Nationalist Backlash Against Foreign Climate Shaming

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Abstract

Should international pro-climate actors speak up against climate rogues, or do foreign critics risk igniting nationalist backlash against global environmental norms and institutions? We explore naming and shaming dynamics in global climate politics by fielding survey experiments to nationally representative samples in Brazil. Our results show that nationalism moderates public reactions to foreign climate shaming: individuals who are highly attached to their nation are more likely to reject international criticism than their lowly attached peers. Contrary to existing expectations, however, we find that nationalist publics express little support for virulent defiance against foreign critics. Our findings hold irrespective of the source of criticism and the nature of the critical message. These results sound a cautionary note on the belief that liberal internationalists should tread carefully so as not to unadvisedly unleash nationalist pushback. Although foreign climate criticism may bump up against nationalist sentiment in climate rogues, it will not necessarily fuel an all-out backlash against the global environmental regime.

"Stop tearing down the forest," Joe Biden warned Brazil during a 2020 presidential debate. "And if you don't, then you're gonna face significant economic consequences."[1] For many years, scholars argued that foreign shaming can be a powerful policy instrument to drive compliance with international norms: exposing target behavior as shameful generates social and political costs for the noncompliant actor, thereby creating an incentive for compliance (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse et al. 1999; Simmons 2009). Now, however, many are sounding an alarm regarding the risk that foreign criticism might ignite nationalist backlash against international norms and institutions. While mass publics may on occasion respond to foreign shaming by expressing regret or a commitment to mending ways, they may alternatively reject or even defy the

critical message (Tingley and Tomz 2021). Scholars hypothesize that the risk of pushback is particularly acute when the critical message comes from an adversary (Terman 2019) and when it evokes liberal cosmopolitan language that elicits the kinds of negative popular emotions that politicians are skillful at manipulating (Snyder 2020a). This article experimentally tests whether the source of criticism (i.e., an adversary or an ally) and the nature of the critical message (be it couched in cosmopolitan language or not) shape preferences among mass publics in the target state. Mapping the determinants of nationalist backlash against foreign climate criticism is urgent at a time scientists and pro-climate actors worldwide confront entrenched opposition to the mitigation of global warming by populist leaders and significant sections of the wider public.

We test these ideas in two survey experiments fielded to nationally representative samples in Brazil. Brazil is an ideal test case for a study of nationalist backlash against foreign climate criticism because it features all of the main elements that theories of naming and shaming predict will matter. First, deforestation rates in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest—a biome large and complex enough to affect climate patterns worldwide—have placed the country at the receiving end of serious international climate criticism (Viola and Franchini 2018). Second, domestic debate about compliance with international pro-climate norms has been couched in the language of sovereignty and national security: successive administrations have depicted the global environmental regime as a set of intrusive rules concocted by Western countries to limit Brazilian sovereignty and autonomy (Hochstetler and Keck 2007; Hurrell 1991). Third, foreign critics normally couch their concerns in cosmopolitan language that portrays the Amazon basin as an object of legitimate concern not only for those countries that exert sovereign rights over it but also for the international community writ large, fueling a type of "Amazon Paranoia" (Viola and Franchini 2018). Finally, Brazilian special interests that derive economic benefit from cutting down the forest are invested in fueling public backlash against foreign critics (Rochedo et al. 2018) and have the advantage of being uniquely positioned to capture the policy-making process and the state apparatus (Mello and Spektor 2018).

In this article, we focus on foreign climate criticism issued by states. This is an important addition to the literature, which has up to now focused almost exclusively on climate shaming practiced by nonstate actors, such as nongovernmental organizations, pressure groups, and civil society activists (Murdie and Urpelainen 2015; Pacheco-Vega and Murdie 2021). Our choice of level of analysis reflects the fact that state-based climate shaming is gaining unprecedented traction. Powerful states in the international system are for the first time drawing on naming and shaming as a policy tool to enhance compliance with the global environmental regime. For example, President Joe Biden's Plan for Climate Change and Environmental Justice states that the United States intends to "name and shame global climate outlaws" in order to "hold countries accountable for meeting, or failing to meet, their commitments and for other steps that

promote or undermine global climate solutions."[2] The trend is reinforced by the fact that most Western militaries now identify climate change as a security threat and are recrafting their strategies and planning accordingly. As states become increasingly involved in enforcing global climate norms, state-led shaming is likely to consolidate as a common feature of the contemporary international system (Falkner 2016, 2021). This article is one of the first attempts at providing causal evidence about how foreign climate critical cues coming from states affect domestic audiences in target societies (for another example, see Tingley and Tomz 2021).

Our experimental results show that nationalism moderates individual-level preferences among publics irrespective of the identity of the shamer and of the content of the critical message. We also show that highly nationalist individuals have a strong preference for rejecting foreign climate criticism, but not for defying it. Together, these results carry important implications for theory and policy. The following section specifies our theoretical expectations and hypotheses. We then report results from two waves of survey experiments. The final section discusses our findings and lays out their implications for the study and practice of climate naming and shaming moving forward.

