myself and assume that the constructive tone of the criticisms does not reflect some underlying reluctance to shame.

Terman wisely asks about the limits of shame as both an analytical tool and something that can be manipulated for political purposes. I certainly see the danger of a shame-centered analysis that attributes great explanatory power to shame and shamelessness and forgets other important factors. Shame is only one of many emotions shaping politics, after all. And then there are political and material interests.

I have spent much of my academic career trying to document the political and economic functions of disasters. I believe that these "benefits" help to explain why disasters happen. So I certainly would not want to ignore the role of interests. Yet, the role of emotion in disasters—and in politics—is something that also cannot be ignored. And shame is one of the most important.

Very often, extreme violence—from atrocities in civil wars to the Nazi Holocaust—tends to defy explanation when we focus on its political and economic functions. There is an important element of irrationality, in this sense. At the same time, it would be unwise to retreat into the position that such catastrophes *cannot be explained*—unwise, not least, because that stance leaves us clueless about prevention.

In looking at how shame and interests *interact*, I have been repeatedly reminded of the frequency with which the political functions of violence *depend on* some kind of invocation of shame by politicians manipulating disasters. I am also interested in the way economic exploitation contributes to perverse distributions of shame, a process that plays no small part in legitimizing exploitation. While all of these processes are complicated, what does seem clear—and here I emphasize the value of Terman's book—is that rather than reifying either emotions or interests, we need to understand better how they interact.

To come now to Terman's more specific points, she asks: when is political manipulation of shame effective and when is it ineffective? While my answer is only tentative, I would say that a lot depends on the existence or absence of a deep reservoir of shame within a particular society, the presence or absence of a leader with an instinct for tapping into it, and the presence or absence of a sense of national crisis or defeat.

Terman takes up my argument that leaders are sometimes stoking the shame that they simultaneously promise to relieve, and she points out that this may even create an incentive to behave badly (so as to stoke up the shaming and the shame that a conspicuously shameless leader may thrive on). This interesting point pushes at the edges of my thinking rather than simply summing it up, and I can certainly see that this perverse incentive may operate. Terman and I are strongly in agreement that the political mobilization of shaming often makes opponents' attempts to shame feel counterproductive. Indeed, many *are* counterproductive.

Terman also asks "does it matter whether those who perceive themselves as victims are actually victims?" I certainly think it does matter, and perhaps I should have addressed this more explicitly. Today, we are seeing a strong backlash against longstanding attempts by many disadvantaged and oppressed groups to free themselves from shame and move toward pride; indeed, many find themselves being shamed for trying to escape shame! This is indeed very different from shame-around-weakness that frequently informs the actions of an abusive leader—from Eichmann to Trump to Putin.

So far, so comfortable for the US Democrats. But one thing that liberals are sometimes insufficiently aware of, in my view, is their own attraction toward shaming others—all too often an enjoyable expression of superiority and prejudice. Such shaming, which often shades into humiliation, feeds off good causes like "fighting for democracy." But it has frequently fed into violence—and continues to do so. Liberal shaming of various kinds has become a valuable political resource for the current right-wing populist backlash and even for Putin. We are left with dangerous individuals whose sympathy for themselves and their nations—and whose sense of themselves as victims—is constantly reinforced by those who proclaim themselves to be their "enemies".

The Geopolitics of Shaming: When Human Rights Pressure Works—and When It Backfires. By Rochelle Terman. Princeton University Press, 2023. 216p. $99.00 cloth, $29.95 paper.
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The book is a highly enlightening account of the functions and varied efficacy of shaming in international politics. It is logical, clear, concise, and systematic. A key question posed by the book is whether shaming is effective in international politics, and the overall approach is relational in the sense that it takes very seriously who is shaming, who is the target of the shaming, and what is the relationship between them. Terman's conclusion, broadly, is that shaming can be effective under certain circumstances but is very often ineffective or even actively counterproductive, particularly when a government is shaming an adversary rather than an ally.

Shaming an adversary runs into several problems, Terman argues. One is that the shamer may lack substantial leverage. The second is that the shamer may lack credibility, particularly if it is seen as having ulterior motives or as hypocritically "throwing stones in glass houses".

A third is that the government being shamed may find opportunities to turn this shaming to advantage, notably through cementing its own political constituency via a public denunciation of the shamer as illegitimate or hypocritical.

