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Adler-Nissen, Rebecca

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Rebecca Adler-Nissen



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# Stigma Management in International Relations: Transgressive Identities, Norms, and Order in International Society

Rebecca Adler-Nissen

**Abstract** This article develops a theoretical approach to stigma in international relations and resituates conventional approaches to the study of norms and international order. Correcting the general understanding that common values and norms are the building blocks of social order, this article claims that international society is in part constructed through the stigmatization of "transgressive" and norm-violating states and their ways of coping with stigma. Drawing on Erving Goffman, this article shows that states are not passive objects of socialization, but active agents. Stigmatized states cope strategically with their stigma and may, in some cases, challenge and even transform a dominant moral discourse. A typology of stigma management strategies is presented: *stigma recognition* (illustrated by Germany); *stigma rejection* (illustrated by Austria); and finally *counter-stigmatization* (illustrated by Cuba). Because of the lack of agreement on what constitutes normal state behavior, attempts to impose stigma may even have the opposite effect—the stigmatizers become the transgressive. A focus on stigma opens up new avenues for research on norms, identities, and international order.

The past twenty years have witnessed a rise in the use of shaming to promote international norms. Human rights, free markets, and representative democratic systems are now routinely invoked to justify international pressure to make states comply with shared norms and values. At the end of the Cold War, many former Eastern Bloc states were eager to be accepted as members of this ostensibly global society, and the rapid internalization of these norms by elites in these and other nations can be seen in the enlargement of both the EU and NATO. At the same

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time, norm-violating states are now routinely denounced as "pariahs," squarely positioned outside the company of "civilized states." In some cases, such as South Africa in the 1990s, this has arguably been an effective strategy,[1] whereas in other cases, such as present-day Iran, it may merely have helped to entrench the power of current regimes.[2] There appear, then, to be very different ways of coping with international shaming.

Nonetheless, the dynamic relationship between those imposing normal behavior and those stigmatized by it remains undertheorized in international relations. Constructivists have come closest to identifying the mechanisms through which norm-violating states may be socialized into norm compliance. In their influential article on norm dynamics from 1998, Finnemore and Sikkink observed parenthetically that "we recognize norm-breaking behavior because it generates disapproval or stigma."[3] However, apart from Tannenwald's analysis of "the nuclear taboo"[4] and Zarakol's work on the historical expansion of the European society of states,[5] International Relations (IR) scholars have not seriously explored the proposition that stigmatization is central to understanding how norms work and have therefore largely ignored the way deviant actors help to clarify norms.[6] If stigmatization works in international politics as in other spheres of life, we must recognize that states that are unable or unwilling to conform to "normal" standards are not merely objects of (failed) socialization. Rather, they are active agents, able to cope strategically with the shame they are subjected to and, in some cases, may even challenge a dominant moral discourse by wearing their stigma as a badge of honor.

This article develops a theoretical approach to stigmatization and stigma management by applying insights from Goffman's seminal work in sociology into IR theory. Taking the concept of stigma from the domestic sphere (and its microsociological application in analyses of, for example, disabled, homosexuals, and unemployed) to the international sphere, I demonstrate how the concept of stigma resituates conventional approaches to norm diffusion and international society in the maintenance of international order. It is not common values but ontological insecurity that is the original push for the relegation of transgressive states to the margins of international society.[7] The drive to impose stigma stems from an uncertainty about what actually holds international society together. Engaging critically with

1. Klotz 1999.
2. Takeyh 2004, 51–63; see also Lind 2008.
3. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 892.
4. Tannenwald 2005, 5–49.
5. Zarakol 2011.
6. I use *deviance* in this instance not as a pejorative term but in the classical sociological sense of deviation from the norms of a particular social group. Marxists, poststrucutralists, and feminists have analyzed the marginalization of particular subjects in world politics, but never employed a stigmatization framework.
7. Mitzen 2006, 345, defines ontological insecurity as a basic need for order and trust, which begins with "the position that actors fear deep uncertainty as an identity threat."

recent constructivist work on socialization and norm contestation,[8] I show that this is not just about the positive definition of community, but just as much a matter of marking the deviant actor, that is, stigmatization in a strong sense. The notion of normal state behavior requires a constitutive outside. This involves all the familiar operations of labeling, stereotyping, separation, and discrimination. I present a typology of coping strategies: *stigma recognition*, *stigma rejection*, and *counter-stigmatization*. The framework is then applied in empirical illustrations of *recognition* (Germany), *rejection* (Austria), and *counter-stigmatization* (Cuba). The final section discusses how an analysis of stigmatization provides new avenues for examining the link between norms, identities, and international order.

## Conceptualizing Stigma

*Stigma* is a Greek word that originally referred to a kind of tattoo or identifying mark cut or burned into the skin of animals.[9] In Christian mysticism, the word *stigmata* refers to bodily marks, scars, or pains corresponding to those of the crucified Jesus Christ, interpreted as a miraculous sign from God. In its modern usage, however, stigma is associated with the idea that certain individuals are to be avoided or shunned, particularly in public places, as they are seen as "deviant" or "morally polluted." A stigma can undermine all other claims to normality, rendering the individual less than human. The way stigmatization works can be seen in the classifications built around a stigmatized feature, such as the everyday opposition between homosexuals and heterosexuals, that isolates the deviant trait from all the rest (that is, all other forms of sexuality).

The pioneer of symbolic interactionism, Erving Goffman, developed the notion of stigma as a sociological concept in the 1960s. While constructivists such as Wendt and Barnett were inspired by Goffman's dramaturgy (and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology),[10] many of Goffman's most valuable insights are still to be introduced into IR.[11] Goffman's reflections on stigma remain particularly useful to understanding norms and international order. In his book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*,[12] Goffman explains, "Stigma can be used to refer to any attribute that is deeply discrediting and incongruous with our stereotype of what a given type of individual should be."[13] Building on Goffman, numerous sociologists and social psychologists have used stigma theory to analyze the pre-

8. See Wiener 2009; Acharya 2004, 239–75; Johnston 2007; and Hoffmann 2010. For a critique of the norm literature in IR, see Epstein 2012b, 121–22; and Widmaier and Park 2012, 123–43.
9. Jones 1987, 139–55.
10. See Wendt 1999; and Barnett 1998.
11. For a few, albeit valuable exceptions, see Zarakol 2011; Mor 2009, 219–39; Schimmelfennig 2002, 417–37; Jervis 1976; and Adler-Nissen 2008.
12. Goffman 1963.
13. Ibid.

dicament of the unemployed, transsexuals, immigrants, and people with HIV. They reflect a complex picture of discrimination and strategies of fighting back.

As issues of race, mental illness, HIV/AIDS, and disability show, stigma often produces and sustains material inequalities, and is anchored in histories of prejudice and exclusion. The stigma of race, for instance, derives its significance from particular histories of domination, colonization, and global economic flows. It is not simply a system of cognitive categorization. Yet the global distribution of material resources cannot determine the normative content of international politics.

Any identity, attribute, or behavior may be stigmatized. Goffman argued—not unproblematically—that a stigma linked to an attribute is more difficult to change than one linked to behavior.[14] Visible or easily recognizable "tribal stigmas" (as Goffman calls them),[15] that is, attributes such as race, ethnicity, or nationality, are of course important in determining whether or not someone can "pass" as normal. However, what counts as normal and transgressive changes over time, including stigmas such as race or gender. Moreover, many stigmas are not straightforward. For instance, sexual deviation may be defined in terms of behavior or identity; both are objects of stigma and prejudice. The crucial point is that stigmas are the result of historical interactions that produce not just deviant behavior, but deviant identities, which may remain "spoiled" even after behavioral change.[16]

### *Stigma Imposition*

What makes the concept of stigmatization analytically powerful is that it refers not only to stereotyping, but also to separation, status loss, and discrimination. Thus, it is not only a discursive process such as "othering," which IR scholars have fruitfully analyzed, showing that identities always require an other against which the self is constructed.[17] Stigmatization is also material and embodied. Link and Phelan define stigmatization as the co-occurrence of the following components: *labeling*, *stereotyping*, *separation*, and *status loss* and *discrimination*. Often these components are sequential and develop over time, becoming increasingly extreme, but they can also be simultaneous.[18] This brief section cannot do justice to all nuances of the highly complex and nonmechanical process, but it explains the four major steps of stigma imposition.

