

# Designing Transitions from Civil War

Barbara F. Walter

## Demobilization, Democratization, and Commitments to Peace

**W**hy do some civil war negotiations succeed in ending conflict whereas others fail? Combatants in seventeen of the forty-one civil wars that occurred between 1940 and 1990 initiated formal negotiations designed to end their fighting.<sup>1</sup> In eight of the seventeen cases (47 percent), the adversaries signed and implemented successful peace settlements. In nine other cases (53 percent), however, they returned to war. (See Table 1 for the list of cases.) The fact that combatants were almost as likely to resume hostilities once they initiated negotiations as they were to sign and implement a settlement is striking for two reasons. First, despite all the impediments to cooperation, combatants involved in almost half of all peace negotiations did succeed in ending their conflict off the battlefield. Second, despite the high costs of fighting, including the possibility of elimination on the battlefield, more than half of all combatants involved in negotiations chose to return to war.

To date, most scholars and policymakers have assumed that civil war negotiations fail because the combatants have no interest in working together, they

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*Barbara F. Walter is Assistant Professor, Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies, University of California, San Diego, and Research Director for International Security at the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California. The Ford Foundation supported this work through a grant to the Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University. A version of this article will appear in Barbara F. Walter and Jack L. Snyder, eds., Civil Wars, Insecurity, and International Intervention (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming).*

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1. I coded civil wars as having had "negotiations" if factions held face-to-face talks and issues relevant to resolving the war were discussed. These qualifications eliminated scheduled talks that never took place, meetings where no substantive issues were deliberated, and talks that excluded key participants. I also attempted to apply a "good faith" proviso and exclude those meetings where one or both participants were obviously unwilling to yield on important issues. Although sometimes difficult to determine, certain actions did signal whether or not faction leaders honestly wished to cooperate. Their readiness to accept supervision, make public announcements of important concessions, discuss the details of a transfer of power, and participate in lengthy negotiations all generated costs to the groups involved and indicated more than a tactical interest in appearing to be cooperative. To say that a civil war experienced "negotiations," however, does not imply that groups would not willingly defect if they could benefit from cheating. "Negotiations" simply indicate that they were willing to consider an alternative to war.

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**Table 1. Civil Wars Ending between 1940 and 1990 In Which Peace Negotiations Were Initiated.**

Civil War <sup>a</sup>	Negotiations <sup>b</sup>	Signed Settlement <sup>c</sup>	Outcome <sup>d</sup>
<b>No Settlement Was Reached or Signed</b>			
Vietnam (1960–75)	Yes	No	Decisive victory
Nigeria (1967–70)	Yes	No	Decisive victory
Jordan (1970)	Yes	No	Decisive victory
Nicaragua (1978–79)	Yes	No	Decisive victory
<b>A Settlement Was Reached or Signed but Not Implemented</b>			
Greece (1944–49)	Yes	Yes	Decisive victory
China (1946–49)	Yes	Yes	Decisive victory
Laos (1960–75) <sup>e</sup>	Yes	Yes	Decisive victory
Chad (1979–87)	Yes	Yes	Decisive victory
Uganda (1981–87)	Yes	Yes	Decisive victory
<b>A Settlement Was Signed and Implemented</b>			
Colombia (1948–58) <sup>e</sup>	Yes	Yes	Successful settlement
Lebanon (1958)	Yes	Yes	Successful settlement
Yemen (1962–70) <sup>f</sup>	Yes	Yes	Successful settlement
Sudan (1963–72)	Yes	Yes	Successful settlement
Dominican Republic (1965)	Yes	Yes	Successful settlement
Zimbabwe (1972–79)	Yes	Yes	Successful settlement
Lebanon (1975–76)	Yes	Yes	Successful settlement
Nicaragua (1981–89)	Yes	Yes	Successful settlement

<sup>a</sup> Conflicts were classified as civil wars based on the coding criteria proposed by J. David Singer and Melvin Small's *Correlates of War* project. See Singer and Small, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars, 1816–1980* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1982).

<sup>b</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>c</sup> If the combatants signed an agreement that attempted to address each other's war aims, that conflict was coded as having led to a "signed settlement." Settlements that only included terms for a cease-fire, the withdrawal of foreign troops, or amnesty for combatants were not considered "settlements" because they did not attempt to deal with the difficult issues that had ignited the war. These agreements could better be described as temporary measures to halt fighting, allow foreign states to exit gracefully, or present a coup de grace to losing parties. In this way, I distinguished those settlements that aimed to resolve the underlying conflict from those that did not.

<sup>d</sup> The outcome was coded as a "decisive victory" if one side could convince its opponent(s) to cease fighting without their demanding any major concessions in return. Although it is fairly common for even decisive military victories to end with some form of "negotiated" agreement, it is important to distinguish between treaties negotiated by groups who could continue military resistance and those treaties imposed after one side had already won the war. Wars were coded as ending in "successful settlement," therefore, only when three criteria were met. First, a treaty had to be jointly drafted by all combatants through give-and-take bargaining. Second, the agreement had to keep the opposition intact as a bargaining entity. Third, it had to end the war for at least five years. If a formal peace treaty was signed but broke down within this time period, it was considered a failed attempt, and the outcome in these cases was coded on the basis of the eventual military results.

<sup>e</sup> Small and Singer broke both the war in Colombia and the war in Laos into two phases.

<sup>f</sup> Yemen was an unusual case where the warring factions bargained for and agreed to a very specific political and military peace settlement that remained unwritten. Technically, therefore, there was no physical document to sign.

do not want to compromise their goals and principles, or they cannot resolve underlying conflicts of interest. But a close examination of the failed negotiations reveals that in a majority of these cases combatants were able to resolve their underlying differences and agree on a compromise settlement. The Communists and the Nationalists in Greece, for example, held formal talks in 1945 and eventually signed the Varkiza agreement. The three rivals in Laos met eight times between 1961 and 1972, ultimately signing an agreement in 1973. Uganda's government signed a peace accord and a powersharing agreement with rebel forces in December 1985. Four separate conferences of "national reconciliation" were held between the government in Chad and the guerrillas, two of which ended in signed settlements: the Kano agreement of March 1979 and the Reconciliation accord of August 1979. Even Chinese Communists and Nationalists met three times between 1938 and 1949 and eventually agreed to establish a democratic coalition government and a fully integrated army. The truly puzzling issue then is not why civil war combatants are unable to agree on a compromise settlement, but why they would resume fighting after one had been reached.<sup>2</sup>

I argue that resolving the underlying issues over which a civil war has been fought is not enough to convince the combatants to accept and implement a peace settlement. To end a civil war through a negotiated settlement, the combatants must clear a much higher hurdle: designing credible guarantees on the terms of the agreement—a task made difficult without outside assistance. The biggest challenge facing civil war opponents at the negotiating table therefore is not how to resolve issues such as land reform, majority rule, or any of the underlying grievances that started the war. These are difficult issues, but they are not the most difficult. The greatest challenge is to design a treaty that convinces the combatants to shed their partisan armies and surrender conquered territory even though such steps will increase their vulnerability and limit their ability to enforce the treaty's other terms. Groups that obtain third-party security guarantees for the treacherous demobilization period following the signing of an agreement, and internal political, military, or territo-

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2. Throughout this article, I treat both the government and the rebels as if leaders on each side represent a homogeneous group with unitary interests. In reality, the interests of a group are often diverse and transitory, and leaders frequently preside over fragile coalitions whose internal politics dictate behavior. Nonetheless, this assumption is justified because I argue that *even if* leaders are fortunate enough to preside over a group in complete agreement on behavior, they will still encounter difficult commitment problems. For an article that specifically addresses how the internal politics of a group can affect decisions to negotiate or fight, see Barbara F. Walter and Andrew Kydd, "Extremists, Uncertainty, and Commitments to Peace," unpublished paper, University of California, San Diego, or University of California, Riverside, September 1998.

rial guarantees, will implement their settlements. If an outside state or international organization is not willing or able to provide such guarantees, the warring factions will reject a negotiated settlement and continue their war.

