

# To Name and Shame or Not, and If So, How? A Pragmatic Analysis of Naming and Shaming the Chinese Government over Mass Atrocity Crimes against the Uyghurs and Other Muslim Minorities in Xinjiang

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## Abstract

Faced with crimes such as genocide there is an understandable plea for actors to name and shame the perpetrators involved. The problem is that studies show that while there are cases where this practice has a positive influence, there are many examples where it is not only ineffective, but also counterproductive as it leads to an increase in human rights violations. With this in mind, the article asks, is it right to name and shame the Chinese government over mass atrocities perpetrated against the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities, and, if so, how? It uses a pragmatic approach to consider the ethical concerns that stem from this practice being used in this specific case. It draws links between the role that *image* and *status* play in two literatures: naming and shaming and China. It argues that the Chinese government's prioritization of image and status acts as a double-edged sword when it comes to naming and shaming as it could (1) fuel a backlash or (2) have a positive influence, especially in status-sensitive time periods. While questioning the overall effectiveness of this strategy in relation to China, it argues that a culmination of factors in the lead up to the 2022 Beijing Olympics creates a window of opportunity for naming and shaming to have a positive impact. It offers normative recommendations to shed light on how this practice should be done. At a broader level, the article makes three contributions to the literature on naming and shaming and pragmatist ethics.

## Résumé

Face à des crimes tels que le génocide, il est compréhensible que certains acteurs mettent au pilori les auteurs de ces crimes. Le problème est que bien que des études montrent que cette pratique a une influence positive dans certains cas, il existe également de nombreux exemples dans lesquels elle est non seulement inefficace, mais aussi contreproductive car elle mène à un accroissement des violations des droits de l'Homme. Cet article tient compte de cela et cherche à savoir si le name and shame du gouvernement chinois pour les atrocités de masse perpétrées à l'encontre des Ouïghours et des autres minorités musulmanes est approprié, et si oui, dans quelle mesure. Il s'appuie sur une approche pragmatique pour prendre en compte les préoccupations éthiques découlant du recours à cette pratique dans ce cas précis. Il établit des liens entre les rôles que l'image et le statut jouent dans deux littératures : celle portant sur le name and shame, et celle portant sur la Chine. Cet article

soutient que la priorisation de l'image et du statut par le gouvernement chinois constitue une épée à double tranchant lorsqu'il s'agit du name and shame car elle pourrait (1) alimenter un contrecoup, ou (2) avoir une influence positive, tout particulièrement en ces temps sensibles au statut. Bien que cet article s'interroge sur l'efficacité globale de cette stratégie dans le cas de la Chine, il soutient également que l'obtention de plusieurs facteurs à l'approche des Jeux olympiques de Pékin de 2022 crée une fenêtre d'opportunité d'impact positif du name and shame. Il propose en outre des recommandations normatives apportant un éclairage sur la manière dont cette pratique devrait être menée. Plus globalement, cet article apporte trois contributions à la littérature portant sur le name and shame et l'éthique pragmatiste.

### Extracto

Ante crímenes como el genocidio, es comprensible que los actores denuncien públicamente a los perpetradores involucrados. El problema que demuestran los estudios reside en que, aunque hay casos sobre los cuales esta práctica tiene una influencia positiva, hay muchos ejemplos en los que no solo es ineficaz, sino también contraproducente, ya que conduce a un aumento de las violaciones de los derechos humanos. A partir de esto, el artículo plantea si es correcto denunciar públicamente al gobierno chino por las atrocidades masivas perpetradas contra los uigures y otras minorías musulmanas, y en caso de que se hiciera, ¿de qué forma? Utiliza un enfoque pragmático para considerar las preocupaciones éticas que se derivan de la utilización de esta práctica en este caso concreto. Establece relaciones entre el papel que desempeñan la imagen y el estatus en dos literaturas: las denuncias públicas y China. Sostiene que la prioridad que da el gobierno chino a la imagen y al estatus actúa como un arma de doble filo cuando se trata de denunciar públicamente, ya que podría (1) alimentar una reacción violenta o (2) tener una influencia positiva, especialmente en períodos de sensibilidad con respecto al estatus. Aunque se cuestiona la eficacia general de esta estrategia en relación con China, se argumenta que la culminación de los factores en el período previo a los Juegos Olímpicos de Pekín de 2022 crea una oportunidad para que las denuncias públicas tengan un impacto positivo. Ofrece recomendaciones normativas para clarificar cómo debe realizarse esta práctica. A un nivel más amplio, el artículo hace tres contribuciones a la literatura sobre las denuncias públicas y la ética pragmática.

**Keywords:** China, Uyghurs, mass atrocities, naming and shaming, pragmatism, status

**Mots clés:** Chin, Ouïghours, génocide, crimes contre l'humanité, pragmatisme, name and shame

**Palabras clave:** China, uigures, genocidio, crímenes contra la humanidad, pragmatismo, denuncias públicas

### Introduction

The twenty-first century has seen many large-scale studies conducted on the role that naming and shaming can play in relation to widespread human rights violations in international society (Hafner-Burton 2008; Lebovic and Voeten 2009; Krain 2012; DeMeritt 2015; Terman and Voeten 2018; Squarrito, Lundgren, and Sommerer 2019). The studies reveal mixed results with some claiming this practice has a positive influence while others argue it is ineffective or even counterproductive in that it leads to an increase in human rights violations. On one hand, therefore, there is a good intentioned call for actors (defined here as political elites, religious leaders, international organizations, the media, and non-governmental

organizations) to speak out more in the face of human rights violations around the world. For instance, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, criticized world leaders for staying silent and instead demanded that they do more to call out abusers (Hussein 2019).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, concerns over the effectiveness of naming and shaming raise ethical questions over if, when, and how this practice should be implemented?

1 Squarrito, Lundgren, and Sommerer (2019) show that the practice of naming and shaming is more common than Hussein suggests, which helps highlight the issues underpinning this article are important.

Against this backdrop, allegations of “mass atrocities”<sup>2</sup> including genocide and crimes against humanity against the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in China (Smith Finley 2020; Uyghur Human Rights Project 2020a; Clarke 2021; Newlines Institute 2021) create an urgent need to better understand the intended and unintended consequences of this practice in relation to this chosen case.<sup>3</sup> Since the so-called vocational training camps in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) came to light, many actors have named and shamed Beijing while also pursuing other policy options (Smith Finley 2020, 19–23; Foot 2021). Echoing the sentiment expressed by Hussein, Brophy argues “to drop any criticism of China would be to shirk a moral responsibility to speak out against oppression and a political responsibility to find solutions to it” (cited in Smith Finley 2020, 2). Such sentiment is understandable but creates an oversimplistic binary as it implies those who name and shame are moral and those who do not are immoral. To return to the studies on naming and shaming, the problem with this binary is that it fails to consider that this practice can be counterproductive. From this perspective, could those who name and shame without considering the unintended consequences of their actions also be viewed as immoral? Rather than uphold the moral (namers)/immoral (silence) dichotomy, this article draws on pragmatic ethics to ask, is it right to name and shame the Chinese government, and if so, how should this be done?