The Sources and Nature of Criticism

Scholars have argued that a key factor moderating the reception of international criticism is the *source* of the critical message. For example, Terman (2019) posits that the originating source of the criticism matters along geopolitical lines: when critics are allies, targets consider their motivations genuine and sincere, leading to an increase in compliance; by contrast, when critics are adversaries, targets interpret the criticism as denigrating, raising fears of status threat that reduce the odds of compliance. Other work reinforces the notion that criticism from allies is more likely to strike a responding chord in the target state (Terman and Voeten 2018). Within this, the extant literature expects that individuals who have strong attachment to their nation will be particularly influenced by whether the source of the criticism is an ally or an adversary (Terman 2019). This occurs because individuals with higher nationalist sentiment derive their self-esteem and status from membership to their national community and therefore see shaming from adversaries as a threat to their social identity (by the same token, these individuals tend to see shaming from allies as reassurance to their social identity).[3] This theoretical intuition is anchored in experimental evidence in the field of international relations, showing the extent to which

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2. The Biden Plan for a Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice, 2020, available at: https://joebiden.com/climate-plan/, last accessed November 15, 2021.
3. The notion that shaming coming from adversaries is interpreted more sensitively and defensively than is shaming that originates with allies is based on research on social and group psychology that argues that criticism is interpreted differently depending on whether the critic is seen as a member of the target's ingroup or as a member of the target's outgroup (e.g., Hornsey et al. 2002).

individuals ranking high in national attachment appraise international situations through "more positive feelings about allies and more negatives feelings about foes" (Herrmann et al. 2009, 727).

According to previous scholarship, a second factor moderating the effects of international criticism on target states is the *nature* of the critical message. Critical messages are hypothesized to be more consequential when they are aligned with the values and ideologies of their targets (Fielding et al. 2020). Investigating the scope conditions under which shaming works best, for example, Kelley and Simmons (2019) find that message alignment with the values of the target state's citizens is an important variable to induce compliance. Concerns with message alignment have led scholars to explore the dangers of criticism that is couched in language that sounds alien or overtly hostile to target populations. For instance, Snyder (2020a, 2020b) alerts to the risk of backlash when critical cues anchored in the language of cosmopolitanism hit nationalist publics who may consider them a threat to national security and autonomy. When this occurs, shaming "arguments based on the irresistible power of liberal normative persuasion" (Snyder 2020a, 110) will be ineffective and possibly counterproductive, in that they may actually contribute to reinforcing preferences for noncompliant behavior in the target state (Gallagher 2021). Critical messages that threaten ingroup identification may under such conditions make individuals consider rejection or defiance as morally desirable options. When public attitudes toward foreign criticism are based on moral conviction, individuals can create "escape clauses" to justify aggressive attitudes and behavior (Herrmann 2017), thereby abandoning any assessment of the situation via cost–benefit analysis (Ryan 2017). The implication that follows is that whenever shamers couch their criticism in terms that are culturally alien to the domestic audiences in the target state, incumbents have an opportunity to dismantle the shaming capacity of outsiders (Schweller and Pu 2011). By exploiting the contest between outside shaming and ingroup loyalty, domestic leaders may set out to bolster their own legitimacy (Ward 2017).

Responses to Shaming

Expert literatures suggest that incumbents in target states seek to attenuate the shaming effects on the publics they govern by adopting a range of possible responses. An incumbent's ability to mitigate these effects will depend on how these responses align with the foreign policy preferences of her supporters (Brewer 2001). Domestic publics may support four possible responses to naming and shaming: *regret*, *silence*, *rejection*, or *defiance*, a continuum ranging from a positive reaction to shaming to neutrality to complete opposition against the critical message. Responding to shaming with regret means admitting to past misdeeds (Lind 2011; Tingley and Tomz 2021), expressing remorse (Kitagawa and Chu 2021), or promising to repair the situation in the future (Daase et al. 2016). Expressing regret signals goodwill and seeks to alleviate suspicion in the

shamer about the target state's intentions (Kitagawa and Chu 2021). At the middle of the spectrum, targets of foreign criticism may adopt a cautious position by remaining *silent*, "in the hope that the storm will blow over" (Schroeder 1994, 117). But publics might adopt more defensive responses to shaming. Consider two distinct defensive options. On one hand, targets may *reject* the criticism, questioning the motivation of the shamer and insisting that the critic is driven by obscure motivations (Tingley and Tomz 2021).[4] On the other hand, targets may *defy* the criticism. Defiance implies a recommitment to noncompliant behavior in the future, amounting to the "net increase in the commitment to or incidence of norm-offending behavior caused by a defensive reaction to social sanctioning" (Terman 2019, 5). While rejection is a defensive posture against the criticism, it does not imply the obstinate commitment to noncompliance expressed in a decision to defy the critical cue. Of all possible policies, defiance is the most forceful: it overtly calls for doubling down on the transgressing behavior, making it far harder for critics to secure their desired goal. In our experimental setting, we break down the full spectrum of possible responses to shaming into four different types to accurately and realistically portray the range of options available to public opinion in the target state. This is an important addition to the existing literature on naming and shaming, which either focuses on defiance (Terman 2019) or collapses the various types of possible reactions into a dichotomous regret-or-defy opposition (Tingley and Tomz 2021).