In the first section of this article, I explore a number of current explanations for why civil war negotiations might break down. In the second section, I argue that civil war peace negotiations frequently fail because combatants cannot credibly commit to treaties that produce enormous uncertainty in the context of a highly dangerous implementation period. In the third section, I illustrate the importance of credible commitments to the success of a peace treaty by examining Mozambique's 1990–92 negotiation process. Also, I briefly review some of the other successful settlements. In the final section, I discuss the implications that the credible commitment theory might have for policymakers interested in the problem of persistent or recurrent civil war.

### *Possible Explanations for the Breakdown of Negotiations*

To date, no study has addressed the question of why civil war adversaries might walk away from negotiations and return to war. Still, a number of explanations have been offered for why this might be so. These can be divided into two "camps": those that claim negotiations fail because combatants are only stalling for time before returning to war rested and resupplied, and those that claim combatants might want to reach a compromise but cannot strike a mutually acceptable deal.

#### COMBATANTS DO NOT WANT TO REACH A SETTLEMENT

A compelling and popular camp argues that civil war negotiations often fail because competing factions are not serious about making concessions. As Donald Horowitz has argued, "Not all leaders in ethnically divided states want to promote accommodation."<sup>3</sup> Domestic groups might negotiate, but for reasons unconnected to obtaining real peace: they might be under pressure from outside patrons who demand that their "client" participate in a peace process; they might need to satisfy citizens weary of war; or they might simply stall for time. After failed negotiations in 1974, a leader of Zimbabwe's rebel faction proclaimed that "the Prime Minister is just playing for time, he wants the

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3. Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 564. See also Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 1997), pp. 5–53.

whole problem to drag on until he reaches his retirement age.”<sup>4</sup> Groups might also have strong incentives to feign interest in negotiations for reputational reasons. Leaders who are intent on absolute victory must cater to world opinion if they hope to obtain foreign aid once established in power; being considered belligerent could reduce their final reward. In short, civil war adversaries have many strategic reasons to participate in talks and sign settlements they have no intention of supporting.

#### COMBATANTS CANNOT AGREE ON A SETTLEMENT

A second camp asserts that negotiations could fail as the result of an imperfect bargaining process where civil war combatants aggressively pursue individually rational bargaining strategies that backfire, leaving everyone worse off. Four problems in particular could make reaching an agreement difficult even if both sides sincerely wish to settle: (1) combatants cannot agree on how to divide the stakes; (2) both place an equally high value on winning the war, leaving little room for compromise; (3) each has strong incentives to withhold or misrepresent private information they have regarding their own military strength or staying power; or (4) they commit to demands from which they cannot back down.<sup>5</sup>

INDIVISIBLE STAKES. Negotiations might fail if the rebels and the incumbent government cannot divide the stakes in a mutually agreeable way. As Paul Pillar has written, “If the stakes are chiefly indivisible, so that neither side can get most of what it wants without depriving the other of most of what it wants, negotiations are less apt to be successful. Stakes are usually less divisible in civil wars than in other types of war.” This makes settlement less likely.<sup>6</sup>

THE VALUE OF WINNING THE WAR. Negotiations might not succeed if both the rebels and the government place an equally high value on winning the

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4. Quoted in Goswin Baumhoegger, *The Struggle for Independence: Documents on the Recent Development of Zimbabwe (1975–1980)* (Hamburg: Institute of African Studies, Africa Documentation Center, 1984), vol. 2, p. 7.

5. Much exciting research is being done in the area of strategic barriers to successful negotiation in international relations. See especially James D. Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer 1995), pp. 379–414; and David A. Lake, *Entangling Relations: American Foreign Policy in Its Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

6. Paul Pillar, *Negotiating Peace: War Termination as a Bargaining Process* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 24. For similar arguments, see Fred Ikle, *Every War Must End* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 95; George Modelski, “International Settlement of Internal War,” in James Rosenau, ed., *International Aspects of Civil Strife* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964); and R. Harrison Wagner, “The Causes of Peace,” in Roy Licklider, ed., *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

war, causing them to bargain overaggressively. Sometimes this strategy works, producing a better deal for the more determined party. But if both sides simultaneously pursue this approach and hold out for equally exceptional offers, no overlapping bargaining range will emerge, and the combatants could find themselves fighting long after it was mutually rational to settle.<sup>7</sup>

PROBLEMS OF INCOMPLETE INFORMATION. Negotiations might also fail if combatants withhold important private information about their own relative power, making it more difficult to develop a compromise solution.<sup>8</sup> Civil war adversaries have many reasons to be less than truthful during negotiations. For instance, they have incentives to claim that they are better supplied, more willing to return to war, and less willing to compromise than their opponent because the longer a group can hold out, the more likely it can convince its enemy to capitulate. But misrepresenting one's strength, although individually rational, could have the unintended consequence of motivating groups to fight much longer than they would if this information were public.

Groups might also withhold private information if they believe that it could later be used against them. Rebels, for example, might be reluctant to reveal their true strength because this would force them to bring guerrilla forces out of hiding, divulge secret weapons depots, or possibly disclose strategic weaknesses. This information might facilitate a settlement, but could also leave them vulnerable to attack. Given this choice, groups might prefer to guard their secrets even if this might generate a protracted and seemingly irrational war.<sup>9</sup>

IRREVERSIBLE COMMITMENTS. Negotiations are also unlikely to succeed if both sides have attempted to enhance their bargaining leverage by committing to strong demands from which they cannot back down.<sup>10</sup> This could be done, for example, by stirring up popular nationalistic sentiment in support of certain demands. This bargaining tactic would allow a leader to announce

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7. See James D. Fearon, "Bargaining, Enforcement, and International Cooperation," *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 269–305.

8. See Roger B. Myerson and Mark A. Satterthwaite, "Efficient Mechanisms for Bilateral Trading," *Journal of Economic Theory*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (April 1983), pp. 265–281; James D. Morrow, "Signalling Difficulties with Linkage in Crisis Bargaining," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (June 1992), pp. 153–172; and Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War."

9. Ironically, even if groups were willing to divulge this information, their incentive to misrepresent these facts (which is understood by both sides) would make even accurate information suspect.

10. This is similar to the bargaining strategies that Thomas C. Schelling discusses in *Schelling, Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966), chap. 2. See also Vince Crawford, "A Theory of Disagreement in Bargaining," *Econometrica*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (May 1982), pp. 607–637. My thanks to John McMillan for pointing this out.

credibly that “I’d like to make a concession, but my followers won’t let me.” If both sides employ this tactic, no settlement will result.

#### UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Each of these arguments seems quite plausible. In certain cases, civil war combatants have no real desire to negotiate and simply go through the motions because outside pressure, military considerations, or reputational concerns encourage them to do so. In other cases, adversaries cannot find a middle ground on which to base a solution. But explanations that fall into the first camp say little about the conditions under which groups will sign and implement settlements, and explanations that fall into the second camp cannot account for why so many settlements fail even after mutually acceptable terms have been reached. Clearly, negotiations in many of the cases listed in Table 1 were not permanently waylaid by any of the bargaining problems listed above. In short, arguments that view the problem of civil war resolution as one of insincerity or of “bargaining” help elucidate why some groups might walk away from the negotiating table. They do not, however, explain why in so many cases negotiations broke down despite the existence of a signed settlement.<sup>11</sup> The following section presents a theory for why more than half of all civil war negotiations between 1940 and 1990 failed.

