

The Role of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) on State Compliance with Environmental Regulations: A Critical Analysis

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*This paper critically examines the impact of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) on states' compliance with environmental regulations. In the face of urgent global ecological challenges, the role of INGOs in shaping state behavior and ensuring adherence to regulatory frameworks becomes crucial. This study's central research question is: **How do International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) effectively use naming and shaming strategies to influence state compliance with environmental regulations, particularly in the context of varying levels of economic development, democracy, and existing environmental agreements?** Acknowledging as influential entities, INGOs play a pivotal role in advocating for environmental protection and influencing states to comply with these regulations. This research aims to critically analyze the impact of INGOs on state compliance, focusing on both positive contributions and potential challenges within international environmental governance. Acknowledging a research gap about the long-term effects and sustainability of INGO-driven initiatives, this paper aims to address this deficiency. While existing research provides valuable insights, there is a prevalent focus on short-term impacts and immediate policy changes. The research design adopts a comparative case study approach, examining a chosen sample of countries representing diverse geographical regions and regulatory contexts. Employing a blend of qualitative and quantitative methods, the study leverages primary and secondary resources, including documents, reports, policy materials, and interviews. In summary, this research proposal presents a critical analysis of the role of INGOs in influencing state compliance with environmental regulations, guided by a central research question. The study seeks to contribute insightful perspectives, filling gaps in existing research and offering valuable knowledge for policymakers and environmental advocates. By scrutinizing the intricate dynamics between INGOs and states, the research aims to enhance our understanding of effective strategies for promoting global environmental governance.*

Keywords: INGOs, environment, compliance

Introduction

In today's world, where we face significant global issues like environmental damage, poverty, and political instability, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) play a crucial role. These organizations work across borders to push for policy changes, protect human rights, and tackle pressing problems such as environmental decline and social injustice. One key strategy they

use is called "naming and shaming," where they publicly call out individuals or groups for unruly behavior to pressure governments into following rules and agreements set by the international community. This study aims to fill that gap by looking at how INGOs' naming and shaming strategies influence governments to pass environmental laws. This paper will use both theories and real-life examples to understand how INGOs' public criticism affects what governments do about environmental issues. By looking at how environmental shaming campaigns interact with government actions and the introduction of environmental laws, we hope to learn more about how global environmental policies are shaped.

Using a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods, this paper will explore how INGOs' actions influence governments, what factors affect how governments respond to environmental shaming, and what this means for creating environmental laws. By understanding how naming and shaming drives government action on environmental problems, it can be better understood that the role INGOs play in global environmental efforts and find ways to make those efforts more effective. In summary, this study highlights the importance of INGOs in tackling environmental challenges and calls for further research to understand how they influence governments' compliance with environmental rules. By uncovering how INGOs' actions shape environmental policy making, we can develop better strategies for protecting the environment and promoting sustainability worldwide.

Background

Now, the global governance system is fractured, and our political landscape is characterized by populism, skepticism, and partisan competition. Conversely, the challenges we confront have reached unprecedented levels, including issues such as widespread poverty, environmental deterioration, terrorism, unchecked population growth, and global economic instability. Jeffrey Sachs contends that the fate of our global society in the 21st century depends on our ability to unite common objectives and practical strategies for achieving them (Ronalds 2012). International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are poised to play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges. While there are ongoing debates about the rightful role of INGOs in tackling global problems, they are rapidly expanding their involvement across various vulnerable sectors.

INGOs have emerged as prominent actors on the global stage, extending their reach across various regions and sectors to address critical issues (Mitchell 2003). The significant growth in the number of INGOs over the past fifty years is commonly attributed to factors such as decolonization, globalization, and the rise of global challenges (Edward 2010). Their contributions to advocacy for policy changes, promotion of human rights, and mitigation of global challenges like poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation are widely acknowledged (Carpenter 2017). INGOs have become indispensable partners in worldwide initiatives, significantly advancing sustainable development goals (Smith 2019).

In their multifaceted approaches, INGOs have demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in tackling diverse issues, ranging from environmental degradation to social injustice and humanitarian crises (Keck & Sikkink 1998). International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) operate within intricate networks of relationships spanning various actors such as NGOs, activists, experts, and sometimes governments across borders. Together, these networks form Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs), which collaborate to advance specific causes or issues globally. TANs harness their combined resources, knowledge, and influence to enact change (Barnett & Finnemore 2004).