The Moderating Effects of Nationalism

Since shaming is a subjective perception, different people will interpret and react to it in distinct ways. More specifically, we expect varying levels of nationalism—that is, the extent to which individuals attach a strong sense of ingroup identity to their nation—to moderate how people respond to foreign shaming given the origin (Terman 2019) and the nature (Snyder 2020a) of the criticism. Scholarship on social and political psychology shows that those who exhibit higher "nationalism"—that is, those who consider their national group a highly important part to their identity—are more likely to experience group-based criticism as a threat (Major and O'Brien 2005) and are more likely to worry about protecting their group from outside threats (Kertzer and Rathbun 2015). As Herrmann (2017, S62) points out, "the more someone attaches his or her own identity to the nation, the more they will feel the possible threats to the nation and the more inclined they will be to construct beliefs that license acting on those emotions."

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4. The focus we adopt here on rejection as a reaction to the nefarious motives of the accuser is in contrast to an alternative take, which would lead to rejection because the critic is ill informed or biased.

Hypotheses

Leveraging the aforementioned theoretical insights, we derive a number of expectations for testing. With regard to the *source* of shaming, we expect that individuals who exhibit higher levels of nationalism will be more likely to express support for policies that defy and reject shaming accusations coming from a geopolitical rival than from an ally. This expectation is based on the intuition that, as levels of nationalism rise, so does the inclination to attribute defensive intentions to allies and aggressive intentions to adversaries (Herrmann 2017, S69). At higher levels of national attachment, the individual-level distinctions between ingroups and outgroups heighten the divide between allies and adversaries. Accordingly, rebuttal responses should be more attractive to individuals who more intensely perceive the criticism from the "outgroup" shamer as having hostile intentions and being potentially damaging to the nation's status (Terman 2019).

> H_1: Shaming accusations from an adversary will produce stronger support for rejection and defiance than criticism from an ally for individuals at higher levels of national attachment than is the case for individuals at lower levels.

Following the same logic, when criticism comes from an ally, we expect highly nationalistic individuals to be more inclined to express regret over their state's climate policies (i.e., recognizing mistakes and committing to repair the situation) than they would under criticism originating from a geopolitical adversary. This occurs because those exhibiting greater levels of nationalism will be more likely to interpret "ingroup" criticisms as driven by a genuine motivation to preserve the target's reputation as well as a credible signal that their country's behavior "is making the ingroup as a whole look bad in the eyes of outsiders" (Snyder 2020a, 120). In this context, expressions of regret are a way of acknowledging guilt and recommitting to the norms of good behavior and reflect the importance that the target publics put in the preservation of the relationship with the shamer (Kitagawa and Chu 2021). It follows that our next hypothesis for testing can be expressed like this:

> H_{1a}: Shaming accusations from an ally will produce stronger support for expressions of regret than criticism from an adversary for individuals at higher levels of national attachment than is the case for individuals at lower levels.

Turning to the *nature* of the critical message, we theorize that those who identify more strongly with their nation are more likely to reject and defy foreign accusations couched in liberal cosmopolitan language than their peers at lower levels of national attachment. Our expectation is based on the notion that cosmopolitan claims may be easily interpreted by nationalist individuals as challenging national autonomy and security of the group, a type of threat that

encourages greater resistance against foreign criticism (Snyder 2020a, 2020b). We therefore hypothesize the following:

> H₂: Liberal cosmopolitan shaming accusations will produce stronger support for rejection and defiance than neutral criticism for individuals at higher levels of national attachment than is the case for individuals at lower levels.

To fully explore the degree to which nationalism moderates public responses to the nature of the critical cue, we also hypothesize that highly nationalist members of the public will be less likely to express regret for their nation's climate policies when the criticism is presented in liberal cosmopolitan form. This is because whenever the nature of shaming runs counter to the core nationalist values that define the public's identity, highly nationalist individuals are likely to take action that retains a positive image of their nation and avoids any measures that might suggest a sense of guilt (McDermott 2020).

> H₂ₐ: Liberal cosmopolitan shaming accusations will produce weaker support for expressions of regret than neutral criticism for individuals at higher levels of national attachment than is the case for individuals at lower levels.