The article is structured in five sections. The first section explains the ethical value of adopting a pragmatic approach in order to make judgments and set out normative recommendations based on probable results. In so doing, it calls on us to take the unintended consequences of our actions, in this case naming and shaming, seriously. To aid this, the second section looks at quantitative and qualitative studies on naming and shaming, which (1) highlight the advantages and disadvantages involved, (2) show that this practice in relation to genocide has been identified to have a positive effect, (3) underline the importance of emotions, nationalism, and status when explaining why backlashes can occur, and (4) asks us to consider *how* naming and shaming should be done. Turning its attention to the case study at hand, the third

section asks “is it right to name and shame the Chinese government?” To answer this, it draws links between the role that *image* and *status* play in two literatures: naming and shaming and China. It argues that the Chinese government’s focus on image and status acts as a double-edged sword as it can cause a backlash, yet also constrain its behavior. While it has been claimed that naming and shaming China was ineffective in the 1990s, analysis suggesting it did have an impact in the lead up to the 2008 Olympics illustrates the value of this practice within status-sensitive time periods. The article argues that a culmination of factors in the lead up to the 2022 Beijing Olympics creates a window of opportunity for naming and shaming to have a positive impact. That said, this needs to be done in a certain way; hence, the fourth section focuses on the question, “how should Western actors name and shame the Chinese government?” The focus on Western actors stems from developments over the past two years as they have been at the vanguard of naming and shaming the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Yet to return to studies on naming and shaming, the fact that Western actors are leading the way makes it even more important to consider how this practice should be implemented. The article offers a series of normative recommendations to guide this practice in an effort to prevent unintended consequences from arising. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the overall findings and argument.

The article makes three contributions to the literature; first, a two-fold contribution to the studies on naming and shaming. The majority of studies on this topic have used large-scale samples and while these have produced a rich body of data, case study analysis can add much needed insight. For example, Squatrito, Lundgren, and Sommerer (2019) analyzed twenty-seven international organizations over thirty-five years; Terman and Voeten (2018) examined 40,000 recommendations from two cycles of the UN Universal Periodic Review; Hafner-Burton (2008) investigated 145 countries over twenty-five years; and Ramos, Ron, and Thoms (2007) examined 145 countries over fourteen years; however, other than fleeting references to China, we have relatively little to help make practical judgments on this specific case. Linked to this, these studies have focused on human rights violations in general rather than on mass atrocity crimes such as genocide, the exception being Krain (2012). As a result, the article’s focus on naming and shaming the Chinese government in relation to genocide and crimes against humanity helps provide much needed insight into both these aspects. Third, there is a growing body of research on pragmatic ethics, which has been used to analyze different practices, yet as far as this author is aware, it has not been applied to naming and shaming.

2 Mass atrocities is a term commonly used to refer to genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing as set out in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

3 This article will use the term Uyghurs as a shorthand instead of writing Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities each time.

## A Pragmatic Approach

Pragmatism can be understood as grounded inquiry leading to judgments of probable results. Pragmatists set out to explain and critically evaluate the application of practices, norms, and rules within a given situation. To do this, they start with the situation at hand rather than the practice, norm, or rule.

To gauge the value of pragmatism for international relations (IR), it is important to bear in mind its origins and post-Cold War revival. The term “pragmatism” was coined by Peirce in the mid-1870s and first appeared in print in 1902 (Reilly 1970, 147). Rooted in philosophical pragmatism, the work of “classical pragmatists” such as Peirce, James, and Dewey had been said to have “fizzled out after burning briefly with some bright promise” (Malachowski 2013, 3). This changed in the 1990s. As Ralph (2017, 43) explains, scholars such as Brown, Cochran, Owen, Bray, Festenstein, and Kratochwill, to name just a few, began to “import pragmatism into International Relations.” Drawing here on Ralph, the reasons for the pragmatic turn in IR stems from a consensus that (1) attempts to prove moral foundations are unhelpful and leads us down a road that entails a never ending search for absolute truths, (2) we can have a problem-solving-orientated research agenda that upholds an appeal to logics of appropriate behavior without grounding this on absolutes and instead viewing these a product of on-going deliberation, (3) a commitment to normative pluralism and reflexivity as understanding that there is no fixed understanding of right and wrong dictates an on-going process whereby normative assertions need to prove their value (Ralph 2017, 43–45).

To clarify the philosophical foundations of this article, this author upholds an anti-foundational position (see Gallagher 2013, 74–79). Clarity on this issue is necessary because the parameters of pragmatism are so broad that it would be misleading to suggest that all those associated with it uphold Peirce’s anti-foundational position. For example, Dewey’s work as a progressive educator had a significant influence on the progressive movement at the time. One could subscribe to his view on education and defend it against the backlash that followed,<sup>4</sup> on the grounds that it offered a problem-solving approach without upholding or even being aware of anti-foundationalism. Here, it seems that foundationalists and anti-foundationalists may share a common ground in that they are seeking to judge the

usefulness of implementing  $x$ , when trying to solve the problem of  $y$ . To put this in the context of this paper, at times those that seek to protect the Uyghurs have noble intentions but revert to a default position that calls for  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$  to be implemented (more often than not, name and shame, sanctions, and referral to the International Criminal Court) without considering the unintended consequences that may stem from these practices. A pragmatic approach, whether grounded on foundationalism or anti-foundationalism, calls on us to pause and consider the intended and unintended consequences.

