

**"The Power to Walk Away" -  
Transnational Rebels and Success of Peace Agreements<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

In contrast to interstate wars, civil wars end less often with a decisive outcome or a negotiated settlement, but remain in an unclear state without a stable solution. The type of conflict termination is ultimately a question of the balance of power between the combatants: If none is strong enough to overpower its opponent, pressure grows to find a compromise. Studies show, however, that conditions that encourage negotiations are not enough to guarantee the striking of a deal or its successful implementation. For this, the ability of the actors for a "credible commitment" is essential. If conflicting parties can draw on resources that allow them to easily withdraw from an agreement once it is struck, it should be not only less likely that this agreement will last but also that it will be set up in the first place. One such resource is the ability of rebels to cross national borders. Such "transnational rebels" are less able to credible commit, because they can hide on foreign territory and potentially return to fight another day. The presence of such groups should therefore exacerbate the problems of civil war solutions. This paper will test this assumption using relevant datasets on conflict resolution and transnationality of rebel groups.

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One seemingly defining characteristic of modern civil wars is that they are notoriously difficult to be decisively terminated. Compared with traditional wars between states, civil wars end less often with a military victory or a negotiated settlement, but very often just peter out and remain in an unclear state without a stable solution – ready to flare up again even after several years of inactivity. This is despite the fact that there has been no shortage, especially in the last two decades, of efforts to settle domestic warfare peacefully – negotiations are a ubiquitous feature of most civil wars and in more than one third of all cases even a formal agreement has been struck at some point (Harbom, Höghbladh & Wallensteen 2006: 622). Nevertheless, just about 25% of civil wars really terminate through a formal peace agreement (Kreutz 2010: 245f). Furthermore, post-conflict processes following peaceful settlements are infamously unstable and in danger of breaking down, with the country plunging back into civil war after a brief period of peace (Collier et al. 2003).

This paper seeks to contribute to the growing literature on the conditions under which civil war peace agreements are successful and stable by focusing on an aspect that has been mostly neglected in existing studies. These analyses often treat the civil war country and the interactions of its conflicting parties as a kind of closed policy-space. However, despite their defining moniker, many contemporary armed conflicts cannot be adequately described as being purely internal (Gleditsch 2007). Civil wars affect their neighbors through refugee flows (Gleditsch & Salehyan, 2006), disrupt legitimate and facilitate illicit trade through “shadow economic networks” (Juma, 2007), hamper the economic development of a region (Collier et al., 2003) and make conflict in nearby states more likely through demonstration effects (Forsberg, 2009) and by providing cheap weaponry (Killicoat, 2006). Many civil wars have also more direct international connections, as especially neighboring states often intervene in the conflict directly or

through the provision of support for one of the belligerents (Salehyan, Gleditsch & Cunningham 2011). Another feature of many seemingly domestic conflicts is a situation, in which rebel organizations do not limit themselves to the territory of their home state but deliberately operate across state borders, often with the explicit or tacit permission of their hosts. Such “transnational rebels (TNR)” (Salehyan, 2009: 6) use neighboring countries, where national security forces normally cannot follow them, as safe havens and staging areas, to recruit new soldiers and to resupply. This strategy allows even vastly outnumbered rebel actors to avoid being defeated decisively by the government army. For instance, after they were forced out of the country by the United States-supported Northern Alliance, the Afghan Taliban withdrew across the border to the inaccessible areas of Pakistan’s tribal regions. In addition to the safety of the rugged terrain the local system of *madrasa* religious schools provided them with a fertile recruiting ground for their later return to Afghanistan (Harpviken, 2006).

Research shows that the transnationalization of rebel actors in a civil war can have a major impact on that conflict: Conflicts involving transnational insurgencies tend to last longer and are less likely to end with a decisive victory (Salehyan 2007; Fürstenberg 2011). In this paper I argue moreover, that the use of external territory by rebel actors should also negatively affect the chances of success of a negotiated settlement, as they can always withdraw to their cross-border bases to fight another day when the situation seems more promising. There are three mechanisms by which this dynamic plays out: Transnational rebels are in a stronger military position, so they are likely to demand more concessions from the government than this is really willing to provide. Secondly, such groups face relatively low costs of returning to violence, as they can hide and preserve fighting capability in their secure cross-border bases. Finally, for the same reason they are less able to signal a credible commitment to the peace and gain the trust of

their government partner. All in all, I assert in this paper that the “geographic exit-option” of transnational rebels will make the failure of a signed peace agreement more likely. To test this, I combine data mainly from the UCDP Peace Agreements Dataset (Harbom, Höghbladh & Wallensteen 2006) on characteristics of peace agreements with data from the Non-State Actor Dataset (Cunningham, Gleditsch & Salehyan 2009) on characteristics of rebel actors.