Experiment 1: Identity of the Shamer

Research Design

To study whether and how the source of foreign shaming might induce public support for compliance with or backlash against the critical cue, we surveyed a sample of 2,001 Brazilians between January 13 and 17, 2020. Respondents were recruited by the Datafolha Institute, which used quota sampling to be representative of the general population. These quotas were based on the following pretreatment variables: age, education, gender, income, and region. As the appendix demonstrates (item A.2), the characteristics of the individuals are balanced across the treatment levels.[5]

In our survey experiment, participants were first asked to rate their agreement with two statements designed to measure their level of national attachment.[6] We used the standard battery of statements that have been employed in previous work on national identification (Herrmann 2017; Herrmann et al. 2009). The national attachment scale was constructed by taking the mean scores across the two items and rescaling from 0 to 1, with higher values denoting greater national attachment. This scale was then used to test the conditional-effects hypotheses about levels of nationalism on responses to foreign climate

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5. A full description of the sample composition, sampling strategy, and sample representativeness is given in the appendix, item C.
6. These statements include "When someone says something bad about Brazil, you feel it is as if they say something bad about you" and "Brazil should stand for national honor, even if it compromises its image in the world."

shaming. We chose to pretreat respondents about their national attachment before the experimental part of the study, in line with standard practice in the field (Herrmann 2017; Herrmann et al. 2009; Kitagawa and Chu 2021).

After the pretreatment section, all respondents began the experimental portion of the study by reading "Everyone talks about wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon forest. We will read different imaginary scenarios and ask what you think of each." Respondents then received a vignette with the details of a hypothetical situation in which Brazil suffered foreign shaming accusations for mismanaging deforestation and wildfires in the Amazon. We randomized the countries criticizing the Brazilian government over the Amazon wildfires, namely, an ally and an adversary. We told some respondents, "An ally country criticizes Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon," while telling others, "An adversary country criticizes Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon."

We opted to use the generic "ally" and "adversary" rather than real-world countries for both conceptual and empirical reasons. Conceptually, we chose to adopt abstract terms to identify the shamer because it is hard to find real-world countries that are identical in all characteristics except the unit of analysis of our choice (Rousseau and Garcia-Retamero 2007). We know from previous research that public reactions to country attributes may vary unevenly among the population (Herrmann et al. 1999). Had we identified these actors, we would have run the risk that country features rather than our main variable of interest could have driven results. The empirical reason for our choice is that, at least when it comes to the field of global climate politics, we still lack a firm baseline for how the public in Brazil might interpret who is an ally and who is an adversary. Without such a baseline, had we identified real-world countries, we would have incurred the risk of hurting the experiment. Consider, for example, a scenario where we adopted the view that the United States was an adversary, while China was an ally. In making such a choice, we might be artificially introducing countries that respondents may well think are unlikely to be an actual ally or adversary of Brazil. After all, we are in the dark as to how the public approaches these countries on the issue of global climate policy. If the choice of country were to negatively affect the acceptance of the treatment by respondents, it would have weakened their effects. To avoid this pitfall, we stuck to countries in the abstract. This choice is supported by new work by Brutger et al. (2020), which finds that varying the level of abstraction of actor identity does not affect the direction or magnitude of experimental results.

The next step in our experiment was to independently randomize all four possible reactions to these criticisms: silence, regret, rejection, and defiance. Some respondents read that the best response to the criticism is "to keep silent," others read that the best response is "to acknowledge past mistakes and commit to working harder to reverse the situation in the future," while others were told that the best response is "to reject these criticisms because they are just an excuse by foreign actors seeking to exploit the Amazon." A final group received the

information that the best response is "to walk away from all international environmental agreements the country is party to." In keeping with recent scholarship (Kitagawa and Chu 2021), we use the "keep silent" condition as the baseline for comparison in the analysis of results. Given the fact that the four policy responses reflect a continuum of choices ranging from expressions of regret to outright defiance against the critical message, "keep silent" serves as a middle ground for comparison.

This resulted in a 2 (Country) × 4 (Response) factorial experimental design whose general structure and full vignettes are summarized in Table 1. Our factorial experimental design seeks to estimate the comparative effects of the source of shaming on public support to a range of policy responses. By independently randomizing the source of criticism and the four possible reactions among respondents—rather than simply forcing respondents to make a single choice on the same scale—we can estimate the intensity with which they support one policy over the other (not only on average but also when the source of shaming is ally/adversary). Allowing for this is particularly relevant in a study of global climate politics, where individuals do not necessarily hold firm policy choices close to their chest and where changes in the strategic environment might make them switch from one policy choice to another. This design also allows us to assess whether interactions between the source of shaming and the different policy responses produce an especially defiant or accommodating environment, above and beyond the separate effects of each variable.

After reading the scenarios about shaming accusations, respondents indicated their level of agreement, disagreement, or neither agreement or disagreement with the proposed reactions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*completely agree*) to 5 (*completely disagree*). This resulted in a dependent variable measuring the degree of support for a proposed reaction from each respondent. The full text of the questionnaire is provided in the appendix.

Results

Recall that our theory expects the effects of shamer identity on public preferences to be moderated by varying levels of national attachment. For this reason, our main analysis tests these effects by splitting the sample along levels of national attachment on a continuous scale.[7] Overall, we find that levels of nationalism do moderate individual preferences, but these preferences hold *irrespective* of the identity of the shamer. First of all, we find that members of the public at higher levels of national attachment exhibit a stronger preference to reject and defy foreign climate shaming than their lowly nationalistic peers. More specifically, a 1-unit increase in the national attachment scale predicts a 0.395-unit increase in support for rejection ($p < 0.001$) and a 0.194-unit

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7. For purposes of completion and transparency, in appendix item A.3. we provide general results without splitting the sample.