One notable strategic approach employed by TANs is the Boomerang Model. In this model, local NGOs or activists facing challenges in directly influencing their own government due to limited resources or political constraints seek support from international NGOs or foreign governments. These external actors then advocate on behalf of the local NGOs or activists, effectively “boomeranging” their influence back to the local government. The Boomerang Model proves particularly effective in scenarios where domestic political conditions hinder local advocacy efforts, offering a means to navigate obstacles through external assistance and pressure (Keck & Sikkink 1998).

A notable example of the boomerang model in action occurred in Argentina during the 1970s and 1980s. Under military rule, widespread human rights abuses, including disappearances, prompted domestic outcry and the emergence of grassroots human rights organizations. Responding to domestic pressure and international scrutiny, Amnesty International documented these abuses in 1976, leading to increased pressure from governments like the United States, Sweden, Italy, and France on Argentina to cease human rights violations. This combination of domestic and international pressure contributed to a significant improvement in human rights practices, with a notable decrease in disappearances by 1979 and the eventual democratization of the country in 1983 (Keck & Sikkink 1998, pp. 103–110). Another example is Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières, MSF), a renowned INGO recognized for its medical humanitarian efforts, which has made significant contributions during the health crises in Europe. Amidst the refugee influx, particularly in nations like Greece, MSF delivered vital medical care, mental health services, and humanitarian aid to migrants and refugees facing dire circumstances. Through the deployment of mobile clinics, establishment of shelters, and extensive outreach activities, MSF ensured that vulnerable populations received timely assistance despite the challenges posed by the crisis and strained healthcare systems (Doctors Without Borders n.d.). Oxfam, an international NGO dedicated to combating poverty and injustice has played a significant role in Latin America. In countries like Guatemala, Oxfam has initiated projects focusing on enhancing agricultural methods and ensuring food security among marginalized communities (Oxfam International n.d.). These instances exemplify how INGOs contribute to addressing a wide array of challenges and fostering positive change across different regions, including Latin America and Europe. These examples illustrate how INGOs employ the Boomerang model, utilizing their skills,

connections, and resources to tackle local issues through collaboration with local actors and governments (Risse et al. 1999).

Another potent strategy employed by INGOs is naming and shaming, which involves publicly exposing instances of misconduct or violations of international norms (Simmons 2009). In the norms model of foreign policy, INGOs play key roles in both norm creation and the subsequent cascade of norms. Acting as norm entrepreneurs, INGOs continue to exert influence by publicly denouncing non-conformity through this method, thereby encouraging greater adherence to established norms. By publicly identifying and condemning individuals or entities responsible for undesirable behavior, INGOs aim to pressure governments to adhere to established standards and commitments (Florini 2017). This approach seeks to tarnish the reputation of offending actors and compel them to take corrective actions to avoid further scrutiny and condemnation (Hafner-Burton 2008).

The impact of naming and shaming on important security issues, such as human rights violations and environmental degradation, has been substantial (Zacher & Keefe 2016). Through this strategy, INGOs contribute to the deterrence of harmful practices and the promotion of accountability and transparency (Goodman & Jinks 2004). Naming and shaming during the Saffron Revolution in Myanmar (Burma) in 2007 had a notable impact. As protests erupted against the military junta's oppressive rule, international condemnation from INGOs and governments intensified, focusing on human rights abuses. This scrutiny resulted in heightened global pressure on Myanmar's government, leading to economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation. Consequently, the regime was compelled to implement some political reforms and release political prisoners, highlighting how naming and shaming can effectively influence change in certain situations (Esarey & Demeritt 2016). Again, the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh in 2013 exemplifies the impact of naming and shaming by INGOs. After the tragedy, INGOs like Human Rights Watch and Clean Clothes Campaign pressured multinational corporations like H&M, Walmart, and Gap to improve working conditions, leading to significant reforms in the garment industry.

INGOs naming and shaming is not limited to human rights violations, in recent years, environmental security has emerged as a priority area for INGOs, reflecting the increasing global urgency to address environmental challenges (Haas 2002). While there has been notable progress in terms of state compliance with environmental regulations, further research is needed to assess the specific impact of INGOs; naming and shaming strategies in this context (Gulbrandsen 2007). This paper aims to address this gap by analyzing the effectiveness of INGOs; and advocacy efforts in promoting state compliance with environmental regulations and fostering sustainable development.