#### *Combatants Cannot Credibly Commit to or Enforce an Agreement*

Combatants who are able to resolve their underlying issues will still return to war if credible, enforceable guarantees on the terms of their agreement cannot be arranged. Once the underlying issues are resolved, negotiations become a search for guarantees that combatants will be protected as they demobilize and that they will not be permanently excluded from a new government once they have done so.

Resolving a civil war requires much more than reaching a bargain and then instituting a cease-fire. To be successful, a civil war peace settlement must consolidate the previously warring factions into a single state, create a new government capable of accommodating their interests, and build a new national, nonpartisan military force.<sup>12</sup> This means that adversaries who want to

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11. One could argue that empty promises are easy to make because they will never be fulfilled. But public promises are not costless. Ignoring or violating an agreement could easily negate many of the benefits a party had hoped to gain by appearing to cooperate.

12. Civil war adversaries could choose to partition their country into two or more independent states and thus circumvent this problem of consolidation. Chaim Kaufmann argues, for example,

settle their war off the battlefield must at some point demobilize, disengage, and disarm their separate militaries. They must then surrender whatever remaining power they have to a single administration, not necessarily their own. These requirements, however, create two tempting opportunities for post-treaty exploitation, and both sides know this. Once groups have sent their soldiers home, laid down their weapons, and surrendered occupied territory, they become extremely vulnerable to a surprise attack. Furthermore, once they have surrendered these assets, they make it easy for their opponent to set up a one-party state. This process of consolidation, and the vulnerability it creates, is quite different from cases where independent states negotiate an agreement and then continue to face each other with the capabilities to return to war should their opponent renege on the terms of the agreement.

The need for competing groups to consolidate power at a time when they can neither defend themselves against attack nor rely on a central government to do this for them greatly complicates their ability to cooperate. By requiring demilitarization under what are essentially conditions of anarchy, civil war peace treaties promise to create security dilemmas in the reverse.<sup>13</sup> As groups begin to disarm, they create an increasingly tense situation. The fewer arms they have, the more vulnerable they feel. The more vulnerable they feel, the more sensitive they become to possible violations. And the more sensitive they become to violations, the less likely they are to fulfill their side of the bargain. The ultimate challenge facing civil war opponents at the negotiating table therefore is not simply how to stop the fighting, but how to design a settlement that convinces the groups to shed individual defenses and submit to the rules of a new political game at a time when no government or police force can either protect them or guarantee compliance.

Below I consider three ways combatants emerging from civil wars might design treaties that reduce the dangers of demobilization and bind parties to the terms. I then argue that these strategies are unlikely to work in the

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that ethnic civil wars “cannot end until the populations are separated into defensible, mostly homogeneous regions.” Kaufmann, “Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars,” *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Spring 1996), pp. 136–175; and Kaufmann, “When All Else Fails: Ethnic Population Transfers and Partitions in the Twentieth Century,” *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 120–156. As I discuss later, however, governments rarely agree to negotiate a separation of territory, leaving powersharing as the only negotiable alternative.

13. For pathbreaking discussions on the security dilemma, see Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 1978), pp. 167–214; and Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” in Michael E. Brown, ed., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).



aftermath of civil wars because they do not fully eliminate the possibility of post-treaty exploitation, and it is this possibility that remains pivotal to combatants. Civil-war combatants will cooperate, but their willingness to do so will depend on the degree to which the treaties can *guarantee* that they will obtain the long-run benefits of peace and powersharing. If combatants can significantly reduce the possibility of a surprise attack and the possibility of permanent exclusion from power, they will sign and implement peace settlements. If they cannot, they will hold on to their arms and continue to fight.

PHASE ONE: DEMOBILIZATION AND THE SAFE CONSOLIDATION OF FORCES

In theory, the danger of demobilization should be clear to both parties early in negotiations, and this awareness should prompt them to design safeguards that neutralize the costs associated with demobilization. A security dilemma that is so clearly predictable should also be manageable. Three safeguards in particular should enable groups to avoid creating a destabilizing security dilemma. First, groups could unilaterally enhance their defenses to make a surprise attack more difficult to launch. Second, they could design less risky consolidation plans that reduce the opportunity to cheat. Third, they could send costly signals that they have no hostile intentions and thus create an atmosphere of trust.

UNILATERAL DEFENSE ENHANCEMENTS. In practice, however, civil war enemies cannot maintain or enhance their individual defenses in order to deter the other from launching a surprise attack. Maintaining or enhancing these defenses would leave the state with multiple competing armies, forsaking one of the main objectives of any peace treaty. Groups could choose to hide weapons or withhold elite soldiers from assembly areas to shield themselves from attack. But these defensive measures could have the unintended effect of setting off a security dilemma. Groups might be able to circumvent this problem by installing sophisticated verification and monitoring equipment, which would give them time to rearm in case of an attack. But even the best intelligence would not eliminate the risk of aggression, and as long as cheating can cause enormous suffering, as it can in civil wars, it is unlikely that groups will rely on early detection to ensure their safety.<sup>14</sup>

RECIPROCAL IMPLEMENTATION PERIODS. If the adversaries fear a one-step advantage, they could disarm in a step-by-step or tit-for-tat fashion, sequencing

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14. Barry Weingast offers an excellent analysis of the problem of extreme vulnerability in Weingast, "Constructing Trust: The Political and Economic Roots of Ethnic and Regional Conflict," unpublished paper, Hoover Institution, 1994.

military disengagement in a way that gives neither side a relative advantage. They could choose to demobilize at exactly the same time and rate, or they could recruit a new national military before existing partisan forces are completely disbanded. On the other hand, if one side enjoys a preponderance of military power while its opponent has a preponderance of political support (like the Kuomintang and the Communists in China during their negotiations in 1946), they could use these opposing strengths to deter the breakdown of an agreement.

Although each of these strategies might make the implementation period less dangerous, two serious problems remain. First, monitoring would be extremely difficult because weapons are easy to buy and hide. A group could appear to disarm by handing over arms, sending soldiers home, and destroying heavy weaponry and still keep elite regiments on alert and supply lines open. Second, creative implementation strategies do not change the end result. In civil wars, demobilization can be postponed or it can be implemented incrementally and reciprocally, but it cannot be avoided. As long as both sides know this, a crafty opponent need only wait until full disengagement to strike. In short, reciprocal implementation strategies ensure only that neither side gains an advantage during demobilization. They cannot, however, guarantee that arms, soldiers, and ammunition will not be held back for a future offensive later on.

**COSTLY SIGNALS.** If the factions are serious about establishing peace, they should be able to communicate these good intentions through costly and credible signals.<sup>15</sup> Yet signals (such as unilateral disarmament) that might convince an opponent to comply with an agreement either expose the sender to such danger that even peace-loving groups would avoid using them or they are too easy to mimic by more Machiavellian groups to have the desired effect of relaying peaceful intentions. "They can hide anything they want to from us," said an American police officer and midlevel supervisor for NATO in Bosnia, "We're out here filling in forms that say everything looks good, but most of these police are ready to go into combat in a quick minute."<sup>16</sup> Negotiating factions therefore are damned if they do and damned if they don't. If they agree to demobilize, they leave themselves open to annihilation without

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15. For a well-developed discussion on the use of costly signals, see Andrew Kydd, "Game Theory and the Spiral Model," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (April 1997), pp. 371-400.

16. Quoted in Mike O'Connor, "Bosnia's Military Threat: Rival Police," *New York Times*, January 12, 1997, p. A6.

conveying any peaceful intentions, but if they refuse to demobilize, they trigger the very security dilemma they hoped to avoid.