Table 1

Vignettes for Experiment 1

	Ally	*Adversary*
Silence	When an ally and friend country criticizes Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon, the best response is to keep silent.	When an adversary country criticizes Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon, the best response is to keep silent.
Regret	When an ally and friend country criticizes Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon, the best response is to acknowledge past mistakes and commit to working harder to reverse the situation in the future.	When an adversary country criticizes Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon, the best response is to acknowledge past mistakes and commit to working harder to reverse the situation in the future.
Rejection	When an ally and friend country criticizes Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon, the best response is to reject these criticisms because they are just an excuse by foreign actors seeking to exploit the Amazon.	When an adversary country criticizes Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon, the best response is to reject these criticisms because they are just an excuse by foreign actors seeking to exploit the Amazon.
Defiance	When an ally and friend country criticizes Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon, the best response is to walk away from all international environmental agreements the country is party to.	When an adversary country criticizes Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon, the best response is to walk away from all international environmental agreements the country is party to.

Note that each group read a different passage, depending on the treatment condition.

increase in support for defiance ($p = 0.05$). These findings remain stable when we run robustness checks for control variables such as education, income, gender, age, and religion. Similarly, we also find that highly nationalistic individuals are less willing to express regret than their less nationalistic peers. We find that a 1-unit increase in the national attachment scale predicts a 0.046-unit
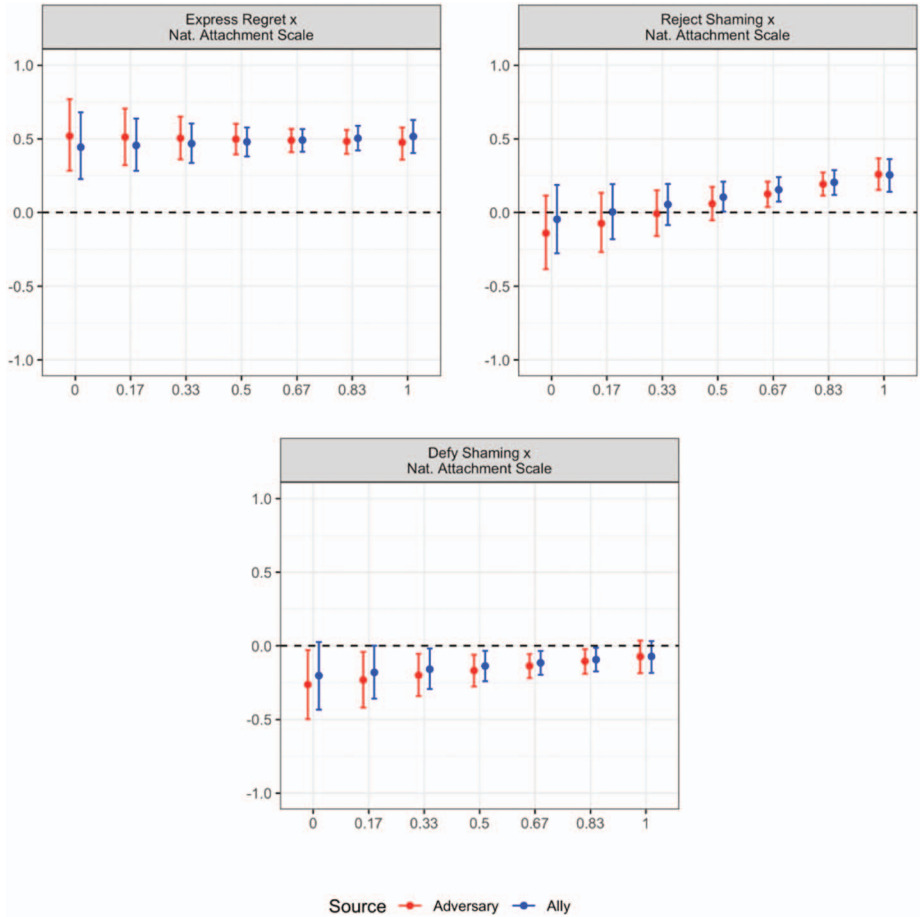
Figure 1
Effects of National Attachment Scale on Public Support for Responses to Foreign Shaming

This figure presents estimates of how the perceived levels of national attachment moderate the effects of receiving a critical cue from an ally (blue) or an adversary (red) country on public support for regret, rejection, and defiance policies versus staying silent (baseline). The x-axis in each quadrant indicates the different levels of national attachment, where 0 represents the lowest level of national attachment and 1 represents the highest level of national attachment. The y-axis represents the preferences for each of the policy responses. A positive estimate means that the respondents favor a determined policy response to foreign shaming, while negative estimates indicate that the respondents oppose a policy response. Estimates are based on 95 percent confidence intervals.

decrease in support for an expression of regret ($p < 0.1$), although results lose statistical significance when we add control variables to the model. Together, these results suggest that levels of nationalism do shape public preferences over how best to respond to foreign climate shaming, but they do not depend on the identity of the shamer to moderate them.[8] In other words, experimental results suggest that the source of shaming has little effect in mediating respondents' responses, irrespective of their level of national attachment. Nationalism therefore trumps ally-versus-adversary dynamics as a predictor of public responses to foreign shaming. Figure 1 illustrates these results.