INGOS Naming and Shaming and State Compliance with Environmental Regulations

INGOs are international groups of people from various countries who unite to tackle global issues. While they aren't linked to any government, they still wield considerable influence on governmental decisions. Historically, they have prioritized safeguarding human rights worldwide, contributing to positive changes for everyone's well-being and safety. Today, these organizations are playing a significant role in addressing environmental challenges, crucial for the future of our planet. They are dedicated to preserving the environment, ensuring clean air and water, and fostering a healthy ecosystem for current and future generations (Koliev et al. 2022). For example, Greenpeace has been working on protecting the environment by focusing on climate change, deforestation, and ocean conservation. The Worldwide Fund for Nature's impactful work in conservation spans from establishing protected areas to fostering sustainable practices among businesses, contributing significantly to the preservation of endangered species and habitats. Both the Nature Conservancy and The Environmental Defense Fund have been working for land and water conservation (Turner 2010).

Firstly, INGOs strategy of naming and shaming involves publicly exposing the shortcomings of government leaders, especially democratic leaders, through media campaigns, particularly concerning widely accepted environmental norms or formal international agreements like the Paris Agreement (Swed 2018). Instead of relying solely on economic sanctions, this approach primarily focuses on inflicting reputational costs. For example, environmental INGOs like the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Greenpeace, and Conservation International consistently advocate for proper regulations and openly criticize governments that fall short of fulfilling their international obligations. This method has been documented to cause reputational damage to state leaders, potentially resulting in consequences such as the loss of foreign aid, decreased foreign direct investment, and pressure from multinational corporations (MNCs). One study supporting the effectiveness of INGOs; naming and shaming approach is (Koliev et al. 2022).

Secondly, in addition to the reputation damage at international level and losing all the incentives, when state leaders are publicly named and shamed by INGOs, it often provides an opportunity for domestic opposition parties to leverage this information to exert pressure or mobilize public sentiment to advance their own objectives. This can manifest in various forms, such as utilizing the information to fuel their political campaigns, rallying public support behind specific policy agendas, or criticizing the incumbent government for its perceived failures on the international stage. Environmental INGOs like International Rivers and Amazon Watch played a pivotal role in rallying global opposition against the construction of the Belo Monte Dam in Brazil, citing environmental and social concerns. Through advocacy campaigns and media outreach, they spurred both international condemnation and domestic opposition, showcasing their significant influence in shaping environmental discourse.

Besides domestic opposition, INGOs naming and shaming amplify the effect and as a result other actors in the target states get engaged in pushing states to comply with environmental regulations. For instance, in 2021, Germany's Constitutional Court deemed the federal Climate Action Law inadequate, prompting immediate government action to amend the legislation. Prior to this ruling, environmental NGOs like Greenpeace and German watch had initiated legal proceedings against the German government and publicly voiced criticisms of German climate laws.

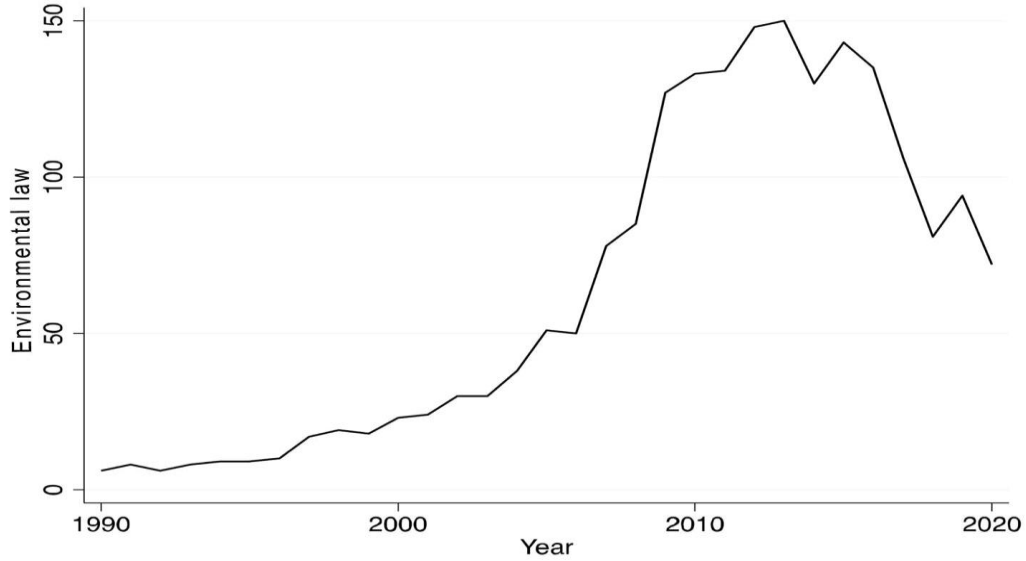
Ultimately to evade both international and domestic scrutiny, leaders are inclined to adhere to environmental regulations. Failure to do so may result in their removal from power. Consequently, this pressure motivates leaders to shift their stance on environmental issues and actively advocate for environmental security. Based on this discussion, I formulate the hypothesis:

INGOs naming and shaming significantly influence state compliance with environmental regulations.

Research Design

The Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, environmental laws, captures whether governments enact environmental laws (=1) or otherwise (=0) each year. This paper utilizes data from the Climate Change Laws of the World (CCLW) database, covering 1990–2020 and spanning over 190 countries (CCLW 2022). The database includes laws related to various environmental concerns, such as energy reduction, low-carbon energy promotion, and deforestation. This sample consists of many environmental law events. The trend shows a rise in laws until 2015, peaking in 2014 with 150 laws passed, followed by a decline. Top adopters include Germany, Italy, Brazil, Spain, and Ireland. Some countries, like Kuwait and Sudan, have fewer laws, while others, such as Burma and North Korea, have none. The database's limitations include a lack of qualitative distinctions among laws, such as strictness. This study provides a preliminary analysis of the link between environmental shaming and laws, with future research needed to explore the impact further.

Figure 1. Number of Environmental Laws Passed Per Year

Source: CCLW database 2022.

The overall data is stated in Table 1. This data is collected from the CCLW database 2022. Figure 1 shows the numerical number of average environmental laws and the percentage according to the regions over the world. It shows the highest level of passed environmental laws in Asia and the Pacific region and the lowest number in the Middle East and North African region.

Table 1. Distribution of Environmental Laws by Region and Corresponding Percentage Share of Global Environmental Legislation

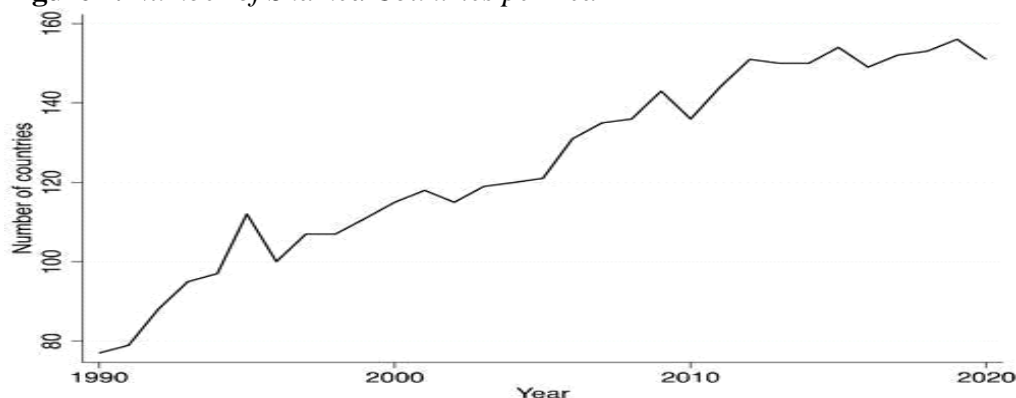
Region	Average Environmental Laws	Percentage
Asia and Pacific	293	22%
Western Europe & North America	271	21%
Sub Saharan Africa	247	19%
Latin America & the Caribbean	2391	18%
Eastern Europe & Central Asia	162	12%
Middle East & North Africa	103	8%

Source: CCLW database 2022.