Ultimately, the most difficult problem with civil war resolution is that the warring parties cannot credibly commit to the safe consolidation of their forces by themselves; no matter what they do, they will be unable either to enforce this phase themselves or to structure it in a way that makes it self-enforcing. Therefore a third party is needed to help enforce or verify this stage of the settlement for them.<sup>17</sup> Third parties can verify compliance with the terms of demobilization and warn of a surprise attack, they can guarantee that soldiers will be protected as they demobilize, and they can become involved if one or both sides resumes the war. Third parties can thus ensure that the payoffs from cheating no longer exceed the payoffs from faithfully executing the settlement's terms. Once cheating becomes more difficult and costly, promises to cooperate should gain credibility and cooperation should become more likely. The success of civil war settlements therefore hinges not only on the ability of combatants to reach mutually agreeable political deals, but also on the willingness of outsiders to verify or enforce the process of demobilization.

#### PHASE TWO: CREDIBLE COMMITMENTS TO POWERSHARING

As difficult as security issues are to solve, however, they do not address any of the governance issues that ultimately determine whether a settlement will last. Thus even if a third party were willing to verify or enforce demobilization, this commitment would not guarantee that the settlement's political terms would be implemented after the outsider left.

Groups that want to end their civil war through negotiation must also relinquish administrative control over conquered territory and create a new central government. Here again, negotiating factions are in a somewhat paradoxical position. On the one hand, each side is likely to demand some form of powersharing as the price for peace: agreeing to demobilize and hand over territory must have some reward.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, both sides know that tolerating a partner in government will be costly because each will almost

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17. I presented and tested this hypothesis and found that outside security guarantees in the form of active peacekeeping forces were a necessary condition for the successful implementation of peace treaties. See Barbara F. Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Summer 1997), pp. 335-364.

18. I use Timothy D. Sisk's definition of powersharing to mean any political system that "fosters governing coalitions inclusive of most, if not all, major mobilized ethnic groups in society." See Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1996), p. 4.

certainly pursue very different if not competing policies. Therefore both have strong incentives to try to capture the government.<sup>19</sup> This, then, is the second dilemma that factions face: How does a group convince its rival that it will not usurp power once its leader becomes president, the instruments of government are under its control, and its opponent's army is disbanded?

An extensive literature beginning with the *Federalist Papers* has sought ways to design domestic political institutions to ensure that minority and opposition groups would not be exploited by those in power. Most of this literature has identified the dangers involved with concentrating power in the hands of a single party or individual, and has addressed this problem by suggesting ways to divide authority among different institutional structures. Although considerable debate still exists, most scholars agree that deeply divided societies can best be governed if they exhibit four basic institutional features.<sup>20</sup> First, divided societies are more likely to be stable and conflict free if power is decentralized in a federal system.<sup>21</sup> Second, divided societies are more likely to be stable if power is dispersed in a parliamentary rather than a presidential system. Parliamentary democracies tend to promote multiparty systems, encourage the formation of coalition governments, and promise that even small parties have an opportunity to gain positions of power.<sup>22</sup> Third, states with highly polarized populations are more likely to democratize successfully if individuals are elected based on the proportion of votes cast rather than on a strict majority of votes, which tends to promote zero-sum stakes.<sup>23</sup> Proportional representative systems tend to be more consensual; they try to limit, divide, and

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19. See Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 15.

20. For a cross section of these debates, see Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

21. An extensive literature supports this view. See James Madison, "Federalist No. 10," *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Penguin, 1961); Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977); Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*; David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall 1996), pp. 41–75; and Alicia Levine, "Political Accommodation and the Prevention of Secessionist Violence," in Michael E. Brown, ed., *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 311–340.

22. See especially Juan Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism" and "The Virtues of Parliamentarianism," in Diamond and Plattner, *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*; and Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflict*, pp. 53–54. For a dissenting view, see Donald Horowitz, "Comparing Democratic Systems," in *ibid.*

23. For criticisms of majoritarianism, see Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflict*, p. ix; Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, pp. 25–28, 114–118; Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, pp. 629–630; and Levine, "Political Accommodation and the Prevention of Secessionist Violence," pp. 333–334.

share power. Most important, they avoid winner-take-all results and promise that most groups will not be denied the opportunity to participate in the government.<sup>24</sup> Finally, checks and balances are often promoted to further bind the governing party once elected. The United States, for example, chose to institute a bicameral instead of a unicameral legislature so that smaller states such as Rhode Island would have greater individual power to check larger, more populous states such as New York. In short, much of the literature on democratization has focused on institution building as the best way to prevent the abuse of power and encourage groups to cooperate with one another.

#### INSTITUTION BUILDING IN POST-CIVIL WAR SOCIETIES

Countries emerging from civil war have deeper societal divisions, more fragile institutions, and greater temptations toward exploitation than almost any other kind of state attempting to democratize. Choosing the institutions designed to channel societal divisions will not be enough to convince combatants to sign and implement a negotiated settlement. Three problems in particular stand out.

First, government institutions will be too weak in the immediate aftermath of a civil war to prevent a rapid grab for power and enforce what the opposition can no longer enforce themselves. Most of the countries listed in Table 1 were not democracies prior to the outbreak of hostilities, nor do they have a history of democratic rule or an established judiciary. Instead, the party that won the first post-civil war election was expected to build these institutions based on guidelines negotiated during the peace talks. Once in power, however, this party could easily ignore these directives and create institutions that appeared “democratic” on the outside only to serve its narrow interests on the inside. As Halidou Ouedraogo, president of the Burkina Faso Movement for the Rights of Man, has articulated, “They say the newspapers are free, but a minister can still put a journalist in jail. They say the courts are independent, but there are always pressures from behind the scenes. We still don’t have real participation of the people at a grass-roots level.”<sup>25</sup>

Second, even if truly democratic institutions were established, domestic groups could not expect them to be effective overnight. As Larry Diamond has observed, “Over time, citizens of a democracy become habituated to its norms

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24. See Dahl, *Polyarchy*, p. 115.

25. Quoted in John Darnton, “Africa Tries Democracy, Finding Hope and Peril,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1994, p. A6.

and values, gradually internalizing them. The trick is for democracies to survive long enough—and function well enough—for this process to occur.”<sup>26</sup> Civil war opponents, however, do not have this luxury because a malevolent opponent would likely act quickly to grab state control.

Third, post-civil war societies rarely enjoy a civic culture strong enough to bolster fragile institutions and serve as a secondary control on misconduct. In fact, war-weary populations often prefer order and economic advancement to democracy; in many cases, residents simply want peace. “Look at Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire,” said a young business manager in Ouagadougou, “If that’s democratization, I’m not for it.”<sup>27</sup> Faction leaders therefore cannot count on the general population to reject efforts by one party to set up dictatorial control if the alternative would be renewed war.<sup>28</sup>

It is easy to imagine why parties would willingly submit to elections in situations where they might benefit from winning in the future, where they will not be maltreated if they lose, and where it would be costly to subvert the system.<sup>29</sup> Under these conditions, they have every incentive to cooperate. But what if elections and institutions could promise none of these things? What if the losers of the first postwar election could not count on another opportunity to regain power? What if no limits were set on what the winning party could do once elected? Most important, what if a loss in the first election could be permanent?<sup>30</sup> These are the conditions that characterize countries emerging from civil wars.

If it is true that groups that have recently fought a civil war fear the possible negative repercussions of a settlement, then simply the opportunity to compete in elections—whether they are based on majoritarian or proportional principles and are backed up by a presidential or parliamentary system with federal or nonfederal arrangements—will not be enough. Both systems still promise that the loser will likely be permanently excluded from government. Institutions

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26. Larry Diamond, “Three Paradoxes of Democracy,” in Diamond and Plattner, *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, p. 104.