14. Ibid., 42
15. Ibid., 5.
16. For participants in weight-loss programs, for instance, "weight loss is always potentially reversible and is an ever-dangerous invisible stigma which threatens the individual." The awareness of an "essential fat identity" (whether visible or invisible) acts as a warning device against the discredited eating behavior. Laslett and Warren 1975, 72.
17. See, for example, Campbell 1998; and Neumann 1999.
18. Link and Phelan 2001, 363–85.

Labeling singles out certain human or social differences and deems some salient while others are ignored. The second component of stigma occurs when labeled differences are linked to stereotypes. Stigmatization helps establish categories and works as a social identification and knowledge mechanism. A third feature of stigma imposition occurs when social labels connote a separation of "us" from "them." The "us" and "them" designation in the stigmatization process implies that the labeled group is slightly less human, or, in extreme cases, not human at all. In the fourth component, the labeled person experiences status loss and discrimination. When the label is linked to "undesirable characteristics," a rationale is constructed for devaluing, rejecting, and physically excluding the stigmatized.

Stigma is a sociological concept that concerns the construction of deviance and its implications. Thus, states may be labeled "failed," "rogue," "pariah," or "outlaw," but these labels may never develop into a genuine system of social differentiation or attempts to label particular states may prove futile. Take, for example, the Corruption Perceptions Index, which orders countries of the world according to perceived degrees of corruption.[19] The index clearly labels countries and has an impact on the allocation of development aid to the countries in question, but full stigmatization involves instances of status loss and discrimination.

Goffman argues that everybody has the potential to become stigmatized, and even the most fortunate of "normals" are likely to have a half-hidden failing.[20] Some norms "take the form of ideals and constitute standards against which almost everyone falls short at some stage."[21] Stigmatization, he argues, is therefore not the result of the failure to comply with the given social standard for what is normal; it is just as much the result of the inherent shortcomings of the construction of normality itself.

## Stigma and the Production of Normative Order

Goffman's stigma theory draws heavily on the long sociological tradition of seeing deviance as crucial to the construction of social order. As Durkheim famously claimed (a limited amount of) deviance holds society together.[22] Stigma processes help display normality and clarify boundaries of acceptable identity and behavior. Two IR approaches, in particular, share an interest in the link between norms and shared values and social order: the English School (also known as the International Society school) and constructivism.[23] The English School has been (rightly)

19. Lancaster and Montinola 1997, 185–206.
20. Goffman 1963, 127.
21. Ibid., 128.
22. Durkheim 1982.
23. See, for example, Reus-Smit 1999; Buzan 2006, 364–69; Adler 2005, 171–82; and Dunne 2001, 67–91.

attacked for its state-centrism and its Western bias.[24] Nevertheless, the literature remains valuable because it points to the importance of shared norms for the construction of international society.

According to Bull, one of the English School's central figures, *international society* exists when "a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in relation with one another, and share in the working of common institutions."[25] Traditionally, the English School begins with the assumption of an *international system*, which can develop into an international society through intense interaction. Some also include the notion of *world society* that focuses on the global population as a whole.[26] The notion of international society has been employed more broadly by constructivists to emphasize that state interaction is not determined by the structure of the international system.[27] International society is thus a synonym for order, "which potentially stretches across an enormous spectrum of possibilities," ranging from minimal at one end (such as norms against the seizure or murder of emissaries) to maximal on the other (a community of states enmeshed in a network of agreed regimes and institutions covering much of their interaction).[28] The concept helps us understand large-scale dynamics in interstate relations, which operate through concrete social practices where notions of appropriate behavior are negotiated.

Interestingly, while exclusion and shame are part of the English School's accounts of the historical evolution of international societies, these processes disappear in its analyses of the modern era. In the nineteenth century, membership of the European society of sovereign states was defined in terms of "standards of civilization" based upon quasi-Christian European values.[29] The European society subsequently expanded through colonialism, imperialism, trade, and so on, and now has a global extension, arguably with certain shared norms.

In her excellent book, Zarakol details how Turkey, Japan, and Russia joined a Western-dominated international society, which labeled the newcomers as "backward" and "inferior."[30] This helped convince Turkish, Japanese, and Russian elites that they were indeed "backward." After their defeat to the West, all three countries chose policies that signaled stigma recognition. Turkey adopted a secular European model of modernization; Japan said goodbye to militarism and went through a US-inspired economic development; and the former Soviet Union went through a "triple-transition."

24. Suzuki 2009.
25. Bull 1977, 13.
26. Traditionally "international society" refers exclusively to states. For a discussion of the role of nonstate actors and the relationship between "world society" and "international society," see Bellamy 2004.
27. For example, Reus-Smit 2002, 487–509.
28. Buzan 1993, 332.
29. Gong 1984.
30. Zarakol 2011.

Zarakol's analysis leaves us with two intertwined empirical and theoretical puzzles—each of which might be explained by generalizing the argument about stigmatization. First, if international society is now a global phenomenon, why do we still see attempts to internationally stigmatize countries such as Iran or Cuba as threats to international order? This suggests that shaming is not specific to modernity or a particular historical period. Indeed, the framework I am proposing suggests that stigmatization is a more general and continuous phenomenon in international relations. Second, Turkey, Japan, and Russia all expose situations where "outsider" states have sought to be accepted into the Western international system. But what happens when states resist disciplining attempts or reject stigma?

### *Deviance, Normality, and International Society*

Criticizing the notion of society as some sort of totality or stable entity (such as a group of states), Goffman insisted that social order is a collective achievement to which we all contribute. Specifically, there is always the possibility of a collapse of society if its norms and values are not constantly reaffirmed. When there is no shared sense of what is good or bad, social order cannot exist. This is the anomie or ontological insecurity lurking behind most sociological theories of social order.[31] This is also central to the way in which international society works.

So how is social order achieved when there is uncertainty and disagreement about which norms actually underpin society? Stigmatization helps clarify the boundaries of acceptable behavior and identity and the consequences of nonconformity, that is, shame, exclusion or other forms of punishment. Indeed, most societies rely not only on socialization (in the form of emulation, learning, or persuasion)—they also use public sanctioning to construct and display normality. In earlier days, this was the role of the public scaffold. Today, the heavy flow of news on criminal deviance serves a similar purpose. Stigmatization helps clarify norms and achieve conformity by distinguishing between "us" (the normal states) and "them" (the transgressive ones).[32]

Constructivists have always insisted on the link between norms and social order: "Shared ideas, perceptions, and beliefs are what give the world structure, order, and stability."[33] However, if norms hold society together, some kind of shame or stigmatization is likely to exist in most societies. Stigmatization constitutes an important source of information about the normative outlines of society—lessons through which we teach one another what norms mean and how far they extend.[34] Stigmatizing the norm-breaker reinforces the notion of normality, which refers both

31. Mitzen 2006.
32. Hacking 2002, 99–114.
33. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 894.
34. Erikson 1962, 310.

to an aspiration for the future and a factual situation in which there is no "immediate external or internal threats to society's stability."[35] Thus, at the most basic level, stigma helps the world hang together.

International society (as any social order) rests uneasily on occasionally contradictory ideas about its own moral foundations. For instance, should state interaction aim at a pluralist or solidarist world with a single standard of civilization (with its Western imperial legacy)? Moreover, even if a certain set of norms is identified in international society, they may be given different meanings by different states.[36] It follows that the "reality" of normality and deviance will be conceived very differently by different states. World War II and the Holocaust remain hegemonic evils in the Western psyche, while many non-Western countries use the same term to describe apartheid and colonialism.

The notion of international society does not require unanimous acceptance of the underpinning values or notions of normality, but it does require processes of stigmatization to specify those that threaten order. Rather than seeing "pariah" and "failed" states as being outside international society, relegated to a more abstract international system "with less dense interaction,"[37] the stigmatized state has a place in international society in that it secures the performative enactment of the normal. Ironically, it is not common values but the ontological insecurity of interstate relations that is the original push for the relegation of transgressive states to the margins of international society.

This argument challenges the existing narrative of a one-way expansion of international society and the subsequent exclusion of states lacking "standards of civilization." It also goes beyond more recent analyses of the externalized "Other" (for example, the "barbarian Turk" or the "exotic Chinese") in the historical expansion of European international society. International society is not just constituted by shared norms or identification, but equally through continuous processes of stigmatization.