Experiment 2: Nature of the Critical Message

Research Design

To test whether and how the nature of the critical message affects public responses to climate foreign shaming, we administered a second experiment with a nationally representative sample of 2,126 Brazilians in January 2020.[9] In this experiment, we simply varied the nature of the message, while maintaining the identity of the shamer constant, using the term "other countries." The critical cue was framed in cosmopolitan language—highlighting the Amazon biome as belonging not to Brazil but to the whole of humanity—or not.[10] We use cosmopolitan language to test for the nature of the critical message because such language by Western countries has been associated historically with the content of shaming messages (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse et al. 1999; Snyder 2020a). Besides, framing the criticism in liberal cosmopolitan form raises the external validity and significance of our study because this is precisely the language that is used in real-world situations pertaining to the Amazon forest. In fact, messages emphasizing the degree to which the international community writ large has a say over the Amazon rainforest have been ubiquitous over the past decades. For example, in 1989, US senator Al Gore said, "Contrary to what Brazilians think, the Amazon is not their property, it belongs to all of us."[11] To ensure that this treatment is informative enough to elicit our hypothesized reactions among the respondents, we based its language and content on insight from several public opinion polls run in Brazil over time that suggest the public is sensitive to framings that call into question the

8. A full description of results is presented in appendix item A.5.
9. In experiment 2, respondents were also recruited by Datafolha Institute, which used the same recruitment procedures and criteria established for experiment 1. See appendix items B.1 and B.2 for demographic characteristics of the sample and balance tests across treatment conditions.
10. We use the following language in the treatment: "When other countries criticize Brazil for mismanaging wildfires and deforestation in the Amazon by stating that the forest is a common good and that it belongs to all of humanity …"
11. Alexei Barrionuevo, "Whose Rain Forest Is This, Anyway?," *New York Times*, May 8, 2008.

country's sovereign rights over the Amazon forest.[12] All other features of this study were identical to the first experiment described, including the range of possible responses to shaming that continue to vary in terms of regret, rejection, defiance, and silence, as well as a dispositional measure of national attachment.

Results

Our hypotheses predict that more nationalist individuals will support policies that reject or defy liberal cosmopolitan critical cues more than their less nationalistic peers. We also predict that these highly nationalistic individuals will support expressions of regret less than their more lowly nationalistic fellow nationals. To test these predictions, we estimate a regression model that allows the effect of treatments to vary across levels on a national attachment scale. This provides the stiffest test of the theoretical expectations from the extant literature.[13] The findings presented in Figure 2 contradict these theoretical expectations: when analyzing the interaction between nationalism and treatment conditions, the interaction terms are statistically insignificant at conventional levels ($p > 0.1$). That is, the level of nationalism does not moderate the effects of the nature of the message, namely, whether the cue is couched in cosmopolitan language or not, on each of the foreign policy responses.[14] Nationalism has an effect on preferences that are *independent* of the nature of criticism. We find that nationalism interacts in particular with expressions of regret. The higher the level of nationalism is, the lower is the propensity of individuals to express regret. For example, a 1-unit increase in the national attachment scale predicts a 0.277-unit decrease in support for regret ($p = 0.001$). We also find that individuals at higher levels of national attachment support rejection more intensely than their lowly nationalistic peers, occurring irrespective of the nature of the criticism. A 1-unit increase in the national attachment scale predicts a 0.278-unit increase in support for rejection ($p < 0.01$).[15] Finally, results suggest nationalism does not affect public preferences for defiance policies.

As a whole, the results challenge the view that more nationalist individuals will support policies that reject or defy shaming when the criticism is couched in cosmopolitan language. Furthermore, the cosmopolitan message does not trigger more nationalistic individuals to oppose expressions of regret—another prediction outlined in the scholarly literature. Cosmopolitan or not, foreign criticism is likely to be met by nationalist publics with a weaker preference for expressing regret. Nationalism rather than language moderates individual-level preferences.