### **Dynamics of Peace Processes**

In their most basic form, civil wars are traditionally defined as armed struggles between the government of a state and one (or more) non-state organizations (cf. Sarkees 2000; Gleditsch et al. 2002), which course is largely defined by the balance of power between the two parties (Butler & Yates 2009; Cunningham, Gleditsch & Salehyan 2009). If one side is significantly more powerful militarily, it will sooner or later achieve an outright victory or at least dictate unfavorable terms on its enemy in a settlement. In contrast to interstate wars, in which the opposing parties are essentially similar actors with principally the same – if differently capable – instruments and sources of power, in domestic conflicts the contestants are different in character. While the government can at least in principle draw on traditional security forces, financed from taxes, trade or development aid, rebels rely on local support and illegal activities. As rebel troops are usually inferior to their regular opponents (Mason & Fett 1996: 550), they mostly avoid open battles and use instead “a technology of military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerilla warfare from rural base areas” (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 75). This allows even weak insurgents to compensate for their material disadvantage and avoid a military defeat for potentially a long time.

If this is the case and neither the government nor the rebels can hope to achieve a victory in the foreseeable future, according to the bargaining model of war (Fearon 1995; Reiter 2003) both sides should try to find a negotiated settlement. However, as the costs for fighting a low-scale civil war can be relatively low, even without chances for a military solution many conflicts tend to drag on for a long time with low activity, becoming “protracted conflicts” (Nilsson & Kreutz 2010). This is especially likely when the conflict actors are part of shadow-economy networks and war economies, where they probably profit more from a conflict environment than from a peace even to favorable conditions. Such endemic civil wars lose intensity over time, but may never reach a meaningful resolution. In order to get to this, there needs to be a mutually hurting stalemate: “[W]hen the parties find themselves locked in a conflict from which they cannot escalate to victory and this deadlock is painful to both of them (although not necessarily in equal degrees or for the same reason), they seek a way out” (Zartman 2000: 228). The lower the (real or anticipated) costs of the conflict and the higher its (real or anticipated) benefits for either side, the lower the chance for such a “ripe moment” (Zartman 1989; 2000).

While this reasoning seems straightforward, in contrast to many peace treaties between states the settlement of civil wars is usually only the result of a long and painful peace process with ups and downs instead of a single point of decision (Walter 2002: 19f). While a ripe moment may force belligerents to the negotiation table, this first step is not at all a guarantee that an actual deal will be reached, implemented and be stable over a longer period of time. It is not even necessarily an indicator for a real desire to strike a deal: “Negotiations may be a tactical interlude, a breather for rest and rearmanent, a sop to external pressure, without any intent of opening a sincere search for joint outcomes (Zartman 2000: 227). It is also common knowledge that countries emerging

from a civil war are “Highly likely to experience another” (Mason 2001: 171; Walter 2004).<sup>2</sup> All phases of a peace process form part of the bargaining-space that determines whether for both parties “their subjective estimate of the utility of a negotiated settlement,  $U_s$ , is greater than their subjective estimate of the expected utility from continuing the conflict” (Mason & Fett 1996: 547). Unfortunately, the complexities of civil wars make it extraordinarily difficult even for rational actors to get accurate information and assess the situation correctly – they are consequentially very susceptible to bargaining failures (Walter 2009: 253f). Rebel parties may not be organized very tightly, conditions can change quickly and the lack of large-scale confrontations complicates the assessment of the military situation.

Moreover, even peace processes where the parties basically agree on a solution face a fundamental problem of uncertainty: “Negotiations fail because combatants cannot credibly promise to abide by the terms that create numerous opportunities for exploitation after the treaty is signed and implementation begins” (Walter 2002: 5). In contrast to interstate wars, where armies can demonstrable withdraw behind established borders, opponents of a civil war must live in the same country after the war, exacerbating the credible-commitment problem inherent in every bargaining process (Fearon 1995). Returning to peace is particularly difficult for the insurgent party in the conflict, because this usually entails their disarmament – by which they lose the means by which they extracted possible concessions from the government in the first place. In principle, nothing hinders a government to break their promises and destroy the rebels once they laid down their arms (Fearon 2004: 294). Opposition movements will therefore be inclined to keep a critical fighting potential as a guarantee – which in turn enhances suspicions on the government side. Mutual mistrust is naturally especially high immediately

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<sup>2</sup> Although Suhrke & Samset (2007) argue that the actual rate of civil war recurrence is actually much lower than commonly discussed.

after the signing of an agreement and peace processes must deal with this in this critical phase. There are generally two mechanisms “that help address commitment problems and thus reduce the chance of further warfare: *fear-reducing* and *cost-increasing*” (Mattes & Savun 2009: 738). Put it the other way round, the failure of an agreement is likely when there is enduring uncertainty – and consequently anxiety – about the intentions of the other side and the (absolute and opportunity) costs of taking up arms again are low.