## From Norm Diffusion to Stigmatization

Constructivists have contributed greatly toward an understanding of how states (and their representatives) are socialized, particularly by suggesting the conditions under which norm diffusion takes place.[38] However, until recently, constructivist literature on norms tended to examine socialization as one-sided processes of "teaching and persuasion."[39] Even scholars interested in the use of social rewards, punishments, or shaming to socialize agents into accepting, for example, human

35. Misztal 2001, 313.
36. Wiener and Puetter 2009, 1–16.
37. Dunne 2010, 148.
38. For example, Zürn and Checkel 2005, 1045–79.
39. Gheciu 2005, 973.

rights have mainly focused on how agents can be induced into a "pronormative" behavior, and have downplayed rejection of social norms.[40] As Epstein writes in her critique of the socialization literature, "in the study of social dynamics, 'socialization' was coined to capture a movement that runs in one direction: from the socializer to the socializee."[41]

For instance, constructivists have examined how organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) projected "liberal-democratic norms into Central and Eastern Europe" after the Cold War.[42] However, the normal state and its normal institutions—for example, "human rights" or "liberal-democratic norms"—often become vacuous and elusive.[43] For the notion of normal state behavior to exist, it must have a constitutive outside. As Towns argues, "norms not only unify—they also entail processes of differentiation and stratification."[44] The linkages between the norm entrepreneur's attempts to impose discipline and the actual construction of norms—which is at the center of much of constructivist thinking—remains underexplored.

In recent years, however, constructivists have begun investigating what happens when norms are contested or rejected.[45] As Wiener writes, norms are "contested, unless and until a mutually satisfactory interpretation is established through discursive intervention which may or may not be conflictive."[46] Norm contestation increases when norms move between different sociocultural contexts across state borders.[47]

Conflict is also central to Acharya, who claims that "norm diffusion should be understood as a two-way process."[48] He demonstrates the importance of local actors in international norm diffusion.[49] Indeed, "weaker actors can challenge their exclusion or marginalization from global norm-processes."[50] One example is Latin American countries promoting the principle of nonintervention against global norms of common security and humanitarian intervention. However, in focusing on local responses to transnational norms, Acharya does not fully address the effect of local reinterpretation and resistance on the global normative order. Moreover, he disregards that normative work is not only about defining, redefining, exporting, or resisting norms locally; it is also about excluding what is different or "abnormal."[51] Here Goffman offers original insight into how normality is socially con-

40. Johnston 2001, 510.
41. Epstein 2012a, 140.
42. Gheciu 2005, 973.
43. Jones 2008, 185.
44. Towns 2010, 33.
45. See Wiener 2009, 175–93; Hoffmann 2010; and Cortell and Davis 2005, 3–25.
46. Wiener 2004, 202.
47. Wiener 2007, 4.
48. Acharya 2012, 201.
49. Acharya 2004.
50. Acharya 2012, 202.
51. Mattern n.d.

structed through stigmatization. While it involves an asymmetric power relationship, stigmatization can be resisted and coped with in various ways. This is crucial to the success or failure of attempts to enforce discipline and define the "normal" state in international society.

### *Audiences of Normals*

International society is a *modus vivendi*, which operates only insofar as different "communities of practice," including national governments, diplomats, journalists, companies, and organizations, bother to keep it going.[52] One way this negotiated order comes into view is through diplomatic practices and expressions such as "normalizing" or "severing diplomatic ties."[53] Owing to the lack of normative certainty and agreement, the ongoing stability of international society requires an "audience of normals" to shut away and exteriorize particular features or ideologies. These features resemble those of the "normal" state, but are made different through stigmatization. Stigmatization is one of the processes though which norms are induced, but it is a more painful and contested process than constructivists usually focus on. Specifically, stigmatization is produced in interactions between a particular "audience of normals" and a transgressive individual or group.

An "audience of normals" resembles the well-known concept of a "norm entrepreneur," but is not necessarily an individual or group that successfully plays "a key role in the creation of new international norms."[54] Rather than defining the audience of normals by the outcome (successful stigmatization), I define it as the group of states that attempts to impose stigma. In other words, stigma imposition may fail (and we need to study the effects of failure). The "audience of normals" is constituted by those that do not depart negatively from a particular social expectation.[55] Consequently, an "audience of normals" is not a settled social group but is established and confirmed in specific cases through the very process of stigmatization.[56] This often involves heated debates over the justification for imposing stigma and the choice of instruments for disciplining "transgressive" states.

Stigmatization is always embedded in (and contributes to) a particular normative order, but because of the lack of normative agreement and the ambivalence of state identities, the imposition of stigma calls for some effort. Stigmatization and stigma management occur in contexts with disagreements and ideological conflicts as well as in situations that reflect shared notions of normality. As I will

52. Adler and Pouliot 2011, 1–36. There are interesting affinities between Wenger's work on communities of practice and Goffman's symbolic interactionism. However, one aspect missing from Wenger's communities of practice is exclusion. Wenger 1998.

53. Berridge 1994, 7.

54. Checkel 2012, 2.

55. Goffman 1963, 5.

56. Goffman reflected on the "audience of normals" in his writings on American subcultures and the resultant difficulties in agreeing on who are transgressors. Ibid., 138.

show, stigmatized states can employ a lack of agreement strategically to improve their position.

## Strategies of Stigma Management

Instead of automatically accepting stigma, stigmatized states may attempt to modify its exclusionary effects by changing the way normals perceive them. Taking constructivist thought to its logical conclusion, there is no such thing as nonnormative behavior or pure material self-interest, independent of a social context.[57] States are not free to choose how they cope with their stigma. Stigma shapes identities and "the stigmatised person learns and incorporates standards of the normal, acquiring thereby the identity beliefs of the wider society."[58] Yet while stigmatization shapes state identities, states—governments and populations—also try to make sense of the world. This has implications for the agency of the "deviant" states. States do not necessarily accept stigma, but they act on the basis of the particular categories assigned to them.

Goffman assumes a dichotomy with two available strategies for the group of stigmatized: stigma recognition (what he calls "out-group alignment"), where representatives identify with the "audience of normals" and the wider society and apologize for their transgressive conduct or attribute, internalizing the value judgment made by the "audience of normals." Successful stigma recognition implies that the deviant state works to become normal and eventually succeeds in becoming accepted by international society. If stigma is recognized and coped with in this way, the moral cohesion of international society is likely to be strengthened.

Goffman's second strategy is counter-stigmatization ("in-group alignment"), where representatives accept the stigma but turn it into an emblem of pride, identifying with the group of stigmatized.[59] Here stigma is turned into a virtue and the deviant value their exclusionary status. Stigma rejection has been observed among stigmatized groups of migrants such as the Somali populations in the United States and Europe; these migrant groups create a separate system of honor in which Somali women wear colorful, non-Western dresses and, in most cases, the *hijab* and avoid dance clubs and other venues that typically attract young members of mainstream society.[60] In this way, a selective valuing process protects the self-esteem and status of the stigmatized in-group. As I will show, states may be politically shunned, materially deprived, and their populations suffer while their governments experience ideological victories from processes of counter-stigmatization. Successful counter-stigmatization implies that the stigmatizer becomes perceived as the transgressor.

57. Hoffmann 2010, 5.
58. Goffman 1963, 36.
59. Ibid., 112–23.
60. Kusow 2004, 179–97.

This typology is arguably exhaustive. However, to gain better insight into the negotiation of normality in international society, I suggest a third category of stigma management: stigma rejection (which is close to Goffman's notion of "passing") where the stigmatized accept the categories of deviance, but deny being different from the norm abiders. Stigma rejection can result in situations of mutual embarrassment for the stigmatizer and the stigmatized. When it succeeds, however, the deviant passes as normal. As I will demonstrate, both instances of counter-stigmatization and stigma rejection reveal that stigma is seldom fully or successfully imposed.

At least two factors are crucial for how states cope with stigma. First, there is the degree to which the norms underpinning the stigma are shared. Stigma recognition requires a shared social ground and that the deviant group or actor sees itself as "failing" normal expectations. If these norms are shared and the moral authority of the stigmatizer is recognized, we can expect that stigmatized states want to become part of the "civilized group" and will try to overcome their stigma or try to pass as normals. If states do not share the norms underpinning their stigma, they are more likely to reject the norms and seek solidarity among the deviant. This is why stigma processes involve not only sustaining of order, but also create opportunity for rebellion.

