

What Determines The Implementation of Civil War Peace Agreements?

Written by Anurug Chakma

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ANURUG CHAKMA, AUG 16 2020

Since the end of the Second World War, a total of 231 intrastate armed conflicts have been fought (Harbom, Högbladh and Wallensteen, 2006). Between 1945 and 1999, 2.3 civil wars broke out globally on average every year on, whereas only 1.85 civil wars came to an end in the same period (Cited from Fearon, 2004). Negotiated peace agreements have ended 12 percent of these intrastate conflicts, while 54 percent were resolved with military victories during the Cold War. The landscape of global conflict has drastically changed following the collapse of the Soviet Union (Lounsbury and DeRouen Jr., 2018) as intrastate peace agreements have surged by five times the amount in the post-Cold War world (Badran, 2014). Interestingly, peace agreements have addressed conflicts over power-sharing in government, as opposed to disputed territorial conflicts (Harbom, Högbladh and Wallensteen, 2006).

There is an increasing amount of scholarly literature that is devoted to the study of the implementation of peace agreements (Jarstad and Nilsson, 2008). What should be highlighted is that the implementation process requires several years and decades, and, in many cases, peace negotiations break down before achieving key implementation objectives (Joshi, Lee and Mac Ginty, 2017). More than half of those 105 countries that signed peace agreements between 1945 and 2013 have relapsed into violence (Caplan and Hoeffler, 2017), and 40 percent of civil war-affected countries return to war after a decade of signing peace accords (Collier, Hoeffler and Soderbom, 2008) as can be observed in Indonesia, Burundi, Iraq, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and Iran. This global context of civil war peace agreements can be explained through the question of why government turnover, measured with leader turnover and ideological turnover (Horowitz, Hoff and Milanovic, 2009), reduces the implementation of peace agreements in some countries but not in others.

The article is structured as follows. The first section begins with the background of the study, while the second section surveys existing literature to explain what political factors influence the implementation of peace agreements. The third section suggests an avenue for future research on the nexus between government turnover and the implementation of peace agreements, whereas the final and fourth section concludes the article by providing a summary of the entire discussion.

Past Research

Negotiated settlements can break down as a result of a lack of trust, government misjudgement of rebel capabilities, and rebel fears of government commitment (DeRouen Jr, Bercovitch and Wei, 2009). Violence returns in the post-settlement stage when incentives for violence are available, the grievances of people are unmet, the commitments of signatories are unaddressed, human rights violations continue and ex-combatants are not provided sustainable livelihoods nor social and psychological support (Aghedo, 2013). This implies that the implementation of peace agreements is a multi-dimensional issue that relies heavily on built-in-safeguards, third party intervention, and state capacity to uphold peace, to name but a few.

Previous studies suggest that all civil war peace agreements are dissimilar in nature, mandate and design (Lounsbury and DeRouen Jr., 2018). On average, civil war peace agreements contain seven structural and six

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procedural provisions concerned with political reform, self-determination, transitional justice, security sector reform, judicial reform, human rights protection, rehabilitation of displaced peoples, security guarantees, verification mechanisms, third party involvement, and many other considerations (Badran, 2014). The success of a settlement is directly related to the design of the agreement (Cited from Blaydes and Maio, 2010) and the inclusion of political, territorial and military power-sharing provisions (Hoddie and Hartzell, 2003).

It is estimated that 158 peace agreements have included territorial power-sharing provisions in the form of autonomy (Wise, 2018). Territorial power-sharing can extend peace in the post-agreement phase, while military power-sharing has no significant effect on the duration of peace (Hoddie and Hartzell, 2003). Glassmyer and Sambanis (2008) explain that the poorly structured and incomplete military integration (MI) agreements are mostly associated with peacebuilding failures. On the contrary, Joshi, Lee and Mac Ginty have focused on three types of built-in safeguards of peace agreements – transitional power-sharing provisions, dispute resolution and verification mechanisms – that increase the implementation of peace agreements by more than 47% (Joshi, Lee and Mac Ginty, 2017).