27. Quoted in Darnton, “Africa Tries Democracy, Finding Hope and Peril,” p. A1.

28. This of course assumes that the ruling party does not enact oppressive policies. If one-party rule becomes too tyrannical, war might once again become the more attractive alternative.

29. According to Adam Przeworski, these are the conditions that make elections so attractive to competing groups as they transition from authoritarian rule. See Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

30. For a more comprehensive discussion of the destabilizing effects of political liberalization in war-shattered states, see Roland Paris, “Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism,” *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 1997), p. 56.

and elections might be effective over the long run, after rules and practices become routine. Or they might have greater success stabilizing a less volatile situation. But if the suspension of democracy is relatively easy—as it would be immediately after a civil war—then groups will need far more convincing guarantees that they will not be eliminated from power than the promise that liberal democratic institutions will be in place to help prevent this.

Civil war factions therefore will look for ways to preserve their well-being under even the worst circumstances, and they can do this in three ways. First, both the rebels and the incumbent party are likely to demand guaranteed involvement in the new government regardless of the outcome of elections. This can take the form of a specific quota of power, a guaranteed distribution of key ministries, or shared control over executive positions. Groups should be particularly concerned with executive power because a politically powerful and popular leader will have few real restraints on behavior, especially in the early, often faltering stages of a new government. Groups can choose to establish a single, shared presidency, as the Conservatives and Liberals did in Colombia in 1957. They can create a powerful coalition cabinet comprised of equal numbers of government and opposition leaders, as the Christians and Muslims did in Lebanon in 1958. Or they can decide that if one party wins the presidency, the other party or parties can assign the majority of cabinet positions. A powersharing agreement signed in Rwanda in January 1994 gave the government six of twenty-two government offices, provided the rebels five portfolios, and assigned the remaining cabinet posts to other parties. This way, nervous factions eliminate competition for the most influential positions and ensure that the allocation of these posts is not left to the uncertainty of elections.

Second, groups are likely to attempt to retain some military power even as they demobilize their partisan armies, and they can do this in at least four ways. The new national army and internal security forces could be comprised of equal numbers of government and rebel soldiers, making it difficult for one group to dominate a rival militarily.<sup>31</sup> Soldiers could be demobilized but not forced to disarm. Competing factions could set up autonomous regions where they police themselves. Or they could combine officers from one faction with enlisted soldiers from another. Allowing each competing faction to retain some ability to defend itself even after its army has been formally disbanded offers

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31. For an excellent discussion of the importance of an integrated security force, see Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflict*, p. 57.

an important sense of security, and serves as insurance against future oppression should the benefits of powersharing not materialize. The Zimbabwean rebels' published statement of its "essential requirements for the transition from civil war" illustrates how important these added guarantees are: "The Security Forces during the interim period must be an army composed of a combination of the Patriotic Front's and the Regime's armies, and a police force composed of a combination of the Patriotic Front's and the Regime's police forces, operating in both cases alongside a United Nations Peacekeeping Force and a United Nations Civilian Police Force to supervise the cease-fire and ensure peaceful integration. The foregoing structure is essential to ensure that the process towards genuine majority rule and independence will be irreversible."<sup>32</sup> Such internal security arrangements should help to reduce the fear and insecurity felt by warring factions and make negotiated settlements more attractive to them.

Finally, rival factions are also likely to attempt to retain some administrative control over previously occupied regions in order to preserve a political base should things go badly. The 1970 peace agreement ending the Yemeni civil war allowed the rebel Royalists to continue to administer areas under their control. The 1972 Addis Ababa agreement that ended the Sudanese civil war established southern Sudan as a self-governing region. And in Bosnia, the 1995 Dayton peace accord created a single Bosnian state comprised of two separate entities: one controlled by a Muslim-Croat federation and one controlled by the Serbs.

In short, the more political, military, and territorial power can be disaggregated, the more enforceable and credible promises to share power will be. Disaggregating the state and distributing the parts among the former rivals reduces the risks and uncertainties of early democratization in four ways. First, groups that control key ministries, such as the ministry of justice, or that share control of the prime ministership, have greater incentives to support a new democratic government. Second, splitting the military makes it extremely difficult for potential dictators to oppress or overpower other groups. Third, allowing factions to maintain some regional autonomy offers them an important fallback position if they do lose control of the central government. Fourth, these guarantees help opponents to distinguish early in negotiations which groups are serious about sharing power and which are not. A group intent on

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32. Baumhoegger, *The Struggle for Independence*, vol. 6, p. 1129.



setting up a one-party state would never agree to such a guaranteed division of power and influence.

A government based on mutual guarantees, however, is not without its drawbacks. Consociational powersharing solutions or pacts such as those discussed above have been criticized for being undemocratic, having no “grass-roots backing,” being the “ultimate form of elite manipulation,” leaving political leaders unaccountable to their communities, “freezing” group boundaries, and excluding important parties that were not major players in the war.<sup>33</sup> The shared government between Cambodia’s Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh Sihanouk that was created in 1993, for example, was paralyzed by infighting between the two prime ministers, ultimately falling victim to a coup in 1997. Pacts can be inflexible and highly inefficient. However, the fact that these regimes are likely to follow conflicting policy initiatives and have difficulty obtaining a policy consensus is one reason why adversaries might find them so attractive. A counterintuitive conclusion to draw from this article is that groups that have recently fought a civil war might actually find this paralysis quite appealing because it ensures that an opponent will be unable to enact policies detrimental to their interests. In short, there is great comfort in knowing that policies will *not* be made.

Nevertheless, the inefficiency, inflexibility, and exclusionary nature of consociational governments often means that this type of system will not be stable over time. Eventually, citizens will demand greater efficiency from their government, and new parties will demand more open, competitive systems. If these systems do not evolve, they will eventually topple. Does this mean that mutual guarantees should be avoided? Only if the combatants prefer to return to war. Groups emerging from a civil war have no way to circumvent this early guaranteed system of powersharing. A regime that is good at ending a civil war, however, may not necessarily be good at long-term governance. A second transition will almost certainly be needed toward a more liberal democracy as democratic preconditions are established. The ultimate challenge facing civil war rivals over the long term, therefore, is how to transform the inflexible institutional structures that are necessary to convince each of them to sign a settlement in the highly tense postwar environment into more liberal, open institutions that are necessary to bring peace and stability over time.

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33. For criticisms, see Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflict*, pp. 38–39; Brian Barry, “Review Article: Political Accommodation and Consociational Democracy,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 5 (October 1975), pp. 477–505; and Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 586.

### *Mozambique's 1992 Peace Agreement*

In this section, I illustrate how critical credible guarantees can be to the success of failure of peace negotiations by discussing the 1990–92 peace process in Mozambique. I chose this case because it represents a particularly unlikely case for successful settlement and therefore shows how cooperation might be possible even under difficult circumstances. The war was long (the average duration of the civil wars listed in Table 1 was fifty-three months; this war lasted seventeen years); it was exceptionally bloody (an estimated 900,000 Mozambicans died, more than 3 million were driven from their homes, and half the total population of 16 million faced starvation),<sup>34</sup> and it was ethnically based—fought between the Makonde in the North and the Shangana in the South. Nonetheless, on October 2, 1992, the Frente de Libertação de Mocambique (FRELIMO) government and the Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) rebels signed a peace treaty ending what has been called “one of the most brutal holocausts against ordinary human beings since World War II.”<sup>35</sup>

Specific military guarantees led to the decision by FRELIMO and RENAMO to sign and implement the Rome accord. As with many of the civil wars listed in Table 1, there was a long delay between the time the main grievances were settled and a treaty was actually signed; the negotiations during this period concentrated mainly on finding ways to reassure the rebels that they would not be attacked during demobilization and that the incumbent government was serious about sharing control of the state. For the most part, the talks were not dominated by give-and-take bargaining over ideological positions. Instead, success hinged on resolving three critical issues. Would FRELIMO accept a significant UN role in the transition period as demanded by RENAMO? Was FRELIMO serious about dismantling its one-party state and sharing power? And would both FRELIMO and RENAMO be able to protect themselves after the UN left? Once FRELIMO accepted a large UN military presence and agreed to a system of dual political administration, its promise to seek peace became credible and signatures soon followed.