Second, material and social resources are important for how states manage stigma. States that are conflict-ridden or weak in terms of resources may have few choices when it comes to coping with stigma. For instance, "under-developed countries or countries recovering from atrocities or civil war like Sierra Leone see the adoption of international norms as a requirement for their economic recovery program."[61] Conversely, very powerful states may feel they can ignore international shaming. In such cases, we are not likely to see stigma recognition, but rather stigma rejection or counter-stigmatization.

Stigma management is subject to domestic debate, which may also help explain why states change coping strategies over time. "Are we ashamed?" "Have we been misunderstood?" "Should we resist?" These are questions that most stigmatized groups debate among themselves. In some cases, however, domestic contestation is restrained, limiting the possibility of self-reflective debates about national identity and shame. In President Alexander Lukashenko's Belarus, for instance, a small elite considers how to deal with the international diplomacy of shame in relation to human rights violations.

Interestingly, a stigma can initially be a source of embarrassment and later turn into pride, underlining the ambiguous social identity of stigmatized and constant reconstruction of stigma. This dynamic of stigma's transformation can also be found in international politics. Indeed, coping strategies are not necessarily mutually exclusive. States may adopt several strategies simultaneously or shift between strategies, depending on the situation.

61. MacKenzie and Sesay 2012, 149–50.

Three examples illustrate the distinction between stigma recognition, stigma rejection and counter-stigmatization: Germany (stigma recognition), Austria (stigma rejection), and Cuba (counter-stigmatization). See Table 1. These states have been chosen because their ways of coping with stigma corresponds roughly to the three stigma management strategies. Of course, the chosen set of countries is not an exhaustive sample. States manage stigma in many ways. But the three illustrations provide a starting point for understanding various strategies of stigma management.

**TABLE 1.** *Types of stigma management*

| | *Stigma recognition* | *Stigma rejection* | *Counter-stigmatization* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Stigma management* | "Maturing" through good adjustment, self-discipline | Questioning stigma, revealing shared inferiority | Turning the stigma into an emblem of pride |
| *Consequence for stigmatized state* | Transforming stigma | Stigma reversal | Separate system of honor |
| *Consequence for international society* | The moral cohesion of international society is strengthened | The moral cohesion of international society is questioned | Split in competing visions of international society |

None of the three states conform exactly to the modeled types; nor can brief illustrations do justice to the complex histories and strategies of the three states. Moreover, the way a stigma is managed will change over time as the stigmatized adapt to the expectations of the "normals," as they, in turn, adapt to the stigmatized. Divorce, for instance, used to be stigmatized as a "severely disvalued deviation from traditional marital norms"[62] and is now much more widely accepted in Western societies. This important dynamic of reinterpretation of the stigmatizing attribute can only be partly captured because it is necessary to delimit the time span of the illustrations.

First, I explain the specific normative order and political context within which the stigma processes are embedded. The examined stigma processes are all shaped by the post–World War II order and the Cold War context. I then briefly explain how the state has been stigmatized following the four components of labeling, stereotyping, separation, and discrimination. Then I examine how the state has managed its stigma and the consequences of such management for its position in international society.

62. Bryant 1990, 315.

The sources used in the analysis of German, Austrian, and Cuban stigma management are all publicly available (for example, secondary literature, newspaper articles, legal acts, and official documents). The choice of sources reflects that I am not opting for a motivational analysis. While the drive to impose stigma stems from an uncertainty about what holds international society together (ontological insecurity), I am not trying to get inside people's heads. Instead, I am interested in the intersubjective processes of negotiating stigma.

## Transforming Stigma Through Recognition: Germany

An archetypical example of stigma recognition is how Germany handled its controversial past, which has led to a gradual reinterpretation of its stigma in the course of the past sixty years. Crucially, in the case of Germany, stigma recognition has had an overall transformative effect on the normative order of Europe. Focus lies on the post–World War II Western order, West Germany's development, and post-unification Germany.

### *Stigma Imposition*

After World War II, Germany's relations with the rest of the world were burdened by the historical experience of Nazism and the gruesome persecution and crimes against various ethnic, national, and religious populations. In the first years after the war, Germany was stigmatized (that is, labeled, stereotyped, separated, and discriminated) by the Western Allies and the Soviet Union that, at the time, constituted the strong "audience of normals" in international society. The Allied powers saw themselves as the defenders of moral order; they were the "free West." By occupying Germany, they pursued a clear logic of separation of "us" and "them." In order to impress the German people with the Allied opinion of them, General Dwight Eisenhower adhered to a strict nonfraternization policy, discouraging fraternization with the German officials as well as social and sexual relationships with German citizens. Based on an entirely stereotyped understanding of all Germans as pariahs, this policy was phased out because of pressure from the US State Department and others.[63] In June 1945, the prohibition against speaking with German children was relaxed. In July 1945, it became possible to speak to German adults in certain circumstances.[64]

Tensions between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies mounted during 1946–47, eventually leading to the Cold War. Indeed, had it not been for the Cold War, international stigmatization would most likely have lasted longer. However, the isolation of West Germany relaxed fairly quickly as a new *Feindbild* (enemy image)

63. Biddiscombe 2001, 611–47.
64. Ibid., 619.

crystallized only a few years after World War II. The division between West and East Germany led to very different ways of dealing with the past. In East Germany, propaganda created "a peculiar state of innocence" that depicted all East Germans as heroic resisters against Nazism, and only the West Germans as perpetrators.[65] In East Germany, the Berlin Wall was informally called the "*Antifaschistischer Schutzwall*" ("anti-fascist protective barrier").[66]

West Germany did not seek alliances with other defeated nations, but sought the out-group's acceptance. In the Cold War context, it became one of the founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 and joined NATO in 1955.[67] Postwar West German reconstruction was made possible through references to a "Western civilization" and provided the platform for Germany's first steps toward international respectability.[68]

Throughout the Cold War, Berlin remained an occupied city, and Germany was divided. The successive administrations of West German Chancellors Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt saw the first real attempts to ease tension between East and West Germany through the so-called *Ostpolitik*, which did much to improve West Germany's image vis-à-vis the West. However, it was not until after unification in 1990 that a treaty formally brought an end to the state of war between the Allies and Germany.[69] Some declared that Germany should now be allowed to face the future without being burdened with the events of the past. However, the stereotyping of Germany continued and remains discernible today.

One of the ways Germany was discriminated against after Word War II was by being refused (and by refusing itself) a veritable foreign and defense policy. Only in 1994 did the German Constitutional Court decide that German forces could participate in missions provided an international organization granted a supporting mandate.[70] Widespread fear remained, however, that a unified Germany would dominate Europe. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was not the only head of a European country to candidly assert her disagreement to unification. The French President François Mitterrand was also highly skeptical and demanded a high price for unification.[71]

Yet the impossible became possible. During the Maastricht Treaty negotiations in 1991–92, Germany sacrificed its strong Deutschmark for a common European currency and was allowed unification and later participation in the creation of a common European military cooperation.[72] Today, Germany is actively involved in the EU's common security policy and participates in UN and NATO military missions. How was this transformation possible?

65. Buruma 1994, 156.
66. Herb 2004, 140–64.
67. Green, Hough, and Miskimmon 2012.
68. Jackson 2006.
69. Wolff 2003, 43–63.
70. Whitworth 2004, 37.
71. Bozo 2007, 455–78.
72. Berger 1997, 52.

*Stigma Management*

In the 1990s, many influential Germans warned about the dangers of an activist foreign and defense policy. Author Günter Grass was perhaps the most prominent among them. From a position of isolation, however, the gradual rehabilitation of Germany was made possible because Germany accepted the stigma and embraced international cooperation. By recognizing the past, German leaders reduced and transformed the stigma significantly over the next decades.