Some studies concentrate on the commitment of both signatory and non-signatory groups (Bekoe, 2005) in observing the actual commitment of governments towards a previous peace agreement, as witnessed in Burundi (Joshi and Quinn, 2016). Kirschner (2014), Kyadd and Walter (2002) argue that mistrust and fear can create a commitment problem on both sides, which Toft has described as a 'flawed implementation' (Toft, 2009). Sometimes, involuntary defections might halt implementation of peace agreements.

Earlier studies have also focused on the importance of the peace-justice debate. Two kinds of post-conflict justice – procedural justice and distributive justice – contribute to forging a durable peace by generating trust between conflicting parties (Wagner and Druckman, 2017). Hence, peace is impossible to attain if the issue of justice is neglected, as occurred in the case of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of Sudan (2005), which exempted those responsible from war crimes (Zambakari, 2013).

On the other hand, Wise (2018) adds that peace agreements sometimes exclude and marginalize non-dominant ethnic groups that results in the exclusion amid inclusion (EAI) dilemma, creating an in-built flaw within the territory's system of self-governance. Jana, Werner and Piia (2018) have broadened the inclusion-exclusion scholarship from a gender perspective. Their research shows that, between 1990 and 2014, women have signed only 13 peace agreements out of 130 cases (Jana, Werner and Piia, 2018). Several scholars, including Thania Paffenholz (2014) and McGregor (2006), argue that the durability of peace agreements relies on broader support from civil society, which is composed of voluntary organizations and groups, such as religious institutions, women's organizations, and human rights groups (Krznicaric 1999; Orjuela, 2003). Nilsson (2012) finds that the inclusion of civil society is expected to reduce the risk that agreements collapse by 64%.

The presence of a spoiler in the phase of peace agreement implementation is also a danger inherent to peace processes (Shedd, 2008). Stedman (1997) has divided spoilers into limited, greedy and total spoilers, who fall under two broad categories: inside and outside spoilers. Greenhill and Major (2007) add another group – latent spoilers – who go back on their commitments when they see potential success in confronting rather than cooperating with opposition parties. In their quantitative research on *para-government militia* (PGM) spoilers, Christoph, Janina and Sabine (2018) find that the risk of renewed fighting increases by 64% when a PGM are active in the post-agreement period.

On the other hand, Toft (2009) argues that security sector reform (SSR) should be given top priority so to tackle the 'greed' and 'fear' of belligerent motivations. In other words, sustainable post-conflict peace remains elusive if ex-rebels are not properly reintegrated into their societies. In this regard, the Niger Delta (Nigeria) is a good illustration of how the poorly implemented disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program by the government reinforced insecurity in the everyday lives of citizens (Aghedo, 2013).

There is also a large body of literature on third party intervention. The period of 1945–1992 experienced 39 cases of interventions directed towards governmental reform as the primary goal (Cited from Maekawa, 2019). Beyond the agenda of governmental reform, many countries are currently involved in peacebuilding projects, including projects in

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Nepal and the Philippines (Ochiai, 2016). Apart from interventions by powerful states, 21 international organizations (IOs) between 1945 and 2010 have played three kinds of peace-brokering roles – *mediation*, *economic sanctions* and *peacekeeping* (Lundgren, 2016).

According to Fortna (2008), the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force, as a third party intervening agent, has a pacifying effect, being a symbol of security, neutrality and transparency. UN missions can strengthen weak institutions and provide security in the absence of functional security forces (Maekawa, Ari and Gizelis, 2019). Third party interventions can equally reduce the fear of rebels among the populace, and thus reduce the prospect of rebels compromising the peace agreed upon (Hoddie and Hartzell, 2003). However, third parties as the custodians of peace can deter signatories from becoming spoilers if their power (to coerce or co-opt) is at least greater than the larger party and ideally greater than the combined power of all the conflicting parties (Greenhill and Major, 2007). In the implementation phase of peace agreements, there should be a focus on three key issues: adequate funding for the reintegration process, facilitation of inclusive political partisanship, and development of local government institutions (Bekoe, 2005).

On the contrary, however, several scholars have focused on regime type and the implementation of peace agreements. In their study of 83 peace agreements (1989–2004), Jarstad and Nilsson (2018) find that democracies and autocracies do not reveal any statistically significant differences in implementing all types of power-sharing pacts. This being said, non-democratic regimes are more likely to confront the risk of post-war peace failure (Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2014), while military regimes among non-democratic regimes are less likely to experience peace (Mason and Greig, 2017).