Pragmatists scrutinize any attempt to claim that a practice, in this case naming and shaming, is always the right thing to do. From an anti-foundationalist perspective because we cannot establish absolute truths, we should accept that what we view as the right course of action may in fact be wrong. As Cochran (2002, 528) explains, the problem that Dewey had with positivism was not its commitment to science but its “quest for certainty.” In contrast, pragmatists view knowledge claims as contingent (Bray 2001, 6–8). Precisely because we may know more tomorrow than we know today, we have to be open to the idea that our current understanding of what ought to be done may change over time. Differentiating between Habermas and Dewey, Cochran (2002, 544) notes that the former believed “fixed ends” could be arrived at through consensus, whereas the latter sought to stress the “open-ended” nature of constructed truths. Because truths are constructed, they can be reconstructed over time, “[t]o establish a truth pragmatically is to settle a controversial or complex issue for the time being, until something comes along to dislodge the comfort and reassurance that has thereby been achieved, forcing inquiry to begin again” (Cochran 2002, 527). Yet as Ralph (2018, 179) explains, this does not lead pragmatists to “accept the relativist implications” that might flow from such thinking as we, “need not dismiss the normativity of values such as human rights and humanity simply because ... of their historical and social contingency.” From a pragmatic perspective, when judging the validity of a normative commitment, whether it is to a value such as human rights or a practice such as naming and shaming, we need to make sense of it being “right” by assessing its usefulness (Ralph 2018, 175, 186, 188–90).

When faced with the most heinous crimes in international society, it is completely understandable that this can create an emotional response in which we look to influential actors to name and shame the perpetrators. Yet as will be discussed, we need to be conscious that this practice may also create an emotional response from those being shamed and a backlash may make what appears to be a horrific situation even worse. It

4 Capturing the controversy surrounding Dewey’s teachings on education, President Eisenhower blamed “John Dewey’s teachings” for America’s educational failings (see Gibbon 2019).

is a mistake, therefore, to approach each problematic situation with the view that there is a fixed prescription.<sup>5</sup> When it comes to the question of whether it is right to name and shame China, practical reasoning is required to generate normative propositions. To do this, we can draw lessons from history, but we also need to weigh up the potential consequences at stake. This is very difficult when new situations arise, yet fortunately, this is not the case here as we have studies on naming and shaming that we can draw on (second section) and the fact that China has been routinely named and shamed in the past (third section) helps us assess the usefulness of this practice in this given situation.

## Naming and Shaming

At the outset, it is important to explain the potential benefit of naming and shaming. As [Krain \(2012, 576\)](#) makes clear,

[it] creates a common knowledge about the abused based on reliable reports; frames perpetrators as violating international norms and as untrustworthy partners in future interactions; publicly signals international disapproval to perpetrators, their allies, partners or donors and to domestic challengers; pressures states and IGOs to act upon the information rather than remaining as bystanders; and makes continuing the rights violations is question a more costly strategy, both domestically and internationally. Perpetrators will change their behaviour if they cannot risk the loss of power, resources, allies, or legitimacy that inaction in the face of such condemnation would bring.

The statement underlines the multifaceted implications that can stem from this practice. The hope is that by shining a light on the human rights abuses being carried out, the moral credibility of the perpetrators will come under intense scrutiny thus forcing actors to take a stand. At which point, those being shamed may find themselves increasingly isolated. If perpetrators calculate that the risks involved in continuing their chosen strategy of oppression outweigh the benefits, one expects them to change their plan of action. But of course this is not always the case. It could be that the state in question does not care. An oppressive regime may conclude that there are few, if any, tangible benefits to be gained from consenting to the demands made by external actors. Finally, and more

worryingly, a government may choose to intensify their human rights violations.

The fact that some states may simply ignore naming and shaming underpins the view that this practice has little value in international relations. Responding to this, [Hafner-Burton \(2008\)](#) produced the first global statistical analysis of naming and shaming to provide an empirical grounding. The study of shaming by NGOs, the news media, and the United Nations “provided some evidence of success” but found many cases in which governments make a series of improvements in response to being shamed yet continue or increase human rights violations ([Hafner-Burton 2008, 731](#)). In other words, governments make what [Risse and Sikkink \(1999, 25\)](#) refer to as “minor cosmetic changes” in the short term. These allow perpetrators to portray themselves as making progress while at the same time intensify human rights abuses. [Hafner-Burton \(2008, 730\)](#) found evidence of this in Algeria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, El Salvador, Haiti, Indonesia, Niger, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, and “other countries too.” The sheer number of cases requires those who advocate naming and shaming to bear in mind the unintentional, yet grave, consequences that can arise. That said, it should be noted that [Hafner-Burton \(2008, 730–31\)](#) acknowledges the statistical difficulties involved in that other factors can influence the situation on the ground. This is why quantitative studies establish control variables but the counterfactual problem remains as we can never know how a case would have turned out if naming and shaming was not used. This helps us understand why empirical studies produce mixed results. While most researchers reject the idea that this practice does not have any impact, the magnitude of the effect remains contested.

As raised above, a key limitation in the literature is that the majority of large-scale studies have focused on human rights violations in general rather than on mass atrocity crimes. A notable exception is [Krain \(2012\)](#) who focuses specifically on naming and shaming by transnational networks in relation to cases of genocide and politicide from 1976 to 2008. He finds that “naming and shaming by NGOs, the Northern media, and IOs [international organisations] all have significant ameliorative effect on the severity of most extreme atrocities” ([Krain 2012, 585](#)). Acknowledging that his study provides a very different set of results to [Hafner-Burton, Krain \(2012, 586\)](#) explains that this may stem from his focus on genocide and politicide. As far as this author is aware, since then, only one study focuses on mass atrocities. In contrast to [Broache and Cronin-Furman \(2021, 7\)](#) find naming and shaming to have an “insignificant effect” which they think is “likely attributable” to differences

5 See [Ralphs’s](#) analysis of the United States, UK, and France’s commitment to “Assad must go” during the Syrian crisis ([2018, 191–94](#)).



in control variables. Ultimately, the lack of research on this specific issue inhibits our ability to draw firmer conclusions. It may be that genocide shaming is more effective because of the consensus that underpins the anti-genocide norm. While we live in a pluralist world in which states can put forward a national and/or cultural defense of certain practices, it is widely accepted that there is an “overlapping consensus” regarding genocide prohibition (Donnelly 2002, 251–52). It is here that the “shaming power of norms” comes into play (Wheeler 2000, 281). Although governments may be politically unwilling to address the threat posed by genocide, there is a strong desire among states not to be openly associated with governments that are seen to be perpetrating genocide. On this issue, however, further research is needed.