This process has been far from straightforward. In the early postwar period, the German political elite saw Nazism as a historical aberration in the nation's history and refrained from discussing its "unspeakable crimes." It was only in the 1980s that "the Nazi past became a serious political issue in Germany."[73] From the 1980s onward, however, political and cultural elites have dealt with the past through the erection of Holocaust memorials, Jewish museums, and the "*Historikerstreit*," which refers to the intellectual and political controversy in West Germany about the interpretation of the Holocaust.[74] Meanwhile, Europe gradually replaced the US-dominated Allies as the "audience of normals." German leaders argued that rather than Germanize Europe, Germany had to Europeanize, displaying a radical form of stigma recognition. According to German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas, the greatest German export success is how to come to terms with its past.[75] While this may be an exaggeration, the German experience has become a pan-European experience of "putting the past behind us." Indeed, if Germany had managed its stigma differently, it might have affected the shape of the European order. Also outside Europe, in post-Apartheid South Africa for instance, Germany's particular stigma management is a powerful reference.[76]

Until the end of the Kohl era, the notion that Germany could never be militarily active again remained the dominating paradigm. In the complex struggle over the past, however, in the 1990s, the generations of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer reinterpreted the stigma. They found that Germany's special responsibility was to become an active promoter (also by military means) of human rights and democracy. Consequently, Germany's participation in NATO's operation in Kosovo in 1999 marked both a way of dealing with the past and a step toward "normalization." Indeed, it was only by the end of the 1990s that a domestic German debate about the need for continuing this form of self-reproach or *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* had really begun. The rest of Europe refrains from discussing Germany's past because Germany itself engages in the necessary self-bashing through extensive dialogue about the country's historical burden.

73. Art 2006, 9.
74. Maier 1988, 9–34.
75. Moses 2007.
76. Coombes 2003.

The way Germany dealt with the past becomes clearer when considering how the authorities responsible for German defense and security after the Cold War have managed stigma. Campbell describes the relocation of the Ministry of Defence to Berlin and the so-called Bendlerblock, an imposing stone building dating back to the Wilhelmine era.[77] Used as navy headquarters at the turn of the century, this was where Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz launched the program to build the Kaiser's dreadnoughts; during World War II, Count Claus von Stauffenberg plotted the assassination of Adolph Hitler here, and his co-conspirators were executed in the Bendlerblock courtyard. German Ministry of Defence officials were reacting to the relocation to Bendlerblock "in immensely emotional and complex ways," according to Walter Slocombe, Undersecretary of Defence for Policy at the Pentagon during the administration of US President Bill Clinton.[78]

Yet the new military presence in Berlin did not set off a European neuralgia comparable to that which has accompanied Japanese military reconstruction. According to many observers, Germany has dealt more convincingly with its stigma than Japan.[79] One reason might be the lack of domestic discussion. In the late 1960s and 1970s, social protest and antiwar movements changed the German political landscape from the bottom; in Japan there has been no similar domestic discussion, and the scattered attempts to open the discussion internally are generally discouraged by the political elite. A second reason might have to do with the structure of international society. Unlike West Germany, which was firmly anchored in European and Western institutions, Japan found itself anchored neither in Asia (being a former colonizer) nor among the great powers of the international society.[80]

Despite stigma recognition, German representatives still encounter glass ceilings. While German leaders and diplomats are no longer discriminated against, the labeling and stereotyping of Germans continue in international forums. During an agitated speech in 2003, for instance, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi compared a German member of the European Parliament to a Nazi concentration camp collaborator.[81] At an EU summit in 2007, Polish Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynsky's violated the ultimate taboo when he argued that Poland would be eligible for more votes in the EU if the Nazis had not killed so many Poles.[82]

The shocked reaction to the Poles dredging up Germany's Nazi past at such a delicate stage in EU relations demonstrates the degree to which the stigma has been transformed. Indeed, the other member states reacted by characterizing Poland as backward and "living in the past," as Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Ras-

77. Campbell 2001.
78. Ibid., 117.
79. See Berger 1997, 46; and Buruma 1994.
80. Zarakol 2011, 197.
81. Peter Popham, "Defiant Berlusconi Denies Apologising for Nazi Insult," *The Independent* (Internet ed.), 5 July 2003.
82. Stephen Mulvey, "Poles in War of Words Over Voting," *BBC News* (Internet ed.), 21 June 2007. Available at ⟨http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6227834.stm⟩, accessed 26 August 2013.

mussen stated.[83] Poland was categorized as transgressive while Germany was suddenly considered a "normal" state. To be a "normal" state in the EU, one must not live in the past; one must deal with the past.

However, German stigma management makes it difficult to have a strong and predictive foreign policy. German leaders are carefully watched by the rest of the world and by its own population. Upholding credibility requires continuous effort because the state must live up to the highest moral standards and even outperform the "normals," convincing them that they are "better-than-normal." Germany has gone beyond what was initially seen as "normal," changing European notions of appropriate state behavior. This shows the transformative potential of stigma management.

## Stigma Rejection and Mutual Embarrassment: Austria

In some cases, the stigmatized state might accept the overall categories of "normal" and "transgressive," but it offers explanations for why it should not be labeled "transgressive" or "deviant." The EU's condemnation of Austria for its extremist right wing at the turn of the millennium and Austria's reactions to such condemnation provide an interesting case of stigma rejection. It also shows how difficult it is to achieve consensus on how to uphold normative order even among like-minded states. Stigma rejection can lead to awkward situations involving mutual feelings of insecurity. Yet even if the "audience of normals" may be partly demobilized, stigma rejection betrays an awareness of "normal" expectations and the power dynamics driving them.

### *Stigma Imposition*

In 2000, the admission of Jörg Haider's extreme right-wing Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) to the Austrian government led EU member states to freeze bilateral relations with the alpine republic. Ultimately, however, the Austrian government never accepted being labeled as transgressive and gradually revealed their disagreement on how normative discipline should be upheld in Europe.

While the stigma imposed on Austria resembles that of Germany in the sense that it reduces an entire state to a stereotype (in Austria's case, extreme xenophobia), it differs fundamentally. After World War II, the Allies treated Austria as the first victim of Nazism despite Austria's "willing" annexation by Nazi Germany in 1938, and Austria was never required to undergo the same thorough de-Nazification

83. Siobhán Dowling, "Poland Blasted for Mentioning the War," *Der Spiegel* (Internet ed.), 22 June 2007. Available at ⟨http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/the-world-from-berlin-poland-blasted-for-mentioning-the-war-a-490178.html⟩, accessed 21 August 2013.

that Germany did. The Moscow declaration, issued by the foreign ministers of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union in October 1943, included the statement that Austria "was the first victim of Hitler's typical policy of aggression."[84] In the 1960s and 1970s, Austria was often depicted positively at home and abroad—passing as a neutral bridge between East and West.[85]

Unlike Germany, a particular "victim culture" developed in Austria, stemming first from its initial postwar exercise in identity construction and continuing with the debate over the past of former UN Secretary-General and former Austrian president Kurt Waldheim. Waldheim had enrolled in the SA (the paramilitary Nazi organization of storm troopers) in 1938, but this was revealed to the public only in 1986. Waldheim's rejection of guilt (re)confirmed for many Austrians that they could not be seen as responsible for the crimes committed in the Nazi era.[86]

One of the mechanisms through which stigma rejection took place was by designating a scapegoat (the enemy from the outside). In this way, criticism of Austria's past was transformed into a plot against Austria, contrived in part by vengeful Jews who sought redress. Whereas debate converged in Germany and a broad consensus developed on the Nazi past and how it ought to be usefully and respectfully articulated in the public realm, the debate in Austria became increasingly polarized after 1986.[87] The rest of the world watched Austria carefully, but the victim story was never fully interrogated. After the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc, Austria was simply integrated into the European cooperation and became a full EU member in 1995.

Haider's FPÖ exploited the polarized Austrian debate with spectacular electoral success in the 1990s, measured by the standards of the European extreme right. To many Austrians, Haider was merely a southern governor with an odd blend of liberal spending plans and anti-immigrant sentiments.[88] Once the FPÖ entered the ruling coalition in Vienna as a junior partner to Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel's People's Party in 2000, however, Austria looked suspect in the eyes of the other EU countries—much to the surprise of the Austrian government and population. As with the Waldheim affair, FPÖ's success was interpreted very differently across sociocultural contexts inside as well as outside of Austria.[89]

Similar parties existed across Europe, but the presence of such sentiments in Austria was particularly sensitive. Haider had described Nazi concentration camps as "punishment centres," praised Hitler's "orderly employment policies," and referred to Waffen SS veterans as "decent men of character."[90] Consequently, the entrance of FPÖ into the government provoked widespread unease in Europe. On

84. Wodak 1991, 81, n. 6.
85. Bischof and Gehler 2006, 1–24.
86. See also Art 2006.
87. Wodak 1991, 65–83.
88. Falkner 2001, 1–20.
89. See Wiener 2007.
90. Happold 2000, 955.