The success of a peace agreement depends ultimately both on the provisions of the agreement itself and the conditions under which it was achieved and is to be implemented. Both have to influence the cost/benefit-calculations of the actors and mitigate the problem of credible commitment. It is usually extraordinarily difficult for the combatants to generate and maintain such mechanisms all by themselves – peace processes usually require at least some form of outside involvement (Walter 2002: 83-86). Third party mediation reduces information imbalance, exerts pressure on the belligerents or can provide material incentives. In the aftermath of a conflict, security guarantees by external actors, for example in the form of a robust peacekeeping operation, can reduce the fear of the parties and deter them from resuming the fighting. Of great importance are also the characteristics of the combatants: The cost/benefit-calculations of the opposing sides will largely depend on their military balance, even if neither can hope to achieve an outright victory. This can have paradoxical effects – while rebel organizations that are strong relative to the government can pressure the latter to negotiations and written concessions in the first place, their power is problematic in the phase of implementation as large and well-organized rebel armies are difficult to dissolve and reintegrate into society. Moreover, strong insurgents have a higher incentive to renounce their support for a treaty when they can hope to get better results after another round of

fighting, whereas weak rebels facing possible destruction are more likely to accept even modest terms. It is important to note here, that the military balance between the government and the rebels can be severely influenced by external factors, namely assistance from other states (Salehyan, Gleditsch & Cunningham 2011). Such support not only enhances the capability of rebel actors and in turn their potential to seek better terms after a settlement, but also complicates the bargaining environment by adding actors that might pursue interests of their own and are not necessarily just a “silent partner” to the rebels (Cunningham 2010). Regarding the government on the other hand, the political system is likely to have an influence on their response to a treaty (Walter 2002: 10). Democracies should be more likely to conclude and abide by an agreement, both because they have internalized peaceful modes of conflict regulation and usually face higher limits for the use of armed force than autocracies, for which the use of violence to oppress resistance is the default strategy. Democracies are also more transparent than autocracies, lending their words more credibility.

The characteristics of the conflict itself can also have different effects on the chances of success of a peace process. The expected utility of a continuation of violence has to be calculated relative to the aims of the opposing sides. Consequently, “the success or failure of peace negotiations depends on how easy it is for the combatants to divide the stakes over which they are fighting” (Walter 2002: 12). If the contested incompatibility is for example the total removal of the government, it would be pretty difficult for the party in power to agree to a compromise that entails their own dissolution and is therefore associated with costs that are prohibitively high. Conflicts over land short of outright secession on the other hand should be more likely to be resolved, as territory is easier and more verifiable to divide than central political power (Walter 2002: 61). A more complex influence has the devastation of the conflict so far: While a long and dead-

ly war raises the cost of its continuation, making negotiations and an agreement more likely, it also makes the post-conflict situation more difficult. “One reason wars are likely to recur is that fighting exacerbates many of the underlying economic, political and social factors that encourage war in the first place” (Walter 2009: 256). Conflicts result in an abundance of weapons, destroyed infrastructure and economy and a psychologically as well as physiologically damaged population. The continuation of violence can seem to be the only feasible option in a kind of such environment.

As described, the contextual circumstances of the peace process are important factors, but the success or failure of a peace agreement of course hinges essentially on the construction of the agreement itself. First and foremost it must address the key issues of the conflict itself in a meaningful manner, but it must also include provisions that make it more likely that the parties also abide by that compromise. While the former are probably rather idiosyncratic to specific conflicts, a few general assumptions can be made regarding the latter. As mentioned earlier, peacebuilding mechanisms have to reduce the mutual uncertainty about the behavior of the actors, increase the costs of breaching the agreement and enhance credible commitment. In order to achieve this, most treaties employ some form of power-sharing: “Former combatants require assurances that no single group will be able to use the power of the state to secure what they failed to win on the battlefield, and perhaps threaten the very survival of rivals. [...] By dividing and balancing power among rival groups, power-sharing institutions minimize the danger of any one party becoming dominant” (Hartzell & Hoddie 2003: 319). Sharing institutions not only ensures that no party is left power- and therefore defenseless after an agreement, but also reduces the ability of the actors to withhold information on their plans and capabilities. Moreover, especially in poor countries where access to state power is one of few reliable sources of income, power-sharing also creates material in-

centives for combatants to stick to a settlement. Different forms of power-sharing can be set up, but in addition to some form of access to political power the military dimension is of paramount importance. “The success of negotiations [...] depends on the degree to which combatants believe the entrenched elite will open up the political process even after rivals have demobilized” (Walter 2002: 27f). In the critical first phase after the signing of an agreement therefore, security guarantees should be even more important than access to the political system. In addition to external guarantees, the only way to do this is for the rebel party to keep (at least some of) their arms and the only legal manner in which this is possible is the integration of parts of the insurgents into the state security forces. This in turn gives the government at least some control and oversight, reducing their uncertainty and mistrust even if rebel troops haven’t yet fully demobilized. Finding a good compromise and the right balance of power-sharing is a difficult task even if only two parties are concerned – and it becomes increasingly more difficult, the more veto-players take part in the process. Multiparty-civil wars are much harder to resolve through negotiations than wars between just two parties, because “there is a smaller bargaining range of acceptable agreements [...], information asymmetries are more acute [...] and each actor has incentives to hold out to get the best deal as the last signer” (Cunningham 2006: 875f). Instead of negotiating a comprehensive agreement with all parties, certain actors could prefer to strike separate deals. While such dyadic agreements may not end the conflict as a whole, they should be more likely to hold than inclusive treaties where the risk is high that at least one of the rebel groups is not satisfied enough.

After this brief discussion of the main factors in the dynamics of peace processes, I now turn to transnational rebels and the way in which they influence this dynamics.