In order to assess the hypotheses, an original dataset that captures the overall environmental naming and shaming by environmental INGOs has been used. To compile the dataset, a two-step process is followed. First, the identification of environmental international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) is done by using the Yearbook of International Organizations (YBIO), resulting in a sample of organizations focused on environmental issues (Hadden & Bush 2021). Secondly, to identify environmental shaming events by INGOs, environmental shaming events across 176 countries from 1990 to 2020 have been used. Notably, the number of countries targeted by environmental shaming has increased over time. Descriptive statistics reveal that wealthier and more populous countries, such as the US, Brazil, and China, are most frequently targeted. This paper also

incorporates a variable representing the number of international environmental agreements signed by governments to examine how this interacts with environmental shaming. It is anticipated that countries with more international environmental agreements ratified may be more responsive to environmental shaming due to reputational risks and their commitment to environmental issues.

Figure 2. *Number of Shamed Countries per Year*



Source: CCLW database 2022.

The list of topmost and least 10 named and shamed countries that have been collected from the CCLW database 2022 is stated in Table 2. It's quite surprising that the countries that should be more careful about implementing the environmental laws are highly shamed for not showing enough responsibility in enacting them.

Table 2. *Most and Least Shamed Countries*

Top 10 most shamed	Top 10 least shamed
USA	Tongo
UK	Moldova
Australia	Mauritania
Germany	Uzbekistan
France	Slovenia
Poland	Djibouti
India	Uzbekistan
Brazil	Yemen
Argentina	Serbia
China	Gabon

Control Variables

To assess the hypotheses, control variables like GDP per capita, environmental vulnerability, presence of domestic environmental NGOs are taken into consideration. A country's economic status may affect its capacity and inclination to enact environmental laws. Wealthier nations might allocate more resources to environmental protection or face different economic pressures influencing their

environmental policies. Besides, those countries that face heightened environmental vulnerabilities, such as susceptibility to natural disasters or possession of fragile ecosystems, may accord higher priority to environmental protection. This variable captures the unique environmental challenges countries face and their impact on policy making. On top of this, the existence and strength of domestic environmental NGOs can independently influence a country's environmental policymaking. Strong domestic advocacy may complement or bolster the pressure exerted by INGOs.

Empirical Analysis

Since this paper is interested in whether governments introduce environmental laws or not, the nature of the dependent variable is binary. So, the estimated model will employ logistic analysis. To control aggregate changes in both dependent and independent variables, year-fixed effects variables are determined. The findings from the logistic regression models are given below. This generated model is influenced by the article, named. “The Impact of INGO Climate Shaming on National Laws” (Koliev et al. 2022).

Table 3. Regression Results

Variables	Model 1	M 2	M 3
INGO climate shaming	1.000*** (0.000)	1.720*** (0.138)	1.481*** (0.138)
Democracy			3.110*** (0.896)
Climate agreements			1.09 (0.169)
Economic development			0.889 (0.172)
Trade openness			0.999 (0.001)
CO ₂ per capita			1.23 (0.351)
Federal			0.403** (0.163)
Urbanization			0.998
Constant	0.053*** (0.027)	0.020*** (0.011)	0.066* (0.103)
Year-fixed	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-fixed	No	No	No
Observations	3564	3564	2877

The initial two models present bivariate analyses using both the raw count and the logged version of the INGO climate shaming variable. These models aim to examine the relationship between INGO climate shaming and the outcome variable independently, without the influence of control variables. By conducting bivariate analysis in models 1-2, we can ensure that the main statistical inference remains unaffected by the inclusion of control variables in subsequent models. Model 3 introduces the full model, incorporating all relevant control variables along with the main variable of interest. Following the hypothesis, the results presented below indicate a significant and positive relationship between INGO environmental shaming and the enactment of environmental laws by governments. These findings are consistent across various model specifications, including the inclusion of country-fixed effects. To evaluate the conditional-effects hypotheses, the interaction of terms between the INGO environmental shaming variable and Democracy, Trade openness, and environmental agreements is done. The conditional marginal effects are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 (a–c). *Conditional Marginal Effects of INGO Climate Shaming (95% Confidence Intervals)*