25 January 2000, the Council of Europe passed a resolution registering its grave concern about growing support for extremist political parties in Europe and labeled FPÖ a party with "right-wing populist and Nazi sympathies." German Foreign Minister Fischer stated that "this is the first time an anti-European, xenophobic party with a very dubious relationship toward the Nazi past has come into the government of a member state."[91] The idea that EU membership implies reconsidering the past was openly rejected by FPÖ.[92]

Media across Europe depicted the entire country as "xenophobic"; Europe needed to "separate itself" from Austria, separating "us" from "them."[93] For the first time in EU history, diplomatic sanctions were imposed on a member state. On 4 February 2000, the Portuguese EU presidency issued a statement announcing that the fourteen EU states banned contacts or ambassadorial meetings at intergovernmental level, and Austrian candidates were not supported when EU international offices were assigned. The sanctions, orchestrated by France and Germany, also included a boycott of cultural exchange programs, school trips, and military exercises. Israel withdrew its ambassador for an unlimited period, and the United States recalled its ambassador "for consultations."[94]

The sanctions caused awkward diplomatic moments as various officials did their best to avoid their Austrian counterparts. At an EU summit meeting in Portugal in 2000, for instance, the usual group picture was avoided because various leaders, including French President Jacques Chirac, did not want to be seen standing next to Austrian Chancellor Schüssel.[95] Chirac's remarkable avoidance of physical contact with Schüssel demonstrates how a stigma is embodied even in micro-practices.

### *Stigma Management*

However, the EU sanctions were contested—not only by Austria but by smaller member states such as Denmark, which increasingly voiced their sympathy with Austria. At an emergency meeting on 1 February 2000, the European Commission argued that it would cut working relations with Austria only if it actually breached the EU treaties. Thus, legally speaking, the fourteen governments acted bilaterally, outside the framework of the EU treaties.[96]

Yet while the sanctions were more symbolic than practical, their announcement unleashed debate throughout Europe. Interestingly, both proponents and opponents appealed to shared democratic values and the moral foundations of Europe. Supporters of sanctions declared that Europe was a "community of shared values"

91. Suppan 2000, 57.
92. Leconte 2005, 626.
93. Howard 2000, 18–32.
94. Happold 2000.
95. Suzanne Daley, "Europe Lifts Sanctions on Austria, but Vows Vigilance," *New York Times*, 13 September 2000, A6.
96. Witte and Toggenburg 2004, 75.

(Joschka Fischer) and argued that it was necessary to clearly distance Europe from Austria and the "insulting, anti-foreigner and racist utterances of Jörg Haider" (EU Parliament President Nicole Fontaine).[97] This labeling served to strengthen the identity of the "audience of normals." Austria was to be stigmatized not merely because of what happened within Austria, but because Haider's rhetoric could contaminate the political debate and help support right-wing parties in "normal" states such as France, Belgium, and Germany.[98] Europe stigmatized Austria in order to "destroy the evil in our midst."[99]

Opponents, on the other hand, warned that the EU sanctions breached the treaties and were illegitimate. The sanctions went against "the fundamental right of each democracy to decide freely which parties its citizens can vote for and which of these parties should form the government," as *Die Zeit* declared and added: "A cabal of EU heads of government is determining whether the democratic decisions of the people are valid."[100] The treatment of Austria led to heated debate in all member states about the degree to which the EU should interfere in domestic politics. Chancellor Schüssel threatened to veto admissions of new member states into the EU until the sanctions were lifted. Inside Austria, government supporters questioned the loyalty of opposition and blamed "domestic traitors" for the sanctions imposed by EU14. Stigma needs moral resonance.

As stigmatization had become a source of mutual embarrassment, the (self-proclaimed) "audience of normals" had to find an exit strategy. The fourteen member states appointed a committee of "three wise men," headed by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari, to report on Austria's compliance with "common European values."[101] In September 2000, Ahtisaari, Spanish lawyer and politician Marcelino Oreja, and German Professor of Law Jochen Frowein proclaimed their "grave concern" about FPÖ.[102] However, their report partly removed the stigma imposed on Austria by concluding that the EU sanctions offended Austrian voters, strengthened FPÖ, and upset smaller EU nations that fretted about the Union's ability to interfere with their domestic politics. Moreover, the report noted Austria's commitment to common European values. The sanctions, the committee concluded, "have been effective and can now be lifted."[103] If this "effectiveness" was a thinly disguised diplomatic fiction, the Austrian reaction was undisguised triumph. The

97. Alessandra Stanley, "Europe Moving Cautiously in Punishment for Austria," *New York Times* (Internet ed.), 4 February 2000. Available at ⟨http://www.nytimes.com/2000/02/04/world/europe-moving-cautiously-in-punishment-for-austria.html?pagewanted=print&src=pm⟩, accessed 26 August 2013.

98. Musner 2000, 80–81.

99. Brandström, Bynander, and Hart 2004, 191–210.

100. Theo Sommer, "Contra—Bann Über Österreich?" *Die Zeit*, 1 July 2000, 15.

101. Happold 2000, 958.

102. Ahtisaari, Frowein, and Oreja 2000.

103. R.C. Longworth, "European Union Lifts Sanctions Against Austria," *Seattle Times* (Internet ed.), 13 September 2000. Available at ⟨http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=20000913&slug=4042119⟩, accessed 21 August 2013.

EU's sanctions were lifted in the autumn of 2000. The United States and Israel also resumed full bilateral cooperation.

Seven months after voting to isolate Austria, the other fourteen member states backed down, the Austrians openly relished their triumph and FPÖ remained in power. Belgium and France, who had feared electoral gains by right-wing parties, were harder to convince but ultimately followed suit. In the end, the fourteen countries declared victory by surrendering. The Austrian representatives had never fully accepted the stigma imposed upon them, insisting on belonging to the European community of values and rejecting stigmatization. Chancellor Schüssel said he was grateful for the report, but he also stated "this nonsense is over once and for all... It is a great success for Austria. It is a great triumph."[104] Haider told local television that "those who thought they could stamp us with the hallmark of a fascist, terribly evil party did not succeed."[105] Through such remarks, Austrian leaders rejected the labeling as unfounded and reconfirmed the self-perception of Austria as an innocent victim.[106] Labeling Austria may even have consolidated "deviant" behavior. After the election in 2008, two extreme right-wing parties controlled one-third of the seats in Austria's parliament.

Though the "sanctions" did little material damage to Austria, their psychological effect was lasting and profound. In Austria, they essentially ended the broad popular support that the EU had initially enjoyed in the country. Haider developed closer links with international pariah states—the in-group—including Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Muammar Gaddafi's Libya[107] and attempted to establish an alliance of European right-wing parties. The Haider affair reinforced simmering anti-Austrian prejudices, but it also fuelled euro-skepticism. With Haider's death in 2010, European right-wing populism lost an icon, not its appeal.

The Austrian case offers an eloquent example of how states reject stigma. The discussions on the legitimacy of the sanctions demonstrate how attempts to restore moral order may reveal uncertainty about the way normative order in international society should be upheld. In rejecting stigma, transgressive states largely draw on the same pool of treasured, yet ambivalent, principles from international law, sovereignty, and democracy as the "normal" states do.

In this specific case, stigma rejection helped to specify the rules and procedures upholding normative order in Europe. The complexities in the sanctions adventure led Austrian and other European leaders to require the rules to be specified to assure more certainty and predictability. Thus, the Lisbon Treaty (2009) specifies what it takes to be deviant and how to sanction and eventually exclude a member state from the EU if it breaches Europe's fundamental values, thereby reducing ontological insecurity and clarifying the nature of the EU as a normative order.

104. Ibid.
105. "Austria Welcomes EU Sanctions Report," *BBC News*, 9 September 2000.
106. Musner 2000, 83.
107. Emil Bobi, Michael Nikbakhsh, and Ulla Schmid, "Jörg Haiders geheime Geldgeschäfte mit dem irakischen Diktator Saddam Hussein," *Profil*, 7 August 2010.

In 2012, backed by this reinforced normative order, the European Commission launched legal proceedings against three controversial constitutional reforms in Hungary (affecting the independence of the central bank, the retirement age of judges, and the independence of the data protection authority). The European Commission claimed that these reforms lead Hungary in an authoritarian direction, away from the liberal democratic rules and norms of the EU. In the Austrian case, stigma rejection eventually paved the way for new disciplinary measures and specified the boundaries of the EU's normative order.