In this incisive book, Terman gives many telling examples of international shaming that appear to have backfired. For example, she cites US threats of economic sanctions over Uganda's 2014 'Anti-homosexuality Act', threats that prompted prominent Ugandan journalist Andrew Mwenda to observe that "the mere fact that [President] Obama threatened [President] Museveni publicly is the very reason that he chose to go ahead and sign the bill" (Terman, 59–60). In a more substantial discussion of Iran, Terman concludes "it was their encounter with global shaming that led Iranian officials to defend the stoning law as critical to their religious authenticity and political autonomy" (p. 162). More generally, she notes that "when audiences associate human rights pressure with domination, politicians cannot acquiesce to such pressure without being perceived as kowtowing to the enemy." (p. 59). Terman also cleverly turns her gaze to the US as a *recipient* of criticism: through experimental surveys, she finds that human rights criticism does not mobilize support from American citizens, adding that "criticism of the United States backfires on several dimensions and makes citizens *less* willing to mobilize for human rights norms." (p. 107). Terman also comments wryly, "I found that American survey respondents were largely supportive of international human rights criticism—that is, until their own country was targeted" (p. 161).

So why engage in shaming in circumstances where it is predictably or visibly ineffective and even perhaps counterproductive? Terman has some interesting answers here. Many of the "benefits of shaming" (to use her phrase) do not depend on successfully reforming someone's behavior for the better. First, shaming may bring political benefits by appealing to an audience within the country of the shaming government. Second, shaming may serve to affirm the shaming government's moral superiority in relation to the shamed government.

Finally and most alarmingly, shaming may even *confirm* this superiority by provoking more of the "bad behavior" that prompted the shaming in the first place. Here, Terman quotes Erving Goffman on stigmatizing: "We may perceive his [the stigmatized person's] defensive response to his situation as a direct expression of his defense, and then see both defect and response as just retribution for something he or his parents or tribe did, and hence a justification for the way we treat him" (Terman, p. 42). In this situation, shame is used to stigmatize someone or some collective entity, which in turn encourages behavior that legitimizes and encourages the shaming. Terman notes that where the shamer is aiming to stigmatize the target, "Not only are such actors unfazed by the 'failure' to produce compliance, but they may also benefit from such failures and are reenergized to continue shaming." (Terman, p. 43). This process reminds me also of what Hannah Arendt called "action as propaganda"—essentially destructive behavior that ends up (whether intentionally or not) creating the conditions and behavior that legitimize this behavior.

Here, Terman is moving toward an analysis of a system in which shaming serves important functions that have, as it were, 'broken free' from the expressed purpose of shaming. Again, this resonates strongly with me. So much of the shaming that is now pervasive on the internet is not designed to change behavior but to signal to one's own community that one has the right attitudes. Yet, this can easily feed into a polarized information environment (and, by extension, polarized politics) in which 'both sides' react negatively to shaming that was never really intended to change their behavior in the first place. They may also put this shaming to use, as with Trump's ever-alluring offer of vicarious shamelessness and his *politics of nonapology*.

In the very different context of the Cold War (not a particular focus for Terman), one can see a related phenomenon. There was a good deal of mutual shaming between the West and the Soviet bloc, but whether this was intended to reform the behavior of 'the other side' seems extremely doubtful. More likely, it cemented a sense of identity and helped to construct a political constituency around solidifying enmities on both sides of the Iron Curtain, even as shaming predictably hardened the ideological stance of the other side. Some of these dynamics are still with us in the mutual shaming of the United States and Russia, or the United States and China, to give just two prominent examples.

Terman's analysis of the potential backlash effects from shaming also strikes a chord with me in relation to Sri Lanka where I did some research in 2009 (David Keen, "'The Camp' and 'the Lesser Evil': Humanitarianism in Sri Lanka', *Conflict, Security and Development*, 14(1), 2014). At the time, the government was conducting a ruthless assault on the Tamil Tiger rebels and Tamil civilians. For Western governments, leverage on human rights was significant but also constrained by Colombo's ties with other countries such as China. Meanwhile, the charge of hypocrisy was leveled at Western governments by the Sri Lankan government of Mahinda Rajapaksa, particularly since these governments were pursuing their own "war on terror". When Colombo condemned Western critics as hypocritical, ill-informed, neo-imperial or some combination of these, this was partly a defensive reaction aimed at deflecting criticism. In addition, it was an attempt—at least partially successful—to cement a political constituency out of a set of "enemy definitions" that came to include large parts of the international community that were deemed to be "Tamil Tiger sympathizers". All this illustrates Terman's important

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point on the dangers of backlash. At the same time, we should note that major opportunities to pressure the Sri Lankan government were neglected—notably on the government-declared "safe zones" that were clearly radically unsafe. Being aware of the negative effects of shaming should not preclude frank talk on human rights abuses but should invite more introspection and more curiosity about how righteous messages are received and instrumentalized.