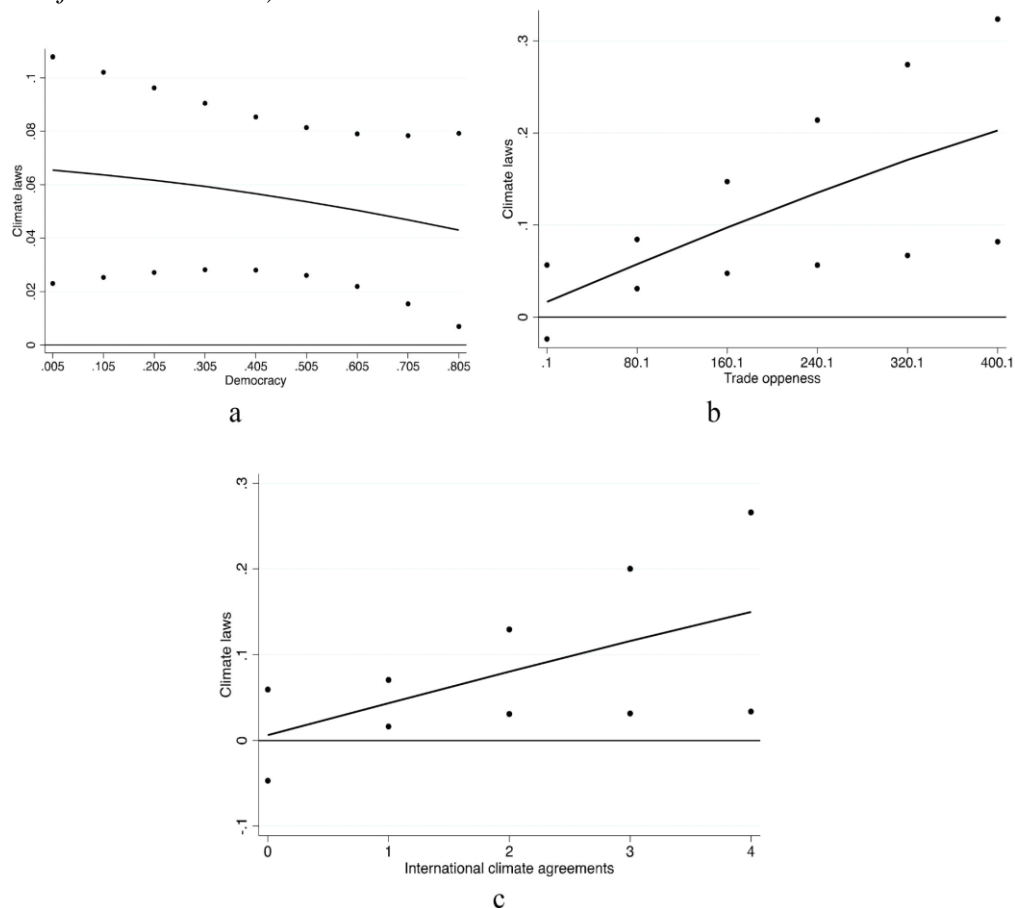


Figure 3 is collected from the regression analysis done by Koliev et al. (2022). The interaction between environmental shaming and democracy appears to have a

negligible negative influence on the likelihood of enacting environmental laws as governments become more democratic. Despite the individual positive effect of democracy on the probability of environmental legislation, Figure 3a indicates that shaming more democratic countries may have a negligible impact. Figure 3b shows that INGO climate shaming is more effective when governments are trade-dependent. Figure 3c suggests that the influence of climate shaming is influenced by the number of climate agreements a government has endorsed. This suggests that governments committed to climate initiatives may face constraints both domestically and internationally, making it challenging for them to maintain; their current stance on climate action.

Conclusion

Researchers emphasize the urgency of reducing reliance on fossil fuels to combat environmental change, stressing the need for governments to enact and enforce ambitious policies. However, recent events, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, have clouded the European Union's path towards renewable energy. Despite calls for stronger commitments, the EU's classification of natural gas as a “green fuel” hints at continued reliance on fossil fuels. This could undermine global efforts to meet the Paris Agreement goals. A study explores the impact of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on government climate policy through shaming campaigns. It suggests that such campaigns can influence governments to enact climate laws, but questions remain about the effectiveness of these laws. While governments may respond to reputational pressures, they may also prioritize minimizing costs and opt for less ambitious policies. This raises concerns about potential greenwashing rather than meaningful action. Future research should delve into the ambition and enforceability of national climate laws to better understand the effectiveness of climate shaming. By examining these factors, scholars can provide insights into when and how such campaigns can truly drive government action on climate change.

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