

## Abstracts

When one country or international organization makes accusations about violations of international law, the intended audience is often third party states who might support punishing the offender. When do these accusations persuade publics in those countries and when do they backfire? We show that reactions are consistent with a theoretical model that allows for both types of reactions, persuasion and backfire, depending on the audience member's prior beliefs and trust of the information source. We provide evidence from large survey experiments in four global swing states – India, South Africa, Turkey, and Indonesia. Swing states are where persuasion or backlash matter most, since allegations about international law could conceivably tilt their support toward the the accuser or the accused. In our survey experiments, when the International Criminal Court makes accusations that Russia violated international law, this persuades certain subsets of the population to support sanctions and assistance for Ukraine. When the United States makes an identical accusation, this fails to persuade, and often backfires, because of the United States' lack of credibility as an accuser. We further show how accusations affect perceptions of the accuser, not just the accused. We show a dynamic feedback loop, where information sent today can increase or decrease views of the credibility of the information source, which can magnify or mute the effect of future accusations. Accusations from the ICC improve respondents' views of the Court's credibility. Accusations from the United States further undermine its credibility