The paradox at the heart of this practice—naming and shaming can lead to the counter-opposite outcome occurring—needs to be considered carefully. Here, there are two critical aspects. First, the *politics* of naming and shaming as this begins to reveal that *who* is doing the shaming has implications for its effectiveness. For instance, why is it that some countries are shamed more than others? It would be naïve to believe that this can be explained by focusing on the human rights violations in and of themselves. When it comes to state-led shaming, the practice should be understood as an “inherently political exercise” (Terman and Voeten 2018, 1). To illustrate this let us consider the now discredited United Nations Human Rights Commission. Roth (2001) captured the common practice at the time when he stated, “the bad news is that a mafia-like code of silence reigns in Geneva, with one abuser covering for another, knowing that, when necessary, the favor will be reciprocated.” The failure to speak out on certain cases highlights the problem of double standards that undermines the effectiveness of naming and shaming. This issue continues to plague its successor, the UN Human Rights Council. Reflecting on the first special sessions created by the Council, Terlingen (2007, 174) argues that while they were legitimate cases the outcome reflected “double standards” as the Council named Israel but stayed silent on Hezbollah. Whether Terlingen’s interpretation of this specific decision is right or wrong, the variety of responses toward Israeli related actions over the years underlines the role that politics plays. As a result, one can begin to see how those being shamed may use this to their advantage. The abusers can, themselves, play the victim card as they try to discredit the legitimacy of the claims made *and* the authority of the shamers. Notably, this does not just apply to interstate shaming as empirical studies show that the shaming strategies used by NGOs, the media, and international organizations are also driven by a variety of

factors such as a country’s treaty commitment, economic development, political openness, and geographical location, which can lead to political decisions being made over which countries should be shamed and how often (Hafner-Burton 2008, 696–700). Again, these trends can fuel resistance and help perpetrators gain support as perceptions of political bias provide fertile ground for building a counter-narrative.

Second, there are structural problems within the practice of naming and shaming that can facilitate a backlash. Drawing on psychology, social psychology, and sociology, Snyder (2020, 645) argues that “the practice of shaming violators to advance the cause of human rights has a *built-in propensity to produce counterproductive backlash* through five interconnected mechanisms.” He goes on to identify (1) nostalgia and cultural revival, (2) universalism inevitably closing down space for compromise and bargaining, (3) shaming producing a sense of anger and resentment in those shamed, (4) shaming triggering “adverse communal reactions,” and (5) the relationship between esteem and status with wealth, security, and authority can, along with the other factors listed here, facilitate a backlash (Snyder 2020, 645). It should be noted that Snyder uses the term “backlash” carefully. His analysis forms part of a broader focus that differentiates between a counter-reaction and backlash. The latter embodies three elements: (1) its objective is to return to a “prior social condition,” (2) it involves “extraordinary goals and tactics,” and (3) has a “threshold condition of entering mainstream public discourse” (Alter and Zürn 2020, 563). Notably, Snyder draws attention to the role that emotions, nationalism, status, and culture can play in fuelling a backlash. Naming and shaming, particularly by external actors can be interpreted through a superior/inferior lens that sees *individual* responses invoke *national* sentiments with underlying emotional and status dynamics at play. For example, faced with widespread naming and shaming combined with a preliminary examination by the International Criminal Court, President Duterte declared, “You do not scare me that you will jail me in the International Criminal Court. I will never allow myself to answer these whites ... I am only responsible to the Filipino” (Reuters 2019). Accordingly, cultural, ethnic, racial, and national factors can be used as a shield and a catalyst to stir domestic support.

For Snyder, namers and shamers cannot bypass the underlying structural problems. Despite this, he upholds the value of this approach but only on the grounds that greater attention is placed on preventing unintended consequences. Albeit briefly, he identifies three approaches. First, that there are different ways to criticize an actor and that this should be done respectfully and with a focus

on the “deed rather than a possibly irremediable character flaw, and aimed at repairing that social rift” (Snyder 2020, 651). Second, and engaging with the work of critical constructivists, he proposes that the shamers could strive to engage in a two-way conversation, avoid claims of universalism, and instead “use generic language of respect and fairness that travels across normative systems” (Snyder 2020, 651). Third, he offers advice to improve the capacity of those being shamed in cases where incapacity is viewed as a key facilitator of the human rights violations (Snyder 2020, 651). These shape the normative recommendations set out below.

### Is It Right to Name and Shame the Chinese Government?

From a pragmatic perspective, it is important to learn lessons from past experience. To gauge this, let us turn to Wachman’s (2001) analysis in which he asked, “Does diplomacy of shame promote human rights in China?” Reflecting on the post-Tiananmen time period in which China was commonly named and shamed, he finds that “efforts to shame Beijing arouse indignation born of national pride, coupled with a cultural relativist defence, but that there is little evidence of enduring change” (Wachman 2001, 257). The statement aligns neatly with Snyder’s account as we see the role that emotions and status play in fuelling resistance. Wachman’s analysis also reinforces the idea that *who is doing the shaming* has critical implications for its effectiveness. The Chinese government could arouse “nationalistic defiance” precisely because of its “foreignness,” which can also “diminish the moral authority of those would-be reformers in Beijing as well as in China’s police substations, prisons and labour camps” (Wachman 2001, 279–80). As a result, well-intentioned naming and shaming strengthened the authority and even the moral credibility of the CCP, thus undermining external and internal efforts to bring about change. Against this backdrop, one could conclude that naming and shaming will continue to be ineffective and, more worryingly, could fuel a more severe backlash as the CCP has hardened its position under President Xi. Yet before making any rash judgments, a pragmatic approach not only asks us to reflect on the past but also weigh up the potential consequences of the action to be taken. Here the article asks the reader to consider that China’s prioritization of *image* and *status* acts as a double-edged sword when it comes to naming and shaming.

To explain the importance of image and status to the Chinese government, the article draws on two studies that argue China is driven by more than material

concerns (Foot 2020; Fung 2019). It has been claimed that China is the “most status-conscious country in the world” and that it views status as “if it were the most desirable value, one that leads to power, security, and respect” (cited in Fung 2019, 7). Here, we see the interplay between different co-constitutive elements with image, status, power, and security viewed as mutually reinforcing. For Foot (2020), China’s relationship with the United Nations is puzzling because in the 1960s the CCP was openly hostile to the UN but embraced it in the twenty-first century. How do we explain this shift? Whereas realists may interpret China’s rise in material terms, Foot (2020, 8) works at the interface between constructivism and the English School to examine the “mutually constitutive relationship between China’s power, image, and ideological beliefs.” These are identified as the key drivers that help us explain China’s evolving relationship with human protection. To put this in context, let us consider China’s relationship with the UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Council. For Foot (2020, 191–227), there are key historical moments that shaped its relationship with these institutions including the Tiananmen crisis, the transition from the Commission to the Council, the Arab Spring and the authorization of all necessary means in Libya. Reflecting on these, Foot (2020, 17) argues that “in all these instances, China’s active involvement in the work of these bodies demonstrates a potent relationship between its ideological beliefs and concerns about image.” What we see, therefore, is that the rise of China is bound with its concern for power, ideology, and image, which has implications for how the Chinese government reacts to naming and shaming.