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34. William Finnegan, *A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 4.

35. U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Roy Stacy speaking at a donors' conference in Maputo, quoted in Thomas Ohlson, “Strategic Confrontation versus Economic Survival in Southern Africa,” in Francis M. Deng and I. William Zartman, eds., *Conflict Resolution in Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1991).

EXPLANATIONS FOR MOZAMBIQUE'S SUCCESS

Observers of Mozambique's civil war argue that RENAMO and FRELIMO settled in 1992 for one of four reasons. First, a lengthy military stalemate made it clear to both sides that neither could win a decisive military victory. According to a UN election observer in Mozambique, "This effectively moved the conflict from a stalemate to a hurting stalemate."<sup>36</sup> Second, outside aid to both parties had been significantly reduced. With the end of the Cold War, support for an ideological battle between Mozambique's Marxist-leaning government and the rebels disappeared, as did their sponsors.<sup>37</sup> Third, a worsening drought threatened mass starvation, making it increasingly difficult for both sides to feed their soldiers and supporters.<sup>38</sup> Finally, outside mediators and observers continued to push the rivals to resolve their differences. According to then U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker, "The skilled and deeply committed people of Sant'Egidio [the mediators] shaped history through their initial intervention, and as time passed, their efforts created a critical mass of facts and momentum so that there was something for 'track one' decision-makers to support."<sup>39</sup>

Each of these variables, however, had been present at different intervals throughout the war, and all were present years before FRELIMO and RENAMO signed a treaty in 1992. As one observer points out, "A mutually hurting stalemate produced an impetus for negotiations at several points in the seventeen-year history of the conflict."<sup>40</sup> Only the final negotiations, however, succeeded. Another observer notes that "the Government had known for many years that even with substantial assistance, a military solution was not possible."<sup>41</sup> It seemed unlikely therefore that the reduction of outside aid suddenly convinced the two sides to settle. And the drought, which many believed pushed both sides to the table, was not a new condition in 1992. In

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36. Robert B. Lloyd, "Mozambique: The Terror of War, the Tensions of Peace," *Current History*, Vol. 94 (April 1995), p. 153. For the theoretical underpinnings of this argument, see I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

37. Eric Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1996), pp. 19–20.

38. See Thomas Ohlson and Stephen John Stedman with Robert Davies, *The New Is Not Yet Born: Conflict Resolution in Southern Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1994), pp. 113–116. See also Chris Alden and Mark Simpson, "Mozambique: A Delicate Peace," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (March 1993), p. 126.

39. Foreword in Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*, pp. xi–xii.

40. Ibrahim Msabaha, "Negotiating an End to Mozambique's Murderous Rebellion," in I. William Zartman, ed., *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1995), p. 210.

41. Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*, p. 21.

1983, nine years before the signing of the Rome accord, a severe drought resulted in the deaths of approximately 100,000 people, yet it did not encourage a settlement.<sup>42</sup> Even mediation was not unique to this last round of peace talks, for a number of countries had been trying to arbitrate an end to the conflict since 1985.<sup>43</sup>

To contend that negotiations succeeded in 1992 because these four factors converged into one costly bundle leaves important questions unanswered. This argument fails to explain why negotiations dragged on for twenty-seven months once groups initiated negotiations. More important, it does not explain why it took two more years to reach a settlement after RENAMO's central demands (a multiparty political system and free elections) were met in 1990.<sup>44</sup>

The convergence of so many costly conditions might have convinced FRELIMO and RENAMO to initiate negotiations, but it was not sufficient to convince them to sign and implement a settlement. I argue that commitment problems offer a better explanation for why negotiations dragged on so long. An examination of the process reveals the degree to which the negotiations revolved around RENAMO's attempt to extract "guarantees" from FRELIMO that the cease-fire would be peaceful, and that they would still be able "to hold the government to commitments" even after RENAMO disarmed.<sup>45</sup>

#### THE MAIN GRIEVANCES SETTLED

As was the case in Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Sudan, the central issues in Mozambique's war were resolved long before a settlement was signed. Since 1989 RENAMO had insisted that its goal was "constitutional reform," and its demands were fairly straightforward. At least officially, the rebels wanted some form of multiparty democracy; they also wanted to be recognized as a legitimate political party within this new system.<sup>46</sup> In December 1990, FRELIMO agreed to adopt a new constitution that provided for multiparty elections and new political parties, and in January 1992, it agreed to a more specific powersharing formula based on proportional representation

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42. Cameron Hume, *Ending Mozambique's War: The Role of Mediation and Good Offices* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1994), p. 10.

43. Allen Isaacman, "Mozambique: Tugging at the Chains of Dependency," in Gerald J. Bender, James S. Coleman, and Richard Sklar, eds., *African Crisis Areas and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Helen Kitchen, *Angola, Mozambique, and the West* (New York: Praeger, 1987); and Msabaha, "Negotiating an End to Mozambique's Murderous Rebellion."

44. See Finnegan, *A Complicated War*, pp. 246–247.

45. Hume, *Ending Mozambique's War*, p. 34.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

and the direct election of a president.<sup>47</sup> Thus by early 1992 the main grievances of the war appeared to be settled.

The fact that the main political issues driving the civil war were resolved but negotiations continued for an additional ten months (almost two years after the initial concessions were made) meant that the bulk of the peace talks focused on other issues. A review of the successive rounds of negotiations (twenty in all) reveals two patterns. First, most of the negotiations concentrated on the issue of “guarantees” (as both RENAMO and FRELIMO called them). Second, the final accords were implemented only after leaders from both groups agreed to set up a “dual administration” and after UN peacekeeping troops arrived on the ground.

RENAMO's security concerns became immediately apparent in the first round of negotiations in July 1990 when it made three demands. First, it insisted that a mediator be present during negotiations. Second, it demanded that a cease-fire begin only after the government had discussed specific political and military reforms. Third, it called for extensive UN involvement in “monitoring and guaranteeing implementation.”<sup>48</sup> RENAMO favored an elaborate UN operation similar to that established in Cambodia in 1992. According to Cameron Hume, U.S. observer to the Rome peace talks, “The choice of this option reflected the depth of RENAMO's skepticism that the FRELIMO government, operating under a FRELIMO constitution, could be trusted to conduct fair, multiparty elections.”<sup>49</sup> RENAMO's leader, Afonso Dhlakama, wondered: “What will happen 24 hours after a cease-fire is in place? How will Mozambicans live afterwards? Does it mean that once a cease-fire is signed, President [Joachim] Chissano will abolish communal villages? Will he then do away with the People's National Security Service, which has been killing Mozambicans under the cover of darkness? Will he abolish all laws [passage indistinct]?”<sup>50</sup> RENAMO's leaders did not trust the government to follow through on its commitment to write a democratic constitution and create a multiparty state once the rebels laid down their weapons, and they certainly did not believe they could hold the government to these promises once the negotiations concluded. RENAMO wanted guarantees that FRELIMO would

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47. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

50. Voice of RENAMO, “Dhlakama Says FRELIMO Army Launching Attacks to Stop Him Leaving for Summit,” August 4, 1992, Lexis/Nexis, Section: Part 4, The Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, Mozambique Peace Talks, ME/1450/B/1.

open up the government and saw extensive UN involvement as the only way to obtain this result.