Another stream of previous research contends that state capacity is one of the prime factors influencing the onset of conflict and conflict recurrence, since weak states are unable to suppress anti-state rebellions (Mason and Greig, 2017). For instance, the United Kingdom and Indonesia, as relatively strong states, are better able to implement peace agreements vis-à-vis weaker states, such as Burundi, Mali, and Somalia (DeRouen Jr. et al., 2010). DeRouen Jr. and Bercovitch (2008) have termed this as 'the state capacity-durable peace nexus'.

Avenues for Future Research

In the existing scholarly literature, 'the effects of government turnover' on the implementation of civil war peace agreements is still under-researched, although previous studies claim that government turnover is a big issue for policy continuity (e.g., Imbeau, Pétry & Lamari, 2001; Tavits and Letki, 2009; Potrafke, 2011; Blum and Niklas, 2019) since two distinct forms of government turnover – leader turnover (change in the ruler) and ideological turnover (change in the ruler's political ideology) – are common characteristics of all those countries researched (Horowitz, Hoff and Milanovic, 2009).

Leader turnover is generally associated with whether a peace agreement will survive following a change in government. Ryckman and Braithwaite (2017) argue that insider leader turnover, (that is when leadership changes in the same governing coalition), facilitates the implementation of peace agreements for three reasons. Firstly, insider leaders are familiar with the policies of the previous leadership. Secondly, they want to maintain the reputation of their previous leaders. And thirdly, rebels have an understanding concerning the behaviour of insider leaders.

In contrast, outsider leader turnover, (that is when a completely new governing coalition comes to power), obstructs the progress of a peace agreement, because outsider leaders play the role of 'shadow veto players' (Ryckman and Braithwaite, 2017). Kauffman argues that outsider leaders do not have enough information about the peace process at hand, making it harder for them to decide when to end the war (Cited from Ryckman and Braithwaite, 2017). Mansfield and Snider (1995) assert that some political leaders, motivated by personal gain, come to power with a war agenda. Moreover, they fear losing the next election when their hawkish domestic and international supporters withdraw their support from the government.

There is also another scholarly line of inquiry that investigates the effects of ideological turnover on the implementation of peace agreements. According to Wolford (2007), new governments tend to be reluctant in

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implementing agreements of the predecessors, particularly when the ideological orientation of a sitting statesman is different from that of the previous regime. Danzell (2011) has stated that right-wing governments are more likely to narrow democratic space and push left-wing and marginalized political parties towards conflict. Similarly, Clare (2014) finds that supporters of left-wing parties are more dovish and willing to punish leaders who take a belligerent stance, whereas a right-wing electoral base reward aggressive policy.

However, this being said, previous studies are incomplete in their understanding of why, how and when government turnover affects the implementation of civil war peace agreements. To date, scholars have overlooked a number of plausible explanations in explaining the implementation of civil war peace agreements, i.e. the level of influence of leaders, the degree of outsider leader turnover, the early outsider leader turnover effect, the composition of the government, and, importantly, ideological turnover on the left-right spectrum. These plausible explanations could be the subject of further study.

Conclusion

What factors determine the outcomes of peace agreements? Does the failure of peace agreements stem from flawed terms of agreements, commitment problems, unmet grievances of rebels, or futile security sector reform? Does the risk of post-war peace failure result from the exclusive design of agreements, lack of post-war justice, undemocratic political regimes, or the absence of third-party interventions? A number of theoretical perspectives ranging from commitment theory and the spoiler model, to the peace-justice framework, political regime and leadership theories have been developed to explain why some peace agreements relapse into violence while others continue for a long time.

The scholarship on civil war peace agreements is relatively rich for its methodological pluralism and qualitative-quantitative evidence. Here, scholars have used large-N datasets, small-N case studies, and mixed method research to examine the role of peace agreements in terminating civil wars across both territory and temporality. Despite the enormous theoretical and empirical progress in understanding intrastate peace agreements, the existing scholarly literature has overlooked one fundamental question: What is the marginal effect of government turnover on the implementation of civil war peace agreements whilst controlling for other confounding factors, such as conflict duration, political system, state capacity, third party intervention and security sector reform?

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