## **Transnational Rebels and the Success of Peace Agreements**

In this section I first briefly introduce the concept of transnational rebels before turning to the mechanisms by which they make it more difficult for a signed settlement to succeed in ending a civil war.

Transnational Rebels are generally defined as “armed opposition groups whose operations are not confined to the geographic territory of the nation-state(s) that they challenge” (Salehyan, 2009: 15). Transnational rebel groups and the conventional perception of civil war as a purely internal affair form an inherent contradiction. It seems surprising that this phenomenon has only recently attracted the attention of quantitative scholars, considering its magnitude: As Salehyan finds in his groundbreaking study, it is by no means a rare or novel event that non-state opposition groups organize transnationally – in fact in the last decades “a majority of rebel groups have utilized territory outside of their target state’s borders in mobilizing and sustaining their activities” (Salehyan 2009: 8). These extraterritorial operations can range from sporadic cross-border incursions to extensive campaigns or the establishment of permanent cross-border bases (Salehyan 2010b: 9). Access to external territory protects rebel groups from government security forces, helps with supplies and “provides the insurgents with a measure of control over momentum, enabling them to compensate for a temporary loss” (Staniland 2005: 25). Research shows that civil wars last longer when rebels have access to foreign territory, hence implying that such conflicts are more difficult to resolve than struggles playing out only on the surface of the state at war (Salehyan 2007; Salehyan, Gleditsch & Cunningham 2008; Fürstenberg 2010).

How do transnational rebels influence the dynamics of a peace process above described in a negative way? First of all, access to neighboring countries increases the military capabilities of insurgents. Because even weak states that are in reality not able to effectively control their borderlands insist on the international norm of sovereign territorial control, state security forces are principally confined by international borders. This makes it difficult for them to fight an adversary that slips back and forth over that very border, even when the host state not actively supports the insurgents. Cross-border incursions in pursuit of transnational rebels may provoke strong countermeasures, like border skirmishes between Thai and Burmese forces over Karen bases in Thailand (Salehyan 2010b: 14) or the mobilization of troops in Ecuador and Venezuela in reaction to an attack of Colombia on extraterritorial FARC-bases shows (Salehyan, 2010b: 7f). But not only would a strike against TNRs on foreign soil be a potentially dangerous violation of the host state's sovereignty. Government counterinsurgency operations in another country would also be hampered with operational difficulties resulting from unreliable intelligence, an unfamiliar environment and a possibly hostile local population. Moreover, unless the state decides to draw on the extreme measure of occupying foreign territory (as for example Israel did in 1982 to establish its Lebanese security zone), even successful cross-border strikes are unlikely to solve the problem for good (Salehyan 2010b: 5-6). To be able to use sanctuaries in neighboring states is therefore an immense tactical advantage, making their preferred mode of guerilla warfare even more effective. This is true especially for relatively weak insurgents that would probably not be able to secure safe bases in their home state. The Contra rebellion in Nicaragua for instance was never able to strategically control significant parts of their homeland and relied almost entirely on access to bases in Honduras (Salehyan, 2009: 126-144). Cross-border safe havens allow rebel forces to train, resupply and organize and stage new offensives with-

out the constant fear of a government attack. Refugee camps close to the border can be a potential source of protection and materiel for transnational rebels, the prime example being the former Hutu-militias that fled into then Zaire in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide and regrouped under the cover of the refugees into a new rebel organization determined to reconquer their home country (Prunier 2009). The often chaotic conditions in such camps can make it difficult for state governments to control rebel activities even if they want to, and allow rivals to support transnational rebels under a smokescreen of humanitarian assistance (Stedman & Tanner 2003). Insurgents are also not only able to hide in refugee camps but may use them as a fertile recruitment ground for so called “refugee warriors” (Zolberg, Suhrke & Aguayo 1989) who may have little other perspectives.

For these reasons, compared to purely domestic opposition groups, transnational rebels face a considerably lower risk of a potential conclusive defeat on the battlefield but by withdrawing to their external bases are able to outlast difficult times and prepare to fight another day. Paradoxically, this at first enhances the probability for the start of peace negotiations, as it signals the government that it is unlikely to quell the rebellion for good. It initially “open[s] up a bargaining space by providing rebels a credible threat and by making it more difficult for the government to prevail” (Salehyan 2007: 226). Opposition groups in general have a greater interest in formal negotiations than the government, because it is a form of recognition as a legitimate actor, especially when international mediators are involved. As long as rebels are able to keep their fighting capacity during the talks, it is also indeed “cheap” for them because “[t]he prospects for ending the conflict ultimately depends on [their] willingness to lay down arms” (Cunningham, Gleditsch & Salehyan 2009: 574). Both arguments pertain to transnational rebels in particular: Recognition as a negotiating partner in a national peace process can

counteract a possible impression of these groups as being detached from the local population or even an agent of foreign powers (Salehyan 2010a: 507), while their cross-border bases make it easy for them to continue being a serious threat.