The government rejected mediation and insisted that RENAMO agree to a cease-fire before any political issues were discussed. Negotiations made slow, halting progress through June 1991, by which time President Chissano of FRELIMO had finally agreed to all three RENAMO demands: the government would accept formal mediation during the talks, address political issues before discussing a cease-fire, and accept international monitoring of a cease-fire and elections. But Dhlakama pressed Chissano further: he demanded to know the specific role outside monitors would have and if FRELIMO's security service would be eliminated before RENAMO began demobilization.<sup>51</sup> The government, however, refused to discuss either issue.

Negotiations then moved to the equally contentious question of who would administer the country during the transition. RENAMO refused to accept any FRELIMO role in conducting the elections, fearing that the incumbents could easily manipulate the process. Chissano's government, however, refused to allow the UN to register parties, conduct elections, or let RENAMO share responsibility for organizing elections.<sup>52</sup> In August 1991, during the sixth round of negotiations, RENAMO broke off talks, claiming that it would be suicide to go forward with a solution that its opponent could so easily manipulate. When asked what went wrong, one of the mediators replied that RENAMO had a "deep fear of falling into the trap of integration."<sup>53</sup>

Negotiations recommenced in November 1991. By August 1992, FRELIMO accepted outside enforcement of the transition period, thus satisfying the first requirement of the credible commitment theory.<sup>54</sup> RENAMO received the second crucial guarantee less than a month later when Chissano and Dhlakama reached a "gentlemen's agreement" that offered the rebels both military and territorial guarantees for their safety. The two leaders agreed that Mozambique's new national army would consist of 15,000 FRELIMO soldiers and 15,000 RENAMO soldiers. In addition, the government could retain its security forces, but they would now be monitored by a mixed FRELIMO-RENAMO

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51. Hume, *Ending Mozambique's War*, p. 62.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

54. Donald Rothchild has argued that one reason why Dhlakama was willing to agree to the plan was because he was receiving side payments from British business interests. For an interesting analysis of this issue, see Rothchild, *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Pressures and Incentives for Cooperation* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1997).

oversight commission. They also agreed that RENAMO could remain in the regions it had occupied prior to elections, while government administrators would be “allowed to establish a presence throughout the country.”<sup>55</sup> RENAMO therefore would not be forced to relinquish administrative control over home regions before elections. If FRELIMO won at the polls but refused to set up a coalition government, RENAMO could retain these regions until FRELIMO fulfilled its promises. And if FRELIMO continued to refuse, RENAMO would not be harmed. As long as RENAMO occupied these regions, FRELIMO would not be able to dominate the country politically, and as long as RENAMO controlled half of the national army, FRELIMO would not be able to take these regions by force. Two weeks after the guarantees were signed, on October 4, 1992, Chissano and Dhlakama signed the Rome accord ending the war.

As the credible commitment theory would predict, neither side began to demobilize until UN troops arrived, nor did they disarm by the time the first elections were held in October 1994. The elections, however, proceeded peacefully. President Chissano won the presidency, and his party carried five of the country’s ten provinces. RENAMO won a majority in the remaining five provinces, two of which were Mozambique’s most populous. Events following the elections, however, confirmed RENAMO’s fears. After winning at the polls, Chissano refused to form a coalition government or to include Dhlakama in his cabinet despite strong domestic and international pressure to do so. Thus although represented in parliament, RENAMO had little if any official influence in the government. RENAMO responded by refusing to relinquish authority in the five provinces it had won. As a result, a dual administration became the norm.<sup>56</sup>

RENAMO accepted Chissano’s refusal to set up a coalition government and did not return to war because the Rome accord had allowed RENAMO to retain sufficient political power to challenge FRELIMO in the next elections. The accord had also set up a dual administration that protected RENAMO from political obsolescence, and had retained 15,000 RENAMO soldiers to help guarantee their physical safety. As Miguel de Brito, a former professor of politics at Mozambique’s Institute of International Relations, observed, “The last thing Dhlakama will do right now is return to war. RENAMO has a lot of

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55. Hume, *Ending Mozambique’s War*, p. 133.

56. Maria Cremilda Massingue, “Mozambique Opposition RENAMO Is Two-Edged Sword, Scholar Says,” March 9, 1996. Lexis/Nexis, Section: International News.

strength in the rural areas and enough influence with the international community to make sure the 1999 elections are fair. If they play their cards right, they could do much better next time.”<sup>57</sup>

The 1990–92 negotiations to end the civil war in Mozambique reflect RENAMO’s effort to extract credible commitments from a government that seemed strongly opposed to powersharing. FRELIMO’s successive concessions increasingly reassured RENAMO that it could not be permanently eliminated and that it would be protected from abuse should the government choose to renege on the deal. The military stalemate, the drought, and international pressure probably convinced FRELIMO and RENAMO to initiate negotiations. Commitments offered by both parties, however, ultimately convinced them to sign, implement, and maintain a settlement. Most important, the willingness of the UN to intervene with a 6,000-person peacekeeping force, to stay through elections, and not to insist on full disarmament allowed for this success.

#### OTHER CASES

The Mozambique case illustrates how external security guarantees and internal political, military, and territorial commitments convinced the two combatants to end their civil war through a negotiated settlement rather than a decisive military fight. A brief review of other wars listed in Table 1 reveals a similar pattern. Six of the eight cases of successful settlement (75 percent) were underwritten by outside security guarantees.<sup>58</sup> These include Lebanon’s 1958 and 1976 agreements, the Dominican Republic’s 1965 Act of Dominican Reconciliation, the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement in Sudan, the 1979 Lancaster House agreement in Zimbabwe, and the 1989 Tela agreement in Nicaragua. Peace settlements signed since 1990 have continued this pattern: agreements in El Salvador, Cambodia, and Bosnia all included arrangements for a contingent of peacekeeping forces, and all brought peace.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, none of the agreements in China, Greece, Laos, Nigeria, Nicaragua (1978–79), Uganda, and Chad included outside security commitments, and all eventually failed. This

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57. John Fleming, “Mozambique Rebel Now Works inside the System,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 19, 1996, p. 6.

58. For a more rigorous empirical examination of these cases as well as an analysis of the full set of civil wars between 1940 and 1990, see Walter, “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement.”

59. Only two civil wars reached successful settlement without an outside guarantee (Colombia in 1958 and Yemen in 1970), yet these were also the only two cases where the opposing parties could not launch surprise attacks on each other. Both wars were fought by relatively uncommitted armies whose loyalties could be procured by the highest bidder and thus did not represent an immediate threat to either opponent. It appears, therefore, as if Colombia and Yemen were exceptions that prove the rule.



seems to indicate that although political agreement is necessary for successful settlement, it is not sufficient to produce peace.

In addition, the successful settlements listed in Table 1 included a variety of creative political, military, and territorial guarantees. The Conservatives and the Liberals in Colombia, for example, agreed to split equally all government positions (including patronage jobs) and to rotate the presidency. The 1970 political agreement in Yemen integrated the rebel Royalists into every level of government with the incumbent Republicans and allowed the Royalists to continue to administer the areas under their control. It also created a combined Republican/Royalist head of state. In Sudan the peace accord guaranteed the continued existence of a southern regional government and gave the South enough tax revenue to survive without help from the wealthier North. The accord also created a national army that preserved the armed strength of both factions.<sup>60</sup> The whites in the new state of Zimbabwe were guaranteed 20 percent of all the seats in the lower house of parliament even though they represented only 3 percent of the population. They were also allowed to retain private control of most of Zimbabwe's richest land and keep their dual citizenship with England. Finally, the Sandinistas and the Contras in Nicaragua created twenty-three self-governing development zones (20 percent of the country), which the Contras could occupy and police themselves. Humberto Ortega (the brother of Daniel Ortega, leader of the Sandinistas) was also retained as commander in chief of the army even after his brother's opponent won the presidency.