This leads us onto Fung’s (2019, 7) study in which she highlights the centrality of status and argues that the fundamental problem facing China is that it has to manage an on-going “status dilemma” by which she means, a rising power such as China needs to “secure status recognition from *all* their peer groups.” Claiming that the Chinese government is “obsessed” with status, the challenge it faces is navigating this dilemma as new events arise in international affairs (Fung 2019, 7). For example, why did the government of China vote the way it did over Libya in 2011? The intervention is widely viewed as historic in that it was the first time the Council authorized the use of force to prevent mass atrocities without the consent of the government in question, which was seemingly at odds with China’s usual stance. Fung (2019, 89) argues that the Chinese government had a “heightened sensitivity regarding status” because the threat posed by Gaddafi was compared to the Chinese repression in Tiananmen square. The former became a “status trigger”

(Fung 2019, 89). The regional support for intervention combined with the United States, the UK, and France's (P3) position created a "status dilemma" for the Chinese government as it wanted to maintain status recognition from the former (Global South peer group) and the latter (great power peer group) (Fung 2019, 89). To address this, the Chinese government voted in favor of UN Resolution 1970 and abstained on UN Resolution 1973 which allowed it to gain status recognition from both peer groups while maintaining independence from the P3's position on the latter. In an analysis of key historical moments therefore, Foot and Fung identify the importance of image and status while accepting that these are interrelated with other aspects such as power and ideology. To offer another example, Foot argues that China's use of the veto over Syria had a negative implication for its image, particularly in 2012, which caused alarm in Beijing precisely because the criticism was coming from not only the usual namers and shamers in the West but also states in the Middle East (Foot 2020, 178–81). In such instances, the Chinese government has failed to win the court of broader opinion within international society. The view that it has mismanaged a situation is a cause for concern amongst decision-makers in Beijing.

When it comes to naming and shaming, we begin to see that China's prioritization of status and image acts as a double-edged sword in that it cannot only facilitate a backlash but also constrain its behavior. Regarding the former, we need to bear in mind the aforementioned difference between counterreaction and backlash. Essentially, the response of the CCP in the post-Cold War era prior to President Xi coming to power was one of counterreaction. Far from being radical, the Chinese government adopted a tit-for-tat approach as it suspends bilateral human right talks with governments that criticize its human rights record (Lum 2017). Under President Xi, however, the CCP's position has hardened. As Economy (2018, 3) explains, Xi Jinping's vision is one of "great revival or rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". While his predecessors shared this goal, his strategy is more radical as he pursues "the dramatic centralization of authority under his personal leadership; the intensified penetration of society by the state; the creation of a virtual wall of regulations and restrictions that more tightly controls the follow of ideas, culture, and capital into and out of the country; and the significant projection of Chinese power" (Economy 2018, 10). The statement captures the ratcheting up of social control that has occurred at the domestic level. At the same time, Beijing has sought to discredit international scrutiny of its policies through propaganda and disinformation (Uyghur Human Rights Project 2020b). It has also significantly

reduced overseas investment from \$75 billion in 2016 to \$4 billion in 2019, as it responds to criticism of its human rights record (Wheatley and Kyng 2020). To put these in the context of backlash, it is evident that President Xi is using more "extraordinary goals and tactics" (Alter and Zürn 2020, 563) to fulfill his vision. But of course, the severity of the backlash may intensify and/or accelerate as allegations of genocide become more mainstream, and it is here that we need to consider two potential consequences.

The first is a *domestic backlash* in which the Chinese government escalates violence against the Uyghurs.<sup>6</sup> As discussed, governments often make "cosmetic changes" in response to being shamed in order to present an image of progress, yet in private, they intensify human rights violations.<sup>7</sup> At which point, the reader may question, when a group is already experiencing genocide, to what extent can things get worse? Yet as history shows us, the artistry and ingenuity involved in processes of destruction dictate that there is no bottom to the "abyss of horror" that is genocide (Roth 2005, 262). Furthermore, genocide is a process and as studies show, mass killing is never implemented at the outset but is introduced as a "final solution" to tackle the threat (whether real or not) when the elites in question conclude that other options just are not working (Valentino 2004). At present, President Xi depicts the camps as a "total success," but if, in private, faced with increasing international scrutiny the government concludes that the process of destruction needs to be accelerated, the result could be an escalation of violence. On this point, it is important to recall that there is relatively little domestic support for the Uyghurs.<sup>8</sup> As Tobin's (2020, 25, 124) study on identity and insecurity in Xinjiang demonstrates, this paves the way for a society in which Han violence against Uyghurs is portrayed as a rational attempt to deal with terrorism whereas Uyghur violence is depicted as terrorism that threatens China. Accordingly, it is difficult to see where domestic checks and balances could come from in an authoritarian state that has seemingly convinced the population that the Uyghurs threaten national security. With this in mind, the threat of escalation and intensification against the Uyghurs is a grave concern.

6 For a history of China's policies in Xinjiang, see Clarke (2011).

7 This term is used by Foot to describe the post-Cold War changes made in China (2000, 257).

8 This is not to suggest that there is no dissidence within China and the widely held view is that the cables were released by a presumably high up Han official.



The second concern is an *international backlash*. When one considers that China is the second largest contributor to both the UN's overall budget and more specifically peace operations (Foot 2020, 3), it is important to recognize that a backlash at the international level could jeopardize international society's capacity to deal with human rights violations elsewhere in the world, as well as other threats such as climate change. This is not to suggest that a genocidal regime should be able to buy silence but that namers and shamers need to consider the ramifications of this practice. This will, of course, vary from issue to issue. For example, China's commitment to the UN's overall budget may be considerable but its contribution to UN troops and police has been described as "limited" (Gowan 2020). The point is that if state leaders choose to name and shame they should express a willingness to fulfill the vacuum left by Beijing's withdrawal from such commitments. This may not be as considerable as one may suspect because when one factors in how the CCP has actively shaped the UN's focus over the past two decades (Sceats and Breslin 2012; Fung 2020; Zhang and Buzan 2020), it seems highly unlikely that there will be a backlash against the UN, international peacekeeping, and cooperation on issues such as climate change. Simply speaking, the CCP has a vested interest in continuing its commitment to these because they are part of its long-term ambition of taking on a global leadership role. Even if the goal is to undermine liberal "ideational hegemony," the Chinese government is doing this from within (Bettiza and Lewis 2020, 599; also, Clark, Hunt, and Sussex 2020). This feeds into the normative recommendations set out below.