Unfortunately, the same dynamics that make transnational rebels more likely to get to the table on the other hand exacerbate the difficulties for the later stages of the process. “Transnational Rebellions complicate the negotiation environment, making it more difficult to reach an acceptable agreement” (Salehyan 2007: 226). Firstly, they aggravate the problem of uncertainty, as information about their activities in neighboring countries are difficult to obtain for the government which is consequently less able to estimate whether and what kind of a deal would be worth striking and complying to. The rebels on the other hand, knowing (or at least perceiving the situation that way) that the government poses little credible threat to their very survival, have less incentives to agree to and honor a compromise that gives them just moderate concessions. Under these conditions, peace processes are prone to bargaining failure (Salehyan 2009: 47). This does not mean, however, that no actual treaties will be signed, but that these are probably not accurately reflecting the real positions of the actors. Such agreements are unlikely to survive, especially when the costs for the non-state side to restart the armed conflict is relatively low. Secondly, external bases aggravate the problem of credible commitment. Even if rebels are honest in their desire for a peaceful settlement, it is difficult for them to signal this willingness to comply in a credible way. Because of the lack of reliable information about activities in other states, governments simply cannot be sure that appeased rebels will really demobilize or just preserve their fighting capacity on foreign soil, able to reactivate it at any time (Salehyan 2009: 48f). As has been described, non-state actors take a considerable risk in disarming themselves, so in the absence of strong security guarantees they have a clear incentive to do just that. All in all, the inclu-

sion of foreign territory in a civil war works against all the mechanisms that are put in place make a peace agreement stable – it decreases the costs of returning to war exacerbates fear and suspicion and lowers the ability for credible commitment. Thus, the existence of transnational rebels should undermine the chances of success of a peace agreement.

H1: The failure of a peace agreement is more likely when rebel actors have access to external territory.

While sometimes transnational rebels may just exploit the inability of neighboring states to effectively control their periphery, quite often they indeed enjoy explicit or tacit hospitality from their host state's governments, which may have an interest in weakening a regional rival. That especially neighboring states support domestic insurgents short of committing troops is actually not an exceptional but a regular feature of internal conflicts (Harbom/Wallensteen 2005; Salehyan, Gleditsch & Cunningham 2011) and „[s]uch indirect support seems at least as important as direct intervention in ongoing civil wars” (Gleditsch 2007: 296). A quite common situation is that rival states, instead of facing each other off directly, support rebel groups in the other country to do the actual fighting (Brown 1996b: 597f). Effectively intervening in a conflict on the side of a rebel group through the provision of sanctuary can be a relatively cheap foreign policy instrument, substituting for interstate dispute behavior (Salehyan, Gleditsch & Cunningham 2011: 710). Insurgencies may even mobilize on their supporter's soil in the first place, as access to extraterritorial safe havens can be crucial especially in the early stages of a rebellion, because newly formed insurgent groups are still vulnerable to government repression (Salehyan 2009: 36). This tactic of deliberately building up an insurgent group as a proxy force is called “delegation” (Salehyan 2010a). Rebels are in this logic

primarily an agent of their government principal which hopes to pursue foreign policy goals through them. By shifting responsibility for the actual fighting to non-state actors, rebel patrons avoid potential costly interstate confrontations and violations of international norms. It is for instance widely known that Palestinian resistance groups fighting Israel were always sponsored by (among others) Iran and Syria. This indirect conflict tactic made it difficult for the superior Israeli forces to retaliate directly, as that would have started a full-blown interstate war. Both interventions and delegations reflect usually long-standing regional rivalries. It is especially prevalent in unstable regions, in which states are too weak to engage their enemy directly and may be plagued by armed opposition groups themselves. In addition to the aforementioned problems that transnational rebels cause for peace processes, the situation is in such cases made even worse as yet another, external veto-player is added to the bargaining framework (Cunningham 2010). States usually don't support rebel groups unconditionally – instead, "these resources almost always come with strings attached and reduce the autonomy of rebel organizations" (Salehyan 2010a: 507). Thus, peace negotiations are made even more complicated by the fact that one (or more) parties have an influence on the outcome that most of the times don't actually sit on the table. Moreover, as states seldom openly acknowledge that they grant foreign non-state groups access to their territory, information uncertainties are also made worse in such circumstances. Therefore, I expect that peace agreements are even more likely to fail when the access to foreign soil is the result of a deliberate decision by the host country.

H2: The failure of a peace agreement is even more likely when rebel actors are intentionally granted access to external territory by the government of that country.

## **Data and Research Design**

To test the proposed hypotheses on the connection between the failure of peace agreements and the transnationality of (one of) its rebel signatories I use the UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset<sup>3</sup> (Harbom, Höglbladh & Wallensteen 2006), supplanted with information coded from the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia<sup>4</sup> and data from the Non-State Actor Dataset (NSA) coded by Cunningham, Gleditsch & Salehyan (2009).<sup>5</sup> The Peace Agreement Dataset contains information about 148 treaties signed between the primary warring parties active in an armed civil conflict between 1989 and 2005.<sup>6</sup>