In contrast to these detailed arrangements, most of the failed settlements included only vague references to future political arrangements.<sup>61</sup> In China the new coalition government provided only for a "cabinet system" in which the executive branch was responsible to the legislative branch. The Greek Communists and Nationalists agreed only to hold "a plebiscite as soon as possible . . . to decide finally on the question of a regime."<sup>62</sup> Elections for a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution would be held sometime thereafter. In Laos the three faction leaders created a coalition government in 1973 in name only, as it did not weaken the power of the incumbent government.

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60. See Dunstan M. Wai, *The African-Arab Conflict in the Sudan* (New York: Africana Publishing, 1981), p. 171.

61. The settlements in both Chad and Uganda included specific political guarantees. In neither case, however, was an outside state willing to enforce the final agreement.

62. From the Varkiza agreement as outlined in *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, October 13–20, 1945, p. 7486.

Although this brief review offers no definitive evidence for or against the credible commitment theory of civil war resolution, it does present strong preliminary support for it. To determine the role of credible commitments in civil war settlement, additional empirical research is required to test all of the alternative hypotheses. This will likely involve multivariate analysis of a large civil-war data set and more detailed assessments of a number of case histories. Nonetheless, as an exercise in theory building, this article does seem to offer useful insights into some unobservable dynamics that could hamper peace negotiations.

#### POSSIBLE CHALLENGES

There are, however, a number of possible challenges to the logic of the credible commitment theory. One is that outside enforcement has no independent effect on civil war settlement and is offered only in those cases that would have succeeded on their own. This is a serious criticism, but one that can be rebutted in at least two ways.

First, if enforcement is offered only in cases where negotiations press toward success, then treaties should succeed whether or not outside forces actually arrive on the ground. The cases, however, show that implementation did not proceed in the absence of peacekeepers, was delayed until peacekeepers arrived, broke down when peacekeepers did not show, and collapsed when peacekeepers decided to leave early. In other words, the arrival or departure of outside enforcement appears to be directly correlated with treaty execution. In Chad the factions successfully formed a government of national unity and began an “orderly withdrawal” of their troops from the capital. But when the neutral African peacekeeping force made up of soldiers from Guinea, Benin, and the Congo failed to arrive, no other terms of their agreement were implemented.<sup>63</sup> In Uganda guerrilla and government leaders signed a peace accord in December 1985 and asked Kenya, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and Canada to establish a peacekeeping force. The United Kingdom and Canada, however, declined to participate, and the terms were never implemented.<sup>64</sup> The peace agreement signed in February 1973 that was designed to end the war in Laos, on the other hand, specifically called for all foreign forces to withdraw within sixty days. The cease-fire never fully took effect, and fighting continued until the Pathet Lao decisively defeated the government. Thus the arrival and

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63. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, February 1980, p. 30067.

64. Kenya and Tanzania never sent troops.

timing of outside intervention does appear to have a direct effect on whether treaties are implemented.

Second, if it is true that third parties intervene only in successful cases, then it must also be true that outsiders can ascertain which negotiations will succeed and which will fail. But what observable indicators would they use to determine this? Outsiders could intervene in only those countries in which groups have reached a mutually acceptable political bargain (assuming that these are most likely to succeed). They could target only the longest, most deadly wars, assuming that these combatants have the greatest incentive to settle. They could intervene in only those wars with costly military stalemates. Each of these conditions should help them identify which cases might succeed. Yet outside security guarantees do not appear to be consistently offered in any one kind of war. Outsiders sent peacekeepers to verify or enforce settlements in both short and long wars, wars with high and low casualty figures, and wars in which the underlying issues were sometimes but not always resolved. In fact, in five of the thirteen cases where combatants had signed peace settlements in hand, outsiders did not step in. In short, outside security guarantees do not seem to be directly correlated with any of these conditions.

Some scholars might argue that partition rather than powersharing offers a more stable and permanent solution to internal violence.<sup>65</sup> In theory, this might be true. Partitioning a country into separate states would allow the competing factions to remain separate, making a peace treaty easier to enforce over the long term. History shows, however, that governments rarely allow sections of their territory to be lopped off in order to avoid or shorten a civil war. This is confirmed when one looks at the successful cases in Table 1, all of which were based on powersharing rather than partition. In short, partition might facilitate long-term peace and be more effective in preventing renewed civil war, but it is a solution that rebels rarely seem to obtain through negotiations with their government once war has broken out.

### *Conclusions and Implications*

Negotiating civil war peace settlements is tricky. The problem is often not that rival leaders have no desire to compromise or cannot locate a mutually accept-

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65. See especially John J. Mearsheimer, "The Only Exit from Bosnia," *New York Times*, October 7, 1997, p. A21; Mearsheimer and Robert A. Pape, "The Answer: A Three-way Partition Plan for Bosnia and How the U.S. Can Enforce It," *New Republic*, June 14, 1993; and Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Conflict," pp. 136–175.

able middle ground, as the conventional view asserts. A large number of civil war adversaries do solve the underlying grievances driving their wars. Rather, even after all of the other obstacles to resolution are removed, civil war adversaries still confront a unique set of commitment problems that stem from the need to integrate two or more separate organizations into a single state. For settlements to succeed, each group must convince its opponent that it will faithfully disengage its military forces and then honestly share power. This requires a complex set of external and internal guarantees. The more secure and self-confident groups are for the safe consolidation of military forces and regarding the opening of the political process, the more likely they are to sign and implement peace treaties.

This study can offer at least four suggestions to policymakers interested in resolving civil wars. First, even the most promising negotiations are likely to require outside enforcement if they are to succeed. Adversaries will generally move forward with a peace plan when a third party has the political will to verify or enforce demobilization. If a third party fails to step forward, or in some way reveals a lack of resolve, the combatants may become reluctant to proceed and even signed settlements could collapse. This does not mean that an outsider must send in massive numbers of peacekeeping troops to coerce compliance from the participants. It does mean, however, that its commitment must be convincing. If groups are uncertain whether peacekeepers will arrive, if they do not believe that peacekeepers can effectively verify compliance or protect them as they report to assembly areas, or if they are not convinced that peacekeepers will stay until demobilization is complete, then their role as a reassuring device will be undercut, and it seems highly unlikely that implementation will succeed.

Second, excessive reliance on the promise of free and fair elections as a means to introduce democracy to states emerging from civil war appears to be self-defeating. If groups that have recently fought each other fear that the victor of the first postwar elections will set up an authoritarian state, outlaw the opposition, and possibly imprison its members, it is likely that they will refuse to participate in negotiations and instead will choose to continue the war. Outsiders therefore should refrain from pushing for a “quick and easy” democratization process and understand that they cannot simultaneously end a civil war and set up a fully liberal democracy without some sort of democratic transition in between.

Third, because combatants are likely to become highly fearful and insecure as they demobilize, they can gain an added sense of safety if they are not forced

to disarm fully, especially not before the political terms of an agreement have been fulfilled. Allowing groups to retain some arms in the open should help to reassure them and act as an important deterrent against attempts by one group to establish dictatorial rule. Outsiders can allow groups to retain an additional measure of self-help by offering groups important “escape hatches” such as territorial autonomy, open borders, and generous asylum provisions.

The civil war cases analyzed in this article suggest that at least one final lesson can be drawn from past experiences. Enforcement does matter in the resolution of civil wars, but only in the short term. If outside states expect civil war settlements to endure, they must consider how the institutional parameters of any new government shape groups’ expectations about their future security and factor into decisions to fight or cooperate. Military force might be crucial for demobilization, but creative institutional design matters far more in the long run.