Returning to the idea of a double-edged sword, the flip side of this is that the importance attributed to image and status by the CCP can see this practice constrain Beijing's policies. Although we should not overstate the power of naming and shaming in relation to China, it is important to recall there are times when it appears to have had an impact. These can be described as status-sensitive time periods. The lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics is a highly relevant example because the CCP came under intense international scrutiny for supporting the government of Sudan despite allegations of genocide in Darfur. Mia Farrow coined the term "Genocide Olympics" as she criticized Steven Spielberg for planning the opening ceremony (Yardley 2008). To return to the idea of the status dilemma, Fung argues that because both peer groups (including the United States, UK, and France as well as the African Union) upheld a united front on the situation in Darfur, Beijing bowed to increasing international pressure to change its position. Fung claims that it was China's hunger for status with its desire for having

heads of state attend the opening ceremonies, juxtaposed with an increasingly isolated position, that led the Chinese government to alter its approach on Sudan (Krain 2012, 576–77; Fung 2019, 84). For example, it began to openly criticize the regime in Khartoum and voted in favor of Security Council Resolution 1769, which established UNAMID on July 31, 2007.

From this perspective, a case can be made that China's desire for status recognition through the 2022 Olympics provides a window of opportunity for naming and shaming to influence the CCP strategy. It is necessary to stress the difference here. In 2008, the condemnation arose over a foreign policy issue (Sudan) as opposed to a national issue (Xinjiang). As a result, one would not expect the Chinese government to bow to international criticism in the same way it did in 2008 and one could justifiably conclude that naming and shaming in this context will not work. The Olympics, in and of themselves, do not create enough opportunity to change strategy toward the Uyghurs. However, here, it is important to recognize a culmination of factors at play within this specific time period. First, unlike 2008, this could literally be a "genocide Olympics" in that the games will be held in a country whose government is being accused of genocide. One can foresee comparisons being drawn with the Berlin Olympics of 1936, which could create a "status trigger" (to use Fung's words) in that a situation creates a sense of alarm in Beijing that the CCP's stance on this issue could have detrimental implications for its status among peer groups. Second, confidence and trust in the CCP dipped sharply in 2020 due to concerns over how it handled the outbreak of Covid-19 (Silver, Devlin, and Huang 2020). The image of China has, therefore, been tarnished and no doubt elites in Beijing are seeking to enact damage limitation. Whereas as an isolated state such as North Korea may simply not care about being named and shamed, Beijing's quest for increased international leadership dictates that the Chinese government needs to get buy-in from other states. Here naming and shaming may have traction because it "implies a process of persuasion, since it convinces leaders that their behavior is inconsistent with an identity to which they aspire" (Risse and Sikink 1999, 15). Quite simply, it is doubtful that governments will rally around a genocidal regime with aspirations of increased global leadership. Third, the election of Joe Biden as the forty-sixth President of the United States creates a platform upon which to provide US leadership. Beijing will be astutely aware that he could use this situation as a political opportunity to help build an anti-China coalition at a time of increasing anti-Chinese sentiment over Covid-19. Although Beijing can use the latter as an opportunity to regain favor via

vaccine distribution, Chinese officials know that President Biden offers the world an alternative to the populist leadership of President Trump and the authoritarian leadership of President Xi. This is discussed more below.

To return to the question of whether it is right to name and shame China, it seems fair to say that the benefits outweigh the potential risks. The threat of a broader international backlash seems low because, as discussed, the Chinese government has a vested interest in continuing its ambition of shaping international order from within. The more pressing concern is that violence against the Uyghurs intensifies, yet one can easily foresee that this could occur with or without naming and shaming being practiced. In terms of effectiveness, it may be that naming and shaming China has been ineffective in the long term, yet a culmination of several exceptional factors in the lead up to the 2022 Olympics creates a window of opportunity for naming and shaming to influence the Chinese government. Notably, this is not an abstract exercise as key actors are beginning to discuss the Uyghurs within the context of the 2022 Olympics. In February 2021, 180 human rights groups called on governments to boycott the Olympics while criticizing the International Olympic Committee for failing to act “despite the clear evidence of genocide and widespread and worsening human rights failures” (Davidson 2021). The United States has stated it does not intend to boycott, yet the UK has stated it has not ruled this out (British Broadcasting Corporation 2020). As more and more countries make public claims that genocide is taking place in Xinjiang, there could be more domestic pressure to boycott. To return to the question of effectiveness, it is worth bearing in mind that twenty of the states that signed the letter criticizing China’s treatment of the Uyghurs in October 2020 were ranked in the top twenty-five medal winners at the 2018 Olympics. Accordingly, if a consensus could be forged that these twenty states boycotted the 2022 Olympics, this would have a devastating impact on the credibility of the Olympics and undermine China’s quest for *status* via such events. Of course, this goes beyond simply naming and shaming and requires a greater consensus being built at the international level, which leads on to the next question.

### How Should Western Actors Name and Shame China?

Given everything that has been said, the focus on Western actors may seem odd as Western-led criticism provides fertile ground for an anti-Western backlash. Accordingly, it is necessary to say a few words about the

current state of affairs as this helps explain why this focus is needed. Essentially, Beijing is waging a counter-narrative that the “vocational training centres” are a “legitimate counter-terrorist struggle” (Uyghur Human Rights Project 2020b). To return to Fung, the objective here is to win support from its peers as key part of its quest for status. From an international legitimacy perspective, the Chinese government is defending its strategy in the hope of gaining *consensus* at the international level that their actions constitute “rightful conduct” (Clark 2007). In 2019, two coalitions emerged. On one side, the UK led twenty-two other countries, predominantly from “the West,” to condemn China’s practices (UK Permanent Representatives to the UN 2019). On the other side, ambassadors from thirty-seven states (including Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) signed a letter to the UN Human Rights Council praising China’s “contribution to the international human rights cause” while noting human rights are “respected and protected in China in the process of counterterrorism and de-radicalisation” (Cumming-Bruce 2019). Although liberals may rightly point out that many of those supporting China are themselves human rights violators (Russia, Belarus, the Philippines, and Saudi Arabia), the fact that the letter referenced counterterrorism measures indicates that President Xi discourse has found favor at the global level. Western states evidently failed to galvanize enough international support, which would suggest their attempt to name and shame did not resonate as strongly as they hoped. On October 6, 2020, countries from both sides of the debate released joint letters (Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office 2020). Yet critically, some states that initially supported China no longer do so. On a related note, on October 13, 2020, China was elected to the UN Human Rights Council but with forty-one fewer votes than last time (139 as opposed to 180), which may be a further indicator that states are wavering in their support of China despite its influence. If Western states are to gain broader international support, they need to consider how naming and shaming China should be done and work to prevent unintended consequences.