### *Dependent Variables*

In order to assess the success or failure of a negotiated settlement I use two criteria: A peace agreement is considered a failure if at least one of the parties withdraws its support to the agreement (specifically: “if the validity of the agreement is contested by one or more of the warring parties that signed” [Höglbladh 2006: 4]) and/or fighting resumes between the signatories within a certain period of time. The first variable is taken directly from the Peace Agreement Dataset (*ended*) whereas I coded the latter by manually inspecting the Conflict Encyclopedia.<sup>7</sup> I construct two dependent variables measuring different periods for which an agreement has to be stable: One denotes conflict activity within one year after the signature, essentially measuring whether the treaty had any impact at all, the other uses the common cut-off point of five years after the settlement (Walter 2002: 53) to account for the more long-time stability of the peace process. Both

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/ucdp\\_peace\\_agreement\\_dataset/](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/ucdp_peace_agreement_dataset/)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/database/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/eacd.html>

<sup>6</sup> In the Conflict Encyclopedia, peace agreements from 1975 onward are included, making for a total of 179 cases. Unfortunately, many of the relevant information on the specifics of the treaties are missing here.

<sup>7</sup> This was necessary because the Peace Agreement Dataset contains no indication whether fighting resumed (almost) immediately after the signing of the agreement.

variables are dichotomous indicators for treaty collapse and hence are submitted to a standard binary logistic regression to assess the factors that influence their outcome.

### *Independent Variables*

The suggested mechanisms of the two main hypotheses of this paper are represented in two variables that denote whether at least one of the rebel parties to an agreement had access to the territory of another state. Corresponding to hypothesis one, the first independent variable measures whether this was the case at all, regardless whether the host state provided this access willingly or not. I take this data from the Non-State Actor Dataset, which contains information on the characteristics of all rebel organizations that are part of one of the conflicts included in the UCDP Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002). Unfortunately, the unit of analysis in this dataset is not specific years but conflict-dyads, with just a very limited temporal dimension in the form of “dyad periods”. As no other, more precise source of data on this topic exists, I nevertheless used the respective variable by matching the year of the peace agreement to the corresponding dyad-period. It has to be kept in mind, that in this way it is not possible to say with certainty whether the conditions coded actually were still/yet present in the year of the agreement, although overall it can reasonably be assumed that they do not change that fast.

For the second predictor variable, representing the intentional state support of rebel groups by willingly granting them sanctuaries, I manually coded information on whether and what type of secondary support was given to an insurgent group from the Conflict Encyclopedia, which is available on a yearly basis.<sup>8</sup> Both variables are dummies, denoting whether at least one of rebel signatories enjoyed external bases/external support through granting access or not in the year of a given peace agreement.

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<sup>8</sup>This information has been systematically published in the meantime in the UCDP External Support Dataset, [http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/ucdp\\_external\\_support\\_data/](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/ucdp_external_support_data/).

### *Control Variables*

All other variables included in the analysis represent the general dynamics of peace processes described in the second section of this paper: Information in the Conflict Encyclopedia was used to code whether rebels received any material external support instead or in addition to the provision of safe havens. The military strength of insurgents is assessed relative to the government on a five-point scale, where 1 marks much weaker, 3 equally strong and 5 much stronger rebel groups (if more than one rebel group participated in the agreement, the strongest actor is coded). This variable is taken directly from the Non-State Actor Dataset. The political system of the government is represented in a binary dummy indicating whether the country in conflict was a democracy according to the Polity IV-data (scoring 5 or better on the combined democracy-autocracy-scale). The total costs of the civil war are proxied by the total amount of battle-deaths, taken from the Conflict Encyclopedia, for the divisibility of conflict stakes I state whether a conflict is about territory as opposed to government.

All remaining predictor variables, representing features of the peace negotiations and the final agreement itself, are dichotomous dummies that were already included the Peace Agreement Dataset: The stabilizing influence of outside parties and security guarantees is tested by indicating whether any third party had a role in the negotiations at all and whether the agreement contained provisions for a peacekeeping operation in the post-conflict phase. I proxy the complexity of the arrangement by indicating inclusive agreements that try to integrate all parties to the conflict in one settlement. Lastly, I measure the two most relevant dimensions of power-sharing through one variable stating agreements that include provisions for an integration of rebel troops into the national army and another which regards the sharing of political power in a new government.

Table 1 summarizes descriptive statistics for the variables included in the analysis, along with the expected direction of effect regarding the failure of peace agreements:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Expected Sign</i>
Failed within 1 Year	163	0	1	.49	.50	
Failed within 5 Years	163	0	1	.51	.50	
Access to External Territorial	148	0	1	.63	.48	+
Access to External Territory with Consent of Host	163	0	1	.20	.40	+
External Military Support to Rebels	149	0	1	.22	.42	+
Rebel Strength	135	1	5	2.37	.92	+
Democracy	162	0	1	.23	.42	-
Territorial Conflict	163	0	1	.23	.42	-
Total BD	163	28	118965	9750.25	17511.6	+
Third Party Mediation	163	0	1	.77	.42	-
Inclusive Agreement	148	0	1	.58	.49	+
Integration in Army	148	0	1	.36	.48	-
Power Sharing	148	0	1	.15	.36	-
PKO	148	0	1	.23	.42	-