12. For a complete overview of public opinions conducted on public attitudes toward the Amazon rainforest, see https://www.cesop.unicamp.br, last accessed November 15, 2021.
13. Results from the nonsplit sample can be found for transparency and completion purposes in appendix item B.3.
14. These results remain stable even when we add controls for education, age, income, gender, and religion. For the results of robustness checks, see appendix item B.5.
15. However, the results are not robust to the addition of control variables to the estimation.
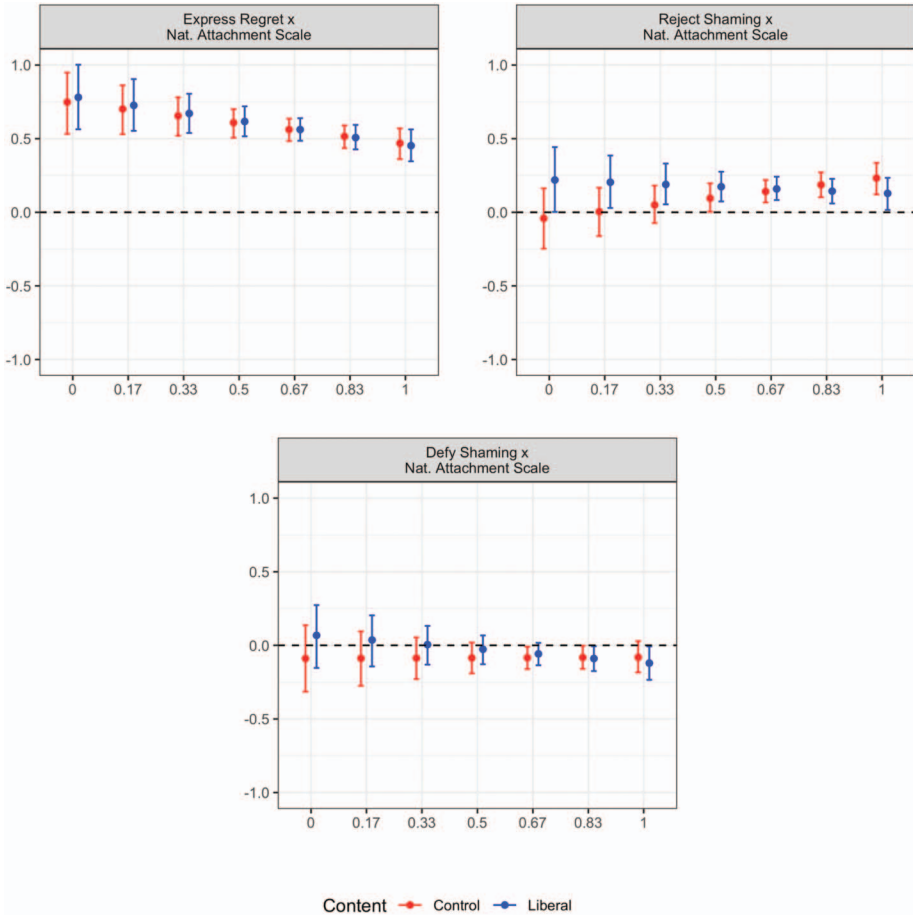
Figure 2
Effects of National Attachment Scale on Public Support for Responses to Foreign Shaming

This figure presents estimates of how the perceived levels of national attachment moderate the effects of receiving a critical cue couched in liberal cosmopolitan language (blue) or not (red) on public support for regret, rejection, and defiance policies versus staying silent (baseline). The *x*-axis in each quadrant indicates the different levels of national attachment, where 0 represents the lowest level of national attachment and 1 represents the highest level of national attachment. The *y*-axis represents the preferences for each of the policy responses. A positive estimate means that the respondents favor a determined policy response to foreign shaming, while negative estimates indicate that the respondents oppose a policy response. Estimates are based on 95 percent confidence intervals.

Discussion

Our experimental results significantly expand our capacity to make sense of mass public reactions to foreign climate shaming. First, we find that nationalistic publics are unlikely to defy foreign critical cues. In our experiments, support for defiance is limited and concentrated on a small section of the public in

experiment 1. That is to say, the bulk of highly nationalist individuals in our sample do not wish to radically challenge external critics by adopting extreme measures like abandoning the Paris Accords. Why should this be the case? One plausible explanation is that nationalistic publics are not completely blinded by emotion and can engage in the rational calculations typical of cognition. More nationalistic individuals in our sample support rejection of the foreign criticism more intensely than they do a policy of defiance against the critical cue. Rejection is a low-cost measure, in that it does not entail an actual change in climate policy and does not carry the cost of attrition with the international community that defiance implies. These findings call for more work on the political psychology of cost–benefit analysis among nationalistic publics.

Our second set of experimental results shows that nationalism shapes the pathway through which individuals respond to international critical cues, irrespective of the source of the criticism and the nature of the critical message. This means that foreign climate critics are likely to bump up against nationalist sentiment no matter who they might be or how they might frame their criticism. There are three alternative plausible explanations for these results. First, variations in the source and in the nature of criticism may not have a detectable effect on public opinion due to issues of trust: individuals in our sample may mistrust *all* foreign nations (allied or not), and low levels of trust may wire them to reject criticism by nonnationals irrespective of the framing they use in their criticism. A large body of research suggests that lower levels of social trust—the belief about human nature that serves as an information shortcut to infer trust in others (Brewer et al. 2004)—actually correlates with trust in other nations. Recent data from the World Values Survey on Brazil show that a staggering 90 percent of the population think that most people cannot be trusted (Haerpfer et al. 2020).