Drawing on Snyder’s approaches toward shaming, it is important to consider that this can be done respectfully. In this case, actors can criticize Beijing for crimes against the Uyghurs but acknowledge the positive role that China plays in international society. This may help reduce the potential and/or severity of a backlash. The critical aspect here is that it may help win the support of actors that may oppose this specific policy but, broadly speaking, admire what the Chinese government has

achieved. Reflecting on China's 2018 Universal Periodic Review, Foot (2020, 249) explains that of the 150 states that offered comments on China's report "the overwhelming majority heaped praise on China's strong economic position." To return to Fung's focus on peer groups, Western actors need to gain the support of the Global South such as African states who often speak of China in positive terms. As Foot (2020, 249) explains, many African governments seemingly buy into the Beijing model of economic development without questioning whether it is right for their country. As one author put it, African turned east and "embraced" China because of its multibillion-dollar investment (Alden 2007, 59), which has only increased since through the Belt and Road Initiative. This is not to suggest that African governments are naïve passive actors. In contrast, they seek to recenter African agency amid competing interests on the continent (Soulé 2020). This plays out at every level of society.<sup>9</sup> With this in mind, Western actors need to get the buy-in from governments that have already bought into the China model. This requires a tactful approach.

It is important that Western actors stress that they are condemning Beijing's policies on this *specific issue area* and not China in general. Otherwise, they run the risk of being perceived as using the atrocity crimes as a pawn to try and gain a geopolitical advantage over China. This could see them fail to win international support and also fuel Beijing's counter-narrative as it accuses Western states of being "anti-China" (Chen 2019, 1218). Drawing on Snyder (2020, 651), the focus should be on the deed rather than a character flaw. On this point, it is necessary to stress that Western actors have a domestic responsibility not to unintentionally incite hate crimes against Chinese people and people of Chinese origin in the West. When China is portrayed as the enemy, this can stoke identity-based violence at home. For example, in the United Kingdom, the police reported a two-third increase in hate crimes toward Chinese people during the 2020 lockdown (Hymas 2020). In part, this is in response to how China was portrayed over its handling of Covid-19. Building on from this, as a part of this specific issue focus, the crimes against Muslims should be placed at the center of the discourse. From the perspective of increasing this practice's potential to be effective in this specific case, Western actors need to gain further support from Muslim-majority countries, religious leaders, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. As Coca (2020) explains, historically, these actors have criticized the United States for treatment of Muslims and remained quiet over

the Uyghurs, but this is changing as "anger grows in Muslim countries at China's treatment of Uyghurs." That fact that Muslim-majority countries have condemned Western states for their treatment of Muslim brings us onto the need for self-reflection.

Western actors need to critically reflect on their own practices and work to improve their own moral standing in the world. In particular, it is difficult for Western governments to put forward a moral standpoint when their own actions have undermined the [little] moral authority they have. Addressing the role that Western governments have to play in championing human rights norms such as the Responsibility to Protect, former Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans (2020), claims "credible advocates have to have their own house in order." While he discusses the treatment of asylum seekers in Australia, the criticism could equally be laid at the door of the United States, the UK, and several other European states. In theory, as trust in China declined in 2020, this was an opportunity for Western states to show moral leadership, but what we saw was President Trump privately expressing his support for mass internment of the Uyghurs (Roberts 2020), the UK cutting its international aid budget from 0.7 percent to 0.5 percent of gross national income (UNA-UK 2020), and Western governments buying up as much of the world's Covid-19 vaccine as possible (Oxfam 2020). As discussed, the election of President Biden allows the United States to restore some sense of leadership but only if this is done in a way that gets buy-in. Biden takes power at a time of acute human rights-related issues in the United States. This is important because the Government of China has a track record of counterattacking the United States on the grounds that it judges the world while "turning a blind eye to its own human rights related problems" (Zhang and Buzan 2020, 176). In order to preempt this criticism and build an international coalition, Western governments need to get their houses in order.

As part of this self-reflection process, Western states face another challenge because Beijing's relationship with Xinjiang has been shaped by Western practices.<sup>10</sup> In the short term, this can be traced back to the US-led "War on Terror" discourse. As academics have rightly pointed out, Uighur organizations had been identified as a "terrorist" threat since the 1990s; the Chinese government

9 A very good example of this is Ethiopian workers on Chinese-run construction sites (see Driessen 2020).

10 The process of "sinification" has a long history. Notably, in the post-1911 era, Han elites in Xinjiang called on Beijing to learn lessons from other empires and how they control peripheral regions (far from the center) by implementing rules and practices that differed significantly from that of the core (Jacobs 2016).

used the “War on Terror” discourse to its advantage as they linked Uighur “terrorism” with groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda network (Chung 2002). As Clark (2008, 272) explains, this was aided by the United States identifying “East Turkestan Islamic Movement” on its official list of “international terrorist organisations” in 2002. Writing in 2008, Clark (2008, 294) concluded that despite United States and Chinese claims, “the available evidence suggesting a clear and significant links between ETIM, Al Qaeda, and the Taliban is circumstantial and fragmentary.” The situation deteriorated significantly following 2009 and Uighur-led violence in 2014 saw President Xi respond with “The People’s War on Terror,” which lay the groundwork for the camp network (Smith Finley 2020, 4). The stark reality, therefore, is that the Western “War on Terror” has helped the CCP make the case that its actions toward the Uyghurs constitute rightful conduct. Furthermore, when Western governments seek to challenge this narrative, they may find that states, for example, in the Middle East do not lend a sympathetic ear. To put this another way, were Western governments not too guilty of overstating the link between organizations such as Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and the Iraqi government? Did they not also conduct practices that violated international norms such as waterboarding and rendition? As a result, if President Xi successfully frames the Uyghur situation through a counterterror lens, Western states face an uphill struggle as many states may see this as another hypocritical lecture, which, to return to Snyder (2020, 644), can fuel a backlash.

