women's rights	9	0.8
Access to information	2	0.2
Other	1	0.1
Total	1032	100

principles relating to human dignity and worth, it is probably best understood as attempts to impose costs on the South African regime in an effort to make it change its behaviour. Similarly, shaming of torture and cruel punishment (8.1% of human rights shaming) also point to a compliance-oriented logic, as does shaming focusing on the rights of specific groups, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights or women's rights.

Compliance-oriented motivations are found also in the shaming that targets activities other than human rights. A significant body of shaming (16%) targets international affairs. Typically, this type of condemnation targets states' failure to comply with international law. In 1992, for example, the UN agreed to a resolution that 'condemns the continued and persistent violation by Israel of the Geneva Convention'.<sup>17</sup> Since this condemnation is clearly linked to the identification of a legal obligation that is violated (here, the Geneva Convention), a compliance motive seems more likely. Another example in this sub-area where shaming is employed as an instrument to further a clearly identified political goal can be found in a 2012 OIC resolution that 'condemns the French occupation on the Said Island and calls upon France to encourage dialogue among the Comoros Union for an effective return of Mayotte and to guarantee the territorial integrity of the Comoros'.<sup>18</sup>

Overall, these patterns speak to the relevance of both compliance and socialization motives. IOs shame actions that are forbidden by binding obligations, sometimes even explicitly stating the action is a violation of an obligation or a failure to comply. At the same time, some shaming focuses on actions that are not clearly prohibited by binding obligations and rather speak to constitutive norms. The wide range of actions that have been socially sanctioned by IOs cannot be fully accounted for by socialization or compliance motives alone. Rather, the evidence suggests that both are crucial motives behind shaming.

## Conclusion

We provide the first systematic, comparative analysis of shaming by IOs based on a representative sample. Our analysis reveals important patterns of shaming across agents, targets and actions. Firstly, while there are IOs that do not engage in shaming, a wide range of different IOs do employ public shaming – albeit to varying degrees. The most active agents of shaming are IOs with larger memberships and broad mandates, such as the UN and the OIC, whereas the least active are smaller IOs with task-specific mandates, such as NAFTA or EFTA. Secondly, all types of actors are subject to IO condemnation. IOs most often shame states, and IOs shame one another very infrequently. An important finding is that IOs are increasingly shaming non-state actors and actions without clearly identifying a target. Thirdly, IOs shame actions across the policy spectrum, but security and human rights violations are those that are most often condemned. Overall, we find that the agents, targets and actions of IO shaming are dynamic. In particular, we observe two evolving dynamics that merit further research: shaming without naming and shaming of non-state actors, both of which have increased significantly over time.

These findings suggest that both compliance and socialization motivations lie at the heart of shaming by IOs. Some evidence corresponds with what we would expect to see if IOs employed shaming in order to address noncompliance. We observe that general-purpose IOs and global IOs, which typically have larger memberships, are among the most frequent agents of shaming. We also find that shaming largely targets member states and focuses on actions that are subject to binding obligations. At the same time, there is strong evidence that points to socialization. We see that IOs with strong collective identities, based on shared religious beliefs or geographic location, are also important shaming agents. Moreover, we find that IOs shame a whole host of actors, including non-member states and non-state actors, and IOs also shame actions that are not violations of explicit commitments, and in issues areas that would tend to speak to constitutive norms, such as human rights and security.

While our data suggest that IO shaming reflects both compliance and socialization motives, further research is necessary to determine whether these motives are exhaustive. We earlier suggested that self-legitimation may encourage some IOs to employ public condemnation. Also, we have not explored the conditions under which each motivation dominates or how the two motives interact. For example, are IO memberships with heterogeneous preferences less inclined to use shaming for socialization purposes? Do IOs with majority voting rules use shaming as a compliance tool to a greater extent than IOs with unanimity voting?

By providing a comparative analysis of IO shaming, this article has three broader implications for future research. Firstly, more data is necessary to have a full picture of IO shaming. We have looked at a selection of IOs. Even though our sample is representative of the general population, many IOs are not included. We are therefore cautious in drawing conclusions but optimistic that IO shaming is a significant phenomenon worthy of closer examination, both across a broader array of IOs and through focused studies on single IOs.