Terman's emphasis on the untrumpeted "benefits of shaming" also resonated with me. She is surely correct is arguing that many of these benefits arise whether or not the expressed goal of reforming behavior is achieved. While my own study of shame ranges more widely and perhaps eccentrically, I too have found that shaming is only successful in reforming people's behavior under rather specific circumstances—and I would list some of the key ones as shared values, respect for the shamer, and the deployment of mild shaming rather than humiliation. I would also emphasize that shaming can easily feed directly into violence as the shamed (and perhaps humiliated) party attempts physically to eliminate the source of shame. Rather than an attempt at reforming someone, shaming often has more to do with offloading your own shame, avoiding uncomfortable introspection, affirming your membership of some community, and/or trying to keep someone "in their place". (The idea that actions may succeed despite failing in their expressed goals is explored, more widely, in Ruben Andersson and David Keen, *Wreckonomics: Why it's time to end the war on everything*, Oxford University Press, 2023.) In general, while my own conclusions were reached via a very different route from Terman's, they are very much in line with her findings.

There is an important political economy dimension here that is not part of Terman's brief but nevertheless worth stressing. Where shaming is backed up by sanctions of one kind or another, potential benefits for the shamed government may certainly arise from the shaming, as Terman emphasizes. This government may also derive benefits from pointing to the shamer as the source of suffering, from increased dependence on government patronage in conditions of scarcity, and from the profits accruing to those who are able to breach international sanctions. Thus, it is not just shaming but the practical accompaniments of shaming that can be counterproductive when it comes to reforming behavior or removing abusive governments. But Terman's overall framework remains highly relevant: the intervention should not be designed in isolation from likely adaptations.

So does the analysis in *The Geopolitics of Shaming* mean we should not be actually engaging in shaming when it comes to international politics? Terman's answer, as so often with careful academic studies, is: it depends. I concur with Terman that while pure condemnation is risky, an appeal to shared values can sometimes work, particularly when there is some kind of established relationship (including leverage, trust, and indeed shared values) between shamer and shamed. When it comes to the human rights abuses of an adversary rather than an ally, I am also somewhat sympathetic to Terman's suggestion that "a strategy of engagement, not isolation, provides the best chance for promoting human rights in the long term… attempting to isolate an abuser is likely to backfire" (p. 66). That said, it is worth stressing that in practice the attempt to "engage" can easily shade into complicity—as it did in Sri Lanka in 2008–2009. Reluctance to shame also proved deeply damaging during Sudan's late 1980s famine, which I was able to research in some detail (David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine*, 1994). Conversely, public exposure—when it belatedly transpired—helped to end that famine as well as improving humanitarian access to southern Sudan in the 1990s. Even then, Terman's warning about the dangers of backlash was hardly irrelevant: in the context of that public exposure, Sudan shifted from being a (tentative) Western ally toward much greater ties with the Middle East from the 1990s, with a loss of "leverage" for Western governments that persists to the present day.

Looking forward, a key step may be to identify those elements of shared beliefs and values that do exist—and to engage with those parts of a shamed polity that share such values. (When it comes to negotiating access for humanitarian aid, the International Committee of the Red Cross has often looked for ways in which warring factors may actually share elements of humanitarian ideology with humanitarian aid agencies, a rather different approach from simply condemning them for blocking aid.) In general, I think we need more frank talking rather than less. But for the would-be shamer, keeping an eye on how you yourself are perceived—and used—by those you are shaming would also seem to be vital. Terman's book is hugely helpful in putting the possibility of backlash on the map.

Response to David Keen's Review of *The Geopolitics of Shaming: When Human Rights Shaming Works—and When It Backfires*

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— Rochelle Terman

I am grateful to David Keen for this thoughtful engagement with my book. I especially appreciate his attention to where our work overlaps and diverges. As he observes, we often reach similar conclusions through different lines of thinking. Here, I want to elaborate on two areas of departure and convergence between our respective approaches to shaming.

First, Keen's attention to the emotion of shame, and its role in individual psychology, is a useful complement to my book's more macro approach, in which I explicitly bracket the *feeling* of shame to concentrate on the *social*