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Abstract

<The Double Bind of International Justice: Shorter Wars or Fewer Casualties?> How do overlapping international and domestic legal threats reshape the trajectory of civil wars? While scholars have long debated the "peace versus justice" trade-off, we lack an understanding of how rebels navigate simultaneous pressure from home governments and foreign jurisdictions. This paper introduces a theory of dual enforcement, arguing that the interaction between domestic and international accountability creates divergent strategic pathways for rebel groups. When rebels face robust international threats (e.g., International Criminal Justice or universal jurisdiction) but weak domestic enforcement, they are incentivized to settle; however, they intensify civilian victimization to maximize bargaining leverage before disarming. Conversely, when both domestic and foreign authorities impose high prosecutorial risks, rebels face a "double bind." Unable to secure impunity through flight or negotiation, they prolong the conflict while exercising restraint toward civilians to evade further scrutiny. Testing these claims on a global dataset of civil wars (1946–2023), findings highlight a tragic dilemma for international justice: the configuration of domestic and international pressures can facilitate shorter wars or minimize atrocities, but it rarely achieves both.