With this in mind, Western actors need to make the dominant narrative about genocide and crimes against humanity rather than counterterrorism. We see evidence of this as parliaments in Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands have declared China’s treatment of the Uyghurs constitutes genocide. Furthermore, the US State Department and the UK Foreign Affairs Committee have also labeled this genocide and/or crimes against humanity.<sup>11</sup> The critical aspect, therefore, is that governments need to stress that Beijing’s policies constitute genocide and/or crimes against humanity thus violating international law as set out in the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,

the 1998 Rome Statute, and also agreements such as the 2005 Responsibility to Protect. While proving genocide is notoriously difficult, there is an ample body of evidence to make allegations of genocide and crimes against humanity carry weight. The objective here, at least in relation to the power of naming and shaming, is not to prove that genocide is taking place in order to prosecute members of the CCP but to make the conversation about genocide and crimes against humanity rather than counterterrorism. As discussed with reference to Krain’s study, naming and shaming over genocide has been more effective than human rights violations in general, though more research on this is needed. By focusing on mass atrocity crimes, this will help delegitimize the policies and force other states to take a stance on alleged genocide and crimes against humanity. As part of which, the Beijing narrative, that these camps constitute rightful conduct because they are successful, has to be challenged directly. Beijing cannot use genocide or crimes against humanity as a means to an end. Again, it could be argued that Beijing can use counterterrorism as a means to an end and this is precisely why actors need to frame the issue as one of genocide and crimes against humanity. Governments that want to support the CCP will have an easier time showing support if the discourse centers on counterterrorism rather than genocide.

If Western actors, most obviously governments, pursue a strategy of naming and shaming they have to be willing to provide more than words alone. As Smith Finley (2020, 22) explains in relation to Muslim-majority countries, “in a context where Muslim majority nations remain dependent on Chinese finance, it is hard to see how they might take a more radical position, religious affinities with the Uyghurs notwithstanding. Were Western democratic states to reverse current populist trends leading to reduced budgets for international aid, and providing genuinely altruistic, sustainable, collaborative, and non-profit-based development assistance, that dependency might be reduced, and Muslim-majority nations might then shift position.”

The statement reminds us that if naming and shaming is to have a long-lasting impact then a long-term broad coalition is needed. To build this, Western governments need to tackle a central problem—China is buying silence. For example, in 2009, President Erdogan depicted violence against the Uyghurs as “genocide” whilst allowing those fleeing China to seek refuge in Turkey. Since 2016, his remarks have become “diplomatically bland” whilst extraditing Uyghurs back to China (Alemdaroglu and Tepe 2020). In a similar vein, Prime Minister Khan has distanced himself from criticizing China while claiming “they came to help us when we were at rock bottom,

11 Under President Trump, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared it to be genocide. This was upheld by the Biden administration, but since then the US State Department’s Office of the Legal Advisor has claimed there is insufficient evidence to conclude genocide is taking place and instead used the term crimes against humanity (Lynch 2021).

and so we are really grateful to the Chinese government” (Mahbubania 2020). Such sentiment is commonplace as governments have borrowed money from China as part of its Belt and Road Initiative. President Xi frames this initiative as a “road for peace,” but critics view it as a part of China’s grand strategy (Desierto 2020, 308) that is implemented through “debt-trap diplomacy” as it allows Beijing to gain further influence within poorer countries (Salamatin 2020, 1430). At which point the reader may rightly claim that it is unrealistic to think that Western governments can offer an alternative to China’s Belt and Road initiative, yet as aforementioned, Beijing has drastically cut back overseas development investment from \$75 billion in 2016 to \$4 billion in 2019, and with this in mind, there is an opportunity for Western governments to do more to remove the crutch of Beijing support.

Finally, it is important to recognize that China’s ability to buy influence is only part of the problem as there is a broader ideological battle. The CCP is offering an alternative vision of how international society should be structured and notably some states appear to accept this view. As Foot (2020, 3) explains, the Chinese government believes its “triadic model” embodying a commitment to “economic development, the strong state, and social stability” is preferable to the UN’s traditional focus on development, peace and security, and human rights. Beijing is of the view that this will better serve international peace and security while at the same time downplaying the role of human rights (Foot 2020, 3). Indeed, Chen’s (2019, 1197) study of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) demonstrates that the CCP is working with authoritarian regimes and developing countries to advance this illiberal agenda by “strategically distorting the Council’s procedures.” Chen (2019, 1222) concludes that despite China’s efforts, it has had “mixed success” because of “growing international awareness of the PRC’s troubling human rights record and its influence on other countries attitudes toward human rights.” This could be read as good news for liberal states. In a time period that saw a disengaging United States, and divided EU, undermine the liberal vision and weaken multilateral censure, it would appear that many states remained fearful of the illiberal agenda. A reengaged United States, therefore, is needed if liberal states are to offer a credible alternative to that put forth by China. At this time of writing, President Biden declares “America is back” and seeks to rejoin the UNHRC whilst proclaiming “by restoring U.S. credibility and reasserting forward-looking global leadership we will ensure America, not China, sets the international agenda, working alongside others to shape new global norms and agreements that advance our interests and re-

fect our values” (Biden 2021, 20). While these words may warm the hearts of many liberals, for those unsure of who to follow (United States or China), simply restating “America is back” is not enough. More needs to be done both at the domestic and international level if the United States is to galvanize support in an era of shifting power balances.

## Conclusion

When faced with the most heinous crimes in international society, there is an understandable emotional response that cries out for the perpetrators involved to be named and shamed. The problem is that this may make things worse for the victims. From a pragmatic perspective, if we adopt a fixed position—naming and shaming should be applied each and every time—we fail to take into account the unintended consequences of our actions. Although we can never know what will happen in the future, the past alone will not provide us with the answers needed to make practical judgments and as a result we need to engage in the “imaginative rehearsal” of consequences (Hoover cited in Ralph 2018, 189). With this in mind, the paper asks us to consider the pragmatic ethics surrounding if, when, and how this practice should be adopted in relation to China. As discussed, the Chinese government has been routinely named and shamed yet in order to make sense of this, the article offers a new way of examining this by analyzing the role that *image* and *status* play in two literatures: naming and shaming and the rise of China. It argues that the Chinese government’s focus on image and status acts as a double-edged sword when it comes to naming and shaming. On one hand, China embodies all the elements set out by Snyder (2020) to suggest that a backlash driven by emotion, nationalism, and status should be taken seriously. The potential implications of which at both the international and national level need to be factored in. On the other hand, its quest for status can see naming and shaming constrain its behavior, particularly during status-sensitive time periods. It argues that a culmination of factors in the lead up to the 2022 Beijing Olympics creates a window of opportunity for naming and shaming to have a positive influence. That said, this needs to be done in a certain way in order to reduce the risk and/or severity of a backlash from Beijing. Here, the final section calls on Western actors to be respectful by condemning wrongs while praising rights, focus on the specific issue and frame this as genocide, self-reflect and strive to get their own house in order, work to reduce the power that the Chinese government has to buy silence around the world, and finally create a liberal vision that offers a credible alternative to



the illiberal vision put forward by Beijing. This requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond expressing worlds alone.<sup>12</sup>

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