As can be seen, about half of all agreements fail, with the rate within one or five years very similar. More than 60% of rebel groups that signed a peace treaty had access to foreign territory – a proportion higher than what Salehyan found, although that may be the result of a selection effect, as transnational rebels are less likely to be defeated and therefore more likely to enter in negotiations. In contrast, just to a fifth of insurgents were extraterritorial bases willingly granted, slightly more received some other form of military support (a figure that is surprisingly small). On average, rebel movements are slightly weaker than government troops, although this is probably biased by a few very

strong groups. About a quarter of all conflicts played out in democracies or was about territorial goals. The involvement of third parties is now a common feature in peace processes, almost 80% of all agreements were achieved under the auspices of international mediators. In contrast, in just under 25% of agreements external actors committed to a peacekeeping operation. Surprisingly low are also the figures for military and political power-sharing – possibly reflecting a large number of agreements that concerned themselves with specific aspects of the peace process.

### **Empirical Results**

Table 2 on the following page presents the results of the logistic regressions. For both independent variables, three models were constructed. The first step of the analysis estimates the influence of the control variables only, while the second and third models include the indicators for access to external territory in general and access granted as part of an effort to support the rebels, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

Beginning with the basic control models, some similarities but also substantial differences between an immediate failure and a more long-term instability of a peace agreement are evident. In both scenarios, military material support to a rebel party by an outside state is significantly and strongly related to a higher risk of agreement breakdown, with the coefficient being even slightly higher for the five-year post-conflict period. This result corroborates existing research on the matter - external actors play an important role in seemingly domestic conflicts, even if they do so through indirect means. Rebel strength is also consistently significant and positive in both scenarios – the stronger the non-state party is, the higher the risk that a settlement will fail.

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<sup>9</sup> Because both variable obviously correlate high with each other, it is not possible to include both in the same model.

Table 2: Logistic Regression

	<i>Failed within one year</i>			<i>Failed within five years</i>		
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
N	131	130	131		130	131
<i>Access to External Territorial</i>	-	<b>1.27</b> (.456)**	-	-	<b>1.28</b> (.461)**	-
<i>Access to External Territory with Consent of Host</i>	-	-	<b>1.22</b> (.704)^	-	-	<b>1.47</b> (.723)*
<i>External Military Support to Rebels</i>	<b>1.39</b> (.580)*	<b>1.36</b> (.673)*	.93 (.602)	<b>1.84</b> (.623)**	<b>1.91</b> (.727)**	<b>1.32</b> (.631)*
<i>Rebel Strength</i>	<b>.67</b> (.292)*	<b>.97</b> (.343)**	<b>.71</b> (.302)*	<b>.76</b> (.299)*	<b>1.08</b> (.358)**	<b>.81</b> (.31)**
<i>Democracy</i>	.08 (.551)	.48 (.587)	.14 (.546)	.38 (.553)	.78 (.598)	.45 (.545)
<i>Territorial Conflict</i>	<b>-1.33</b> (.497)**	<b>-1.99</b> (.549)*	<b>-1.21</b> (.506)*	<b>-1.01</b> (.502)*	-.86 (.551)	<b>-.87</b> (.511)^
<i>Total BD</i>	5.11 (.000)	.000 (.000)	5.19 (9.85)	3.11 (.000)	8.78 (.000)	2.55 (.000)
<i>Third Party Mediation</i>	-.36 (.536)	-.29 (.536)	-.41 (.542)	.36 (.529)	.47 (.532)	.32 (.531)
<i>Inclusive Agreement</i>	-.76 (.597)	-.92 (.591)	-.81 (.611)	<b>-1.10</b> (.595)^	<b>-1.27</b> (.591)*	<b>-1.16</b> (.614)*
<i>Integration in Army</i>	<b>-1.33</b> (.581)*	<b>-1.39</b> (.567)*	<b>-1.37</b> (.597)*	<b>-.96</b> (.577)^	<b>-1.02</b> (.567)^	<b>-1.01</b> (.591)^
<i>Power Sharing</i>	-.44 (.624)	-.11 (.658)	-.45 (.617)	-.44 (.628)	-.12 (.658)	-.44 (.623)
<i>PKO</i>	-.59 (.609)	-.94 (.657)	-.73 (.637)	-.97 (.648)	<b>-1.40</b> (.718)*	<b>-1.17</b> (.681)^
<i>Constant</i>	-.33 (.921)	-3.69 (1.57)*	-2.02 (1.43)	-1.15 (.924)	-5.31 (1.632)**	-3.58 (1.451)*
Chi2	21.72*	22.79*	20.48*	16.89^	19.48*	16.99^
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.147	0.186	0.162	0.140	0.182	0.161

robust standard errors in parenthesis

^ p &lt; 0,10 \* p &lt; 0,05 \*\* p &lt; 0,01 \*\*\* p &lt; 0,001

As expected, the chances for a success of the agreement are better when the civil war is fought about territorial rather than governmental goals (albeit this apparently wears off a bit over time, as demonstrated by the lower coefficient in the fourth model), whereas regime type has just as insignificant an effect than the total costs of the conflict proxied through total battle-related death.<sup>10</sup> Surprisingly, the presence of third parties at the peace negotiations also is consistently insignificant across models. This is probably due to the fact that some external actor is involved in some form in almost every peace process now, reflecting the bigger concern of the international community with the resolution of civil wars in the last two decades (Mattes & Savun 2009: 737). More specific accounts on *which* third parties play *what* role at negotiations are needed to explore this issue further. Just as unexpectedly, political power-sharing, often quoted as the most important condition for peace, is also insignificant. In and by itself, institutional arrangements not underpinned by security measures are not sufficient to alleviate the problems of credible commitment and uncertainty (see Hartzell & Hoddie 2003: 330). This is demonstrated by the in contrast significant and strong stable effect of provisions calling for an integration of rebel forces into the regular army, which reduce the risk of a breakdown of the settlement substantially.