## Counter-stigmatization and the Boomerang Effect: Cuba

When managed in ways that serve to strengthen the position of the state, stigmatization does not necessarily imply a loss of status or exclusion. In fact, stigmatization can lead to empowerment, allowing the public mark of deviance to be transformed into an emblem of pride. Adopting the counter-stigmatization strategy, the stigmatized selectively devalue the performance dimensions that suggest that their group fares poorly and selectively value those dimensions on which their group excels. In other words, they turn vice into virtue.[108] When counter-stigmatization succeeds it may even have a boomerang effect, resulting in the stigmatizer becoming perceived as the transgressor.

Laffey and Weldes have claimed that "however much noise Cuba makes, it remains unheard, drowned out and spoken for by more powerful voices such as the United States."[109] But Cuba has not been merely unheard or dominated; Cuba may in fact have an impact on the international constructions of normality. I focus particularly on the post–Cold War period when Cuba lost its Soviet ally and ideological supporters but still continued to fight the stigma that the United States sought to impose upon it. President Barack Obama's initiatives in 2009 to soften the sanctions suggest that unsuccessful attempts at imposing stigma have backfired.

### *Stigma Imposition*

During the Cold War, Cuba was a Third World ally of the Soviet Union and a prominent member of the Non-Aligned Movement. It also became one of the states most targeted by the United States.[110] As a result of Fidel Castro's socialist revolution, the United States established an embargo on Cuba in October 1960 and broke diplomatic relations the following January. In 1962, the United States engi-

108. Crocker and Major 1989, 616.
109. Laffey and Weldes 2008, 561.
110. Weldes and Saco 1996, 361–95.

neered Cuba's expulsion from the Organization of American States (OAS) and instituted a total trade embargo on Cuba, which is still in force.

In the 1960s, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations expanded the trade embargo on a global scale to render the Cuban project unattractive as an economic and political model for the Third World. A secret memorandum by the US State Department offers a succinct statement of policy objectives: "All [United States] activities directed against free-world ties stem from the basic policy of isolating [Cuba] politically, economically and psychologically from the free-world to greatest possible extent."[111] The United States pressured its Western allies to stop trading with Cuba throughout the 1960s.[112] In the 1970s, there was a slight slackening of the embargo and Western countries were more reluctant to abide by it. In the 1980s, the United States tightened the embargo again under President Ronald Reagan.

Cuba survived largely because of its exports to Communist countries and generous Soviet subsidies.[113] Moreover, Cuba created allies with the Soviet bloc and engaged itself militarily and diplomatically throughout the Third World.[114] In Africa, Cuba supported seventeen leftist governments, sending thousands of troops to Angola. In some countries it suffered setbacks, such as in eastern Zaire, but in others it had significant success. Cuba's military involvement in Latin America was extensive. Cuba openly challenged US military and political power.

With the end of the Cold War, the Cuban economy shrank considerably, losing its aid and ideological support.[115] Meanwhile, the long-standing American embargo was reinforced in October 1992 as a result of the Cuban Democracy Act, and in 1996 following the Cuban Liberty and Democracy Solidarity Act (also called the Helms-Burton Act). The 1992 act prohibited foreign-based subsidiaries of US companies from trading with Cuba, any travel to Cuba by US citizens, and family remittances to Cuba. The Helms-Burton Act strengthened the penalizing of foreign companies trading with Cuba. Moreover, it continued the persistent labeling of Cuba as a "communist tyranny" separating "us" (the "community of democratic countries flourishing in the Western Hemisphere") from the "oppressed Cuban people":

> The Cuban people deserve to be assisted in a decisive manner to end the tyranny that has oppressed them for thirty-six years, and the continued failure to do so constitutes ethically improper conduct by the international community.[116]

While many countries initially followed the US strategy of isolating Cuba, the aggressive attempts at imposing a global stigma on Cuba in the 1990s proved futile.

111. Morley 1984, 30.
112. Ibid.
113. For a detailed account of the ties between the Soviet Union and Cuba during the Cold War, see Katz 1983, 88–112.
114. Linden 1993, 17–58.
115. Perez-Lopez 1991, 81–139.
116. US Congress 1996, Sec. 3, Art. 1; Sec. 2, Art. 27.

The United States desperately attempted to persuade dissenting governments to support the embargo, thus trying to mobilize an "audience of normals." President Clinton sent special envoys to Mexico City, Ottawa, and Brussels to convince other state leaders of the importance of Helms-Burton for US national security, but to no avail. "We object to the basic premise that the United States Congress can tell us and others how we must treat a third country," Canada's foreign affairs minister stated, summing up protests from countries that were supposed to be the US's closest friends.[117] The EU, in turn, complained that the act violated World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. To accommodate European criticism, Clinton suspended the controversial Title III (which gives US nationals and corporations the right to sue foreign companies that "traffic" in property expropriated from the United States entity after 1959), while boldly stating that the act demonstrated the "international community's resolve to end the dictatorship."[118]

In 2005, with the reelection of President George W. Bush, diplomatic tensions heightened. John R. Bolton, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, accused Cuba of maintaining a biological weapons program and argued that Cuba was a "national security threat to the US."[119] Many in the United States, including ex-president Jimmy Carter, expressed doubts about the claim. Bolton also identified Cuba as part of the "Axis of Evil," highlighting that Castro visited several US foes, including Libya, Iran, and Syria. The Cuban government denied all claims and accused the United States of engaging in state-sponsored terrorism against Cuba. Former Cuban Foreign Minister Perez Roque has called the embargo "an act of genocide," and Helms-Burton has provided powerful fuel for Castro's nationalist rhetoric and helped provide legitimacy for his regime.[120]

Thus, the United States may have ended up isolating itself. Canada and Spain have maintained consistent cordial relations with Cuba in spite of considerable pressure from the United States. Additionally, most of America's closest allies, including Canada, Mexico, and the EU, have passed retaliatory legislation that makes it illegal for their citizens to comply with the embargo. The Inter-American Judicial Committee decided that the act violated at least eight accounts of international law. In 2009, for the eighteenth consecutive year, the UN General Assembly condemned the embargo by 187 votes to 3. By aggressively stigmatizing Cuba, the United States has ultimately made itself the transgressive state.

### *Stigma Management*

In the new millennium, liberal-minded groups in the United States and Cuba have raised hope for a period of greater understanding. Many US citizens and policy-

117. Sanchez 2002, 353.
118. Quoted in Roy 2000, 125.
119. Bolton 2002.
120. Sanchez 2002, 358.

makers have found that Cuba has ceased to be a security issue.[121] At the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, Cuban President Castro and US President Clinton spoke briefly at a group photo session and shook hands. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan later commented: "For a US president and a Cuban president to shake hands for the first time in over forty years—I think it is a major symbolic achievement."[122] While Castro stated it was a gesture of "dignity and courtesy," the White House denied that the encounter was of any significance.[123] This revealed the level of tension that inevitably has spilled into every encounter between the stigmatizer and the stigmatized.

Beyond reacting with anger against the American sanctions, Cuban leaders have created a "separate system of honour" for the purpose of staying outside the discriminating identity system proposed by the United States.[124] Through symbolic signals and diplomatic maneuvers, Cuban representatives have engaged in domestic and international forms of counter-stigmatization. In 2004, for instance, Cuban authorities were infuriated when the US special interests section in Havana put up Christmas lights with a neon "75" as its centerpiece surrounded by traditional Christmas trees. The number was a direct reference to seventy-five Cuban dissidents detained by the Communist authorities in 2003 in a crackdown on the opposition. In retaliation to the US Christmas illumination, Cuba mounted pictures of US soldiers torturing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison onto billboards outside the US mission in Havana. The accompanying slogan proclaimed: "Fascists Made In USA."[125] This underlined the interactive nature of stigma that the United States has sought to impose.

Internationally, Cuba has created a role for itself as an international leader of a larger group: the economically destitute countries of Latin America with left-leaning governments. Through effective counterdiplomacy, Cuban leaders and diplomats have largely removed the US-constructed pariah status and have been regarded with admiration by leaders from Mexico, Venezuela, and Bolivia for standing up to the United States.[126] Despite having lost its major ideological support, Cuba has continued to play the role as socialist alternative. In 2004, Cuba was the founding member of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas. As part of this alliance, Venezuela delivered oil to Cuba, which in exchange sends medical staff and teachers to Venezuela.[127]

On 15 September 2006, Cuba officially assumed leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement while continuing its rejection of the United States, for example, by

121. Brenner, Haney, and Vanderbush 2002, 192–208.
122. Claudio Campuzano, "The Earth-Shattering, 'Delightful' Clinton-Castro Handshake," *World Tribune* (Internet ed.), 18 September 2000.
123. Ibid.
124. Kusow 2004, 188.
125. "Cuban Christmas Crisis," *CBS News*, 17 December 2004.
126. Fisk 2001, 106.
127. Azicri 2009, 99–110.

refusing to declare Iran in noncompliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.[128] Cuban diplomacy scored an even greater symbolic victory over the United States in 2008, when the Rio Group—a policy-coordinating bloc covering most of Latin America—welcomed Cuba as its newest member, delivering a pointed challenge to Washington's bid to isolate Havana. The Latin American leaders demanded an end to the US embargo on Cuba in an unprecedented joint declaration issued a month before Obama took office in Washington.