Secondly, our analysis highlights that shaming extends to a variety of agents, targets and actions that scholarship has not yet examined. Our examination shows that shaming is a larger phenomenon than previously believed and our findings suggest new avenues

of research lie with exploring the full range of agents, targets and actions that are shamed in world politics. For example, we find that ‘shaming without naming’ is fairly widespread and has become more frequent over time. What accounts for ‘shaming without naming’? Another dynamic is the increased targeting of non-state actors. Why do we observe this pattern and how can we understand it?

Thirdly, this article views shaming as one of several policy tools available to IOs. Having observed a significant amount of IO shaming and its variation, we conclude that research on IO performance would benefit from greater attention to shaming. Shaming seems to be a particularly important policy tool for some IOs (such as the OIC and UN). How do IOs select among policy tools and why do IOs, such as the OIC, choose shaming as opposed to other policies? Also, how does shaming compare to the other policy tools? Is shaming more effective than sanctioning, and are IOs that use shaming better able to achieve their goals? This article thus highlights a need for more inquiry into such questions.

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### Notes

1. ‘UN condemns North Korea tests which contribute to nukes’. *The Washington Post*, 23 March 2017.
2. ‘African Union condemns Gambian President’s U turn on election results’. *Lusaka Times*, 10 December 2016.
3. ‘WHO condemns Virginity Tests’. *Time*, 2 December 2014.
4. ‘CARICOM condemns economic blockade of Cuba’. *Juventud Rebelde*, 8 December 2008.
5. We do not include this motivation in our analysis because we do not have comparative data on IO legitimacy deficits, even though it may be among IOs’ motives to shame.
6. For example, the UN General Assembly has a subsidiary organ, the UN Human Rights Council, which engages in shaming. The ILO General Conference has several technical subsidiary organs that shame.
7. Technical shaming, for example, includes shaming through peer-review mechanisms.
8. We also gathered shaming data on the U Security Council, see Note 10.
9. Operative terms included are ‘condemns’, ‘deplores’ and ‘denounces’, separately or with adverbial modifiers, for example, ‘strongly condemns’ or ‘emphatically denounces’. From the sample of 27 IOs, two organizations (the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and Andean Community (CAN)) did not provide official policies in English. We translated our search terms into French (‘condemner’ and ‘dénoncer’) and Spanish (‘condenar’ and ‘deplorar’) where a corresponding unambiguous word exists in that language.
10. We record 514 instances of shaming by the UN Security Council between 1980 and 2015. If the UN Council Security replaces the General Assembly in our sample, the UN’s share of

all shamings is 27.3%. Thus, if we were to substitute the UN Security Council for the UN General Assembly, we would record somewhat fewer instances of shaming for the UN, but most importantly, most across-IO patterns would remain unchanged. For example, similar to the UN General Assembly, we find no distinct trend in UN Security Council shaming before and after the Cold War. Even though the UN Security Council was politically deadlocked on operational activities during the Cold War, it was less so when expressing public condemnation. Shaming may have even been a replacement for more extensive forms of action, such as sanctions or intervention.

11. Despite being a global IO with 57 members across four continents, the OIC is an IO with a strong collective identity; as a global actor it aims to represent and be a collective voice for the Muslim world (Kayaoglu, 2015).
12. For a discussion of the OIC's relationship with and condemnation of India, see Kayaoglu (2015: 49–52).
13. Two policy areas were never subject to shaming: energy/transport and agriculture/fisheries/commodities.
14. Some human rights and security shaming does relate to binding obligations; however, this largely depends on whether the target has ratified the relevant treaties or is bound by other forms international legal obligations (e.g., customary law).
15. The protection of Muslim minority communities is one of the OIC's most prominent policy goals (Kayaoglu, 2015).
16. OIC Resolution 2.34 (2007); OIC Resolution 34.34 (2007).
17. UN General Assembly Resolution 47/70 (1992).
18. OIC Resolution 8.39 (2012).

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