While all of these results basically apply to both the failure of agreements within either one or five years after the signature, two variables show variation in this regard: Being both insignificant in the period immediately after the conclusion of peace, the inclusiveness of an agreement and the prospect for a peacekeeping operation decrease the risk of a recurrence of civil war in the medium term.<sup>11</sup> The latter is not surprising, considering that forces need time to deploy and start their mission in earnest. This points to

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<sup>10</sup> For future research, more precise measures of conflict costs specifically for the signing parties should be employed.

<sup>11</sup> The PKO-variable just borders on the 10%-level of significance in model IV. Interestingly, both inclusiveness and PKO are more significant in the models including the main independent variables.

the conclusion that it is really the deterring presence of peacekeepers on the ground that is relevant, rather than just an abstract provision for a mission that may even never come to pass. The former finding is more puzzling, as it goes against the expectations raised in the theoretical section. In the long run, inclusive agreements indeed are *more* stable than dyadic agreements, suggesting that the tactic of buying of rebel actors one by one is inferior compared to a difficult but ultimately more promising comprehensive peace process.

Models II, II, V and VI now test for the hypotheses put forward regarding a negative effect of transnational rebels on the prospects for a successful peace agreement. First, every form of extraterritorial access is considered. This variable proves to have indeed a robust, significant and strong positive influence on the risk of failure of a negotiated settlement, both in the short and medium to long term, and supports therefore the reasoning put forward in this paper. Considering only cases in which the access to foreign bases is the result of a deliberate decision by supporting host governments, the results are a bit more mixed: For the first dependent variable this indicator is barely significant, although quite strong coefficientwise, while it seems to have a more significant effect for the recurrence of civil war. The provision of sanctuary as a form of external support is relevant for the prospects of success of a peace treaty, but not more so than the effect that transnational rebels have in general and with less reliability. The following table demonstrates the substantive effects, using first differences for the binary independent variables and holding all other at their mean.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Calculated with CLARIFY (King, Tomz & Wittenberg 2000).

Table 3: First Differences

	<i>Failed within one year</i>	<i>Failed within five years</i>
<i>Access to External Territorial</i>	.299 (.088-.485)	.311 (.112-.506)
<i>Access to External Territory with Consent of Host</i>	.274 (-.035-.511)	.312 (-.015-.534)

95%-confidence intervals in parenthesis

Effect sizes for all specifications are pretty similar: With transnational rebels being part of a peace agreement, the risk of its failure is about thirty percent higher than otherwise. Also, the values of the aforementioned control variables stay more or less the same when the independent variables are included, suggesting that transnational rebels exert an independent effect not accounted for in traditional models. All in all, the results of this analysis confirm the basic hypothesis that external bases of rebel organizations make it harder to resolve the conflict through peaceful means, by rendering negotiated agreements more likely to fail.

## Conclusion

This paper addressed the issue that studies on the resolution of civil war through negotiated peace agreements often overlook the many transnational connections these civil wars have. In particular, I argued that the use of external territory by rebel groups aggravates all the difficulties (uncertainty, low cost for violence, credible commitment problems) that plague peaceful settlements anyway. The results of the logistic regression analysis confirm that this is the case and transnational insurgencies increase the risk for the failure of an agreement in a significant, substantial and independent way. I also demonstrated that this is true both for the phase immediately following the signing

of an agreement and the longer stabilization phase, in which transnational rebels are positively related to the risk of civil war recurrence.

These findings strongly suggest that this phenomenon has to be addressed in peace processes in a meaningful way. The regional context of a civil war has to be taken into account at the negotiating table and relevant neighboring actors have to be included. Transnational rebels depend on the at least tacit benevolence or weakness of their host states – if those states can be persuaded to stop their support or are enabled to do something about unwanted foreign fighters, they lose their ability to hamper the peace process more than domestic groups. While in many scenarios this is difficult due to long standing rivalries and a lack of acknowledgement of state-support, the example of the sometimes contentious, but ultimately successful cooperation between India and its neighbors about the extraterritorial bases of Indian guerilla movements shows that it can be done (Salehyan 2010b: 29-36). The international community faces a special responsibility here to exert pressure on the regional actors. Moreover, more direct measures to monitor and hamper illegal cross-border movements should be put into place. As Beardsley (2011) has shown, peacekeeping operations can play an important part in reducing the risk of conflict diffusion. Border surveillance could be made an effective part of post-conflict peacebuilding, if actors are prepared to commit appropriate resources, for example in the form of drones, to it.

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