On 2 June 2009, after thirty-six hours of contentious discussions had revealed the isolated position of the United States, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton renounced all US conditions and accepted welcoming Cuba back into OAS. Castro, however, has constantly maintained that the island nation will not "be part of a disgraceful institution that has only humiliated the honor of Latin American nations."[129] Meanwhile, President Obama has openly admitted that US sanctions have failed to produce change in Cuba.

The Cuban experience illustrates that stigma as a social object cannot be created when its cultural and structural contexts are disjunctive. When the United States cannot produce an understanding of normality that can mobilize a broader group of countries, various forms of resistance become possible. This raises the question of who is stigmatizing whom. Counter-stigmatization reveals how difficult it is to stigmatize when there is no shared perception of what constitutes a threat to international society. If the United States continues to normalize relations with Cuba, it appears as though the initially stigmatized will have emerged as the winner. This would provide a striking example of counter-stigmatization and demonstrate how a subordinate, "weak" state actually has room to maneuver in international society. Stigma imposition leads to humiliating failure when sanctions do not discipline the stigmatized as much as they embarrass the norm entrepreneur. Through counter-stigmatization, Cuba has become a symbol of resistance to US imperialism and a pluralist international society.

## Conclusion

Faced with international shaming, states have gone to great length to improve their image by, for example, enforcing human rights, giving up the use of landmines, or apologizing for past crimes. The end of the Cold War and the breakdown of authoritarian regimes have contributed to the rise of international norm entrepreneurship. However, the past twenty years have also shown that international shaming does not always work. Even when there are clear material incentives to norm compliance as in the case of Cuba, Iran, or Belarus, international shaming and sanctions have no effect or may even reinforce norm violation. To

128. Ogilvie-White 2007, 472.
129. "Fidel Castro: OAS Is an Instrument of the US," *Prensa Latina* (Internet ed.), 7 May 2005.

explain how normative pressure sometimes fails to deliver the desired results, we have to look beyond norm diffusion and consider the process of stigmatization. The puzzle now shifts from why deviant states fail to comply with international norms to the meaning they derive from embracing their status as deviants. It becomes a question of understanding the role of national shame, pride, or anger in which continued norm violation makes sense.

**TABLE 2.** *Illustrations of stigma management*

| *Stigmatizer ("audience of normals")* | *The Allies* | *EU* | *United States* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Stigmatized state* | Germany | Austria | Cuba |
| *Labels* | "Nonfraternization," "dark history" | "Right-wing," "xenophobic," "threat to the democratic order" | "Tyranny," "communist," "terrorist threat" |
| *Instruments of stigmatization* | Military occupation, discrimination, deprive right to defense | Diplomatic sanctions | Economic and political embargo, discrimination, moral stamping |
| *Stigma management* | Stigma recognition, dealing with the past, self-reproach | Stigma rejection, denying being different from the "audience of normals" | Counter-stigmatization, accepting being different, turning the stigma against the stigmatizer |

My aim in this article has been to develop a theoretical framework for understanding stigma in international relations. I have shown that stigmatization contributes to the shaping of international society in a continuous manner. Each time international society censures some act of deviance, it sharpens the authority of the violated norm and reestablishes the boundaries of international society. Processes of stigmatization are lessons through which states teach one another what norms mean and how far they extend. Stigma helps ensure ontological security and moral cohesion. Thus, stigmatization can in itself, in controlled quantities, be a factor in maintaining international order. However, there is no automaticity in these processes. Just as normative suasion is not a one-way process, stigmatization is not unidirectional. States do not just accept being stigmatized; they develop a variety of ways to cope with their sullied identity. Stigma management usually perpetuates alienation and marginalization, but it sometimes succeeds in challenging estab-

lished understandings of normality. This gives room to unsettle and potentially transform the prevailing ideas of international society.

A focus on stigma has broader implications for IR theory. First, it resituates conventional approaches to the study of norms and socialization. Norms specify what it takes to be a normal state as opposed to the deviant state and thus prescribe particular forms of state behavior. Norm entrepreneurs do not merely induce states to follow certain norms; they also—and often at the same time—stamp certain states, groups, or individuals as deviant. For transgressive states, stigmatization can be a traumatic process that plays out in a reshaping of national self-esteem. Indeed, many of the norms that structure current international society are not learned through socialization, but internalized though stigmatization. Important elements in the foreign policies of Germany, Austria, and Cuba—and possibly a range of other countries—can thus be understood better as instances of stigma management than as the outcome of successful or failed socialization.

Second, stigma theory adds substantially to our understanding of a core issue in IR: the problem of international order. Stigma processes are central to the production of international society, helping the world hang together. Stigmatizing norm violators helps to show who belongs and who does not. Instead of seeing international society merely as a stable community, supported by shared values and norms, as IR theory—in particular the English School—tends to, it should be seen as a construction, which depends on stigmatization to ensure its ontological security and moral cohesion. Even though international society may be said to have a global extension today (and despite the sovereign equality of states), it continues to work through processes of exclusion and discrimination. Stigmatization constitutes an important source of information about the normative outlines of international order. Somewhat paradoxically, stigma is not a symptom of breakdown of international society, but rather a token of increasing social integration. Yet stigma can be resisted and stigma processes involve not only sustaining of order, but also create opportunity for rebellion.

The pattern of empirical findings adds substantially to our knowledge about norm diffusion. They suggest that international shaming is not likely to have the desired effects (norm compliance) unless the moral authority of the stigmatizer is accepted; stigma needs moral resonance. Moreover, stigma imposition requires substantial effort on the part of the stigmatizers because of the ambivalent norms that underpin an ultimately heterogeneous international society, as illustrated in the Austrian and Cuban examples. However, when a relative degree of consensus can be achieved between the norm abiders and transgressors about what is considered morally problematic (for example, the German Nazi past), stigmatization has a cathartic effect for deviant and normal states alike.

States cope actively with their deviance. Through stigma recognition, deviant states may even turn their stigma entirely around. The German post–World War II experience demonstrates the transformative potential of stigma management. The German example shows that the "norm-taker" may influence the normative order in ways that go beyond recent constructivist arguments about local norm reinterpretation and resis-

tance.[130] States may also try to pass as normals through stigma rejection, as the Austrian case suggests. Indeed, it is impossible to understand the radical difference between Austrian and German post–World War II behavior without taking stigma into account. Finally, as the US-Cuba case demonstrates, a stigma may be turned into an emblem of pride, creating a separate system of values. The attempt to impose stigma on another state may backfire so that the stigmatizer is ultimately perceived as the transgressive. However, counter-stigmatization requires a minimum of international political weight gained through economic strength or political allies. For instance, Cuba's independent value system was first backed by the Soviet Union and is now supported by several left-wing Latin American governments.

Stigmas will probably continue to proliferate with globalization and increased interdependence because these processes increase the likelihood of a shared sense of what is shameful. Yet the stigma processes examined here are linked to the post–World War II liberal world order, dominated by Western powers. Further research needs to be done to establish whether we will move still further in the direction of a more homogenous international society or whether we will see increasing differentiation in distinct audiences of normals in what could be seen as a post-Western international society. Will rising powers such as China, India, and Brazil constitute regional or global audiences of normals in the future? In that case, it is possible that the Western countries' foreign policies will be characterized by a new kind of shame. Further research could also examine the way in which domestic contestation and debate affect stigma management. Furthermore, future research could examine the involvement of nonstate actors. A constructivist or norm-oriented approach to international relations is incomplete without deeper theoretical insights into the conflictual process through which norms are produced, diffused, and rejected. Indeed, stigmatization—not just emulation, learning, and persuasion—is crucial to the ongoing production of normal state identities and behavior in international society.

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130. See Acharya 2004.

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