A second potential explanation may be that highly nationalistic individuals have their cognitive framing well prepared to anticipate foreign criticism and therefore tend to shut down whenever they encounter it, irrespective of the source and nature of the critical message. Indeed, Brazilian nationalists for several decades have homed in on climate shaming, fueling a mind-set that scholars have dubbed "Amazon Paranoia"—the notion that the rainforest and its resources are actively and aggressively coveted by hostile foreign countries (Viola and Franchini 2018). Finally, one potential explanation for the results we find is that individuals in our sample were unable to understand our treatment stimulus due to their abstract character. We have cause to suspect this is not the case, however. Although it is often argued that abstract experimental designs elicit assessments of dependent variables that are less reliable than more concrete ones (Steiner et al. 2016), and that individuals respond to hypothetical scenarios with hypothetical answers (Converse and Presser 1986), recent research shows that there are fewer trade-offs between abstraction and detail in experimental design than political scientists traditionally assumed (Brutger et al. 2020). We are confident that the results are not caused by our experimental design.

Together, the experimental results bode well for a world where curbing carbon emissions requires international cooperation from states whose governing regimes are unwilling or unable to deliver good climate governance. The use of foreign climate criticism as a tool to drive compliance with the global environmental regime seems unlikely to lead to defections from these norms and institutions or make an already fragile regime weaken further. Yet, our results bode ill for those interested in finding a straightforward strategy to shame target states into compliance: nationalist sentiment is a powerful force that the international community will do well to reckon with.

Implications and Future Research

Our findings have at least three relevant implications for the global community of activists, policy makers, and scholars working on issues of climate change. First, given that nationalism mediates how publics respond to international climate criticism, expect anticlimate leaders the world over to be tempted to manipulate their domestic publics via emotions like anger, resentment, and outrage against international meddling. Second, however, while these anticlimate leaders may succeed in getting their mass publics to question the intentions of foreign critics, it is not obvious that they will succeed in mobilizing popular support to defy international climate norms. The message coming from our experiments is that the international community should not preventively abandon naming and shaming as a legitimate tool to convey valuable information to target publics about the appropriateness of their governments' responses to climate change. The key challenge moving forward is to find both the actors and the pro-climate messages that can successfully convey information to target publics in climate-laggard states.

Third, the scope conditions of this study suggest that the dynamics we describe are generalizable to cases beyond Brazil. We expect a concentration of cases in targets of foreign climate shaming where historical memories of foreign imposition provide fodder for nationalist sentiment. These will typically be countries with vast environmental resource endowments that grant their authorities the "power to destroy" (Busby and Urpelainen 2020, 104), placing them on a collision course with foreign critics who deploy shaming accusations as a policy tool (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Obvious candidates may include other Amazon basin countries, for example, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru, but also Malaysia and Indonesia in East Asia or the countries in Central Africa that make up the Congo basin. By contrast, other countries with long histories of foreign imposition who possess the power to destroy valuable biomes under their sovereign jurisdiction, such as Australia and Canada, are less likely to be good cases for the dynamics presented in this study. Although publics in these countries can react to foreign climate shaming by way of rejection or defiance, they are unlikely to be moved by the same set of factors we describe. Their responses are likely to follow other pathways. What the precise mechanisms

driving public reactions there might be is beyond the scope of this article, but we suspect the answer involves an assessment of the relative standing of the country in the international pecking order of the day. Follow-up work will give us a more complete understanding of the conditions under which foreign climate shaming is most likely to produce compliance or backlash.

Finally, the results presented in this research article open the door to three sets of questions for future research. First, are there any types of critical framings that stand a better chance of striking a responding chord with the public, especially in nationalistic societies? While, in this study, we focused only on liberal cosmopolitan criticism, future work might take our study on shaming messages a step further by presenting respondents with a more diverse set of critical messages, such as criticism that focuses on the quality of life for nationals or the prospects for power and prestige for the target state. Future researchers could also include punitive measures in shaming contests to determine whether and how moral persuasion may be reinforced by material sanctions. For instance, what effect might criticism have if it moves the conversation away from a contest between cosmopolitanism and nationalism to one that appeals to threats of sanctions and trade embargoes? Second, scholars may design experiments that rely on different sources of shaming to determine the conditions under which foreign criticism is effective. While we only tested the distinction between allies and adversaries, others could explore how shaming from nonstate actors might impact the public reactions for compliance or backlash. This would offer a more nuanced understanding of which types of actors matter most in climate shaming. Finally, under what conditions does foreign criticism ignite popular defiance? Trying to identify the pathways through which shaming might lead publics to recommit to noncompliant behavior is politically urgent if we are to avoid such an outcome in real-world situations moving forward. At a historical juncture when anticlimate populism is gaining new terrain among relevant portions of the global population, the microfoundations of defiant behavior should attract a generation of engaged scholars.

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