Abstract: While civil wars are by definition armed conflict within a nation state, the conflicts and their effects are rarely if ever confined within the boundaries of a single nation state. This chapter categorizes the transnationalism of civil wars along three dimensions: clustering, contagion, and connectedness. First, civil wars are clustered in space due to shared regional characteristics that make conflict more or less probable depending on geographical location. Such clustering of conflicts may manifest itself even when conflicts are not causally related. Second, the occurrence of civil war in one state may increase the risk of civil war in neighboring nations through contagion effects. Such contagion may take place through direct spillover of, for instance, refugee flows and arms transfer or through more indirect processes of strategic learning and inspiration. Third, civil wars in different countries may be connected by shared grievances, collaboration between rebel groups, and emerging war economies. In the extreme form, such interconnectedness results in regional conflict complexes that may prove intractable. The chapter proceeds to discuss how these transnational dimensions of civil war impact on the duration and outcome of conflicts. The chapter ends by identifying some of the remaining knowledge gaps.
About the author:

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A note to the reader and to the workshop:

This is an early draft; many sections are either too lengthy or too short, and central references may be missing. I appreciate any and all comments on how to improve the chapter. I would particularly appreciate feedback on the general structure, and whether the categorization into clustering, contagion, and connectedness works.
In much of past research on civil war\textsuperscript{2} initiation, dynamics, and outcomes, the main focus has been to convey conflict as taking place within a single nation state and involving two main adversaries pitted against each other: the ruling regime and a rebel group. Picturing civil wars as domestic phenomena to some extent stems from the tradition of International Relations to focus on borders as delimiting the political authority of states. This also explains why in particularly quantitative studies, the most common unit of analysis for studying civil wars have been countries, where determinants of said wars have been sought primarily in the institutional, socio-economic, and demographic setup of those countries. The point of departure of this chapter is that when looking at cases and patterns of civil conflict across the globe, the reality is much more complex. Conflicts are geographically clustered; rebel groups move back and forth across porous borders; cross-national networks of states and non-state actors are engaged in trading arms for natural resources; the effects of civil war are felt far beyond the state in which it is fought, and so on.

To say that civil wars are not “internal” but display transnational dimensions has been increasingly acknowledged by recent scholarly accounts of civil war to the extent that it today is a banal statement. Intrastate armed conflicts do not erupt and carry on in isolation within states, as the term intrastate would suggest. Quite the contrary, few if any civil wars are being fought without interference from actors, issues, and developments outside the country’s border and few if any conflicts do not generate side-effects outside the state where it primarily takes place. [Examples of both] Unless a conflict is very brief, e.g. a coup, or located in an isolated place, the transnational dimensions are likely to be non-trivial (Fjelde 2012).\textsuperscript{3}

These examples also illustrate a primary dividing line in existing research: while some focus on the cross-border (and beyond) effects of civil wars, others focus on how external events and condition shape the onset and dynamics of civil wars. Thus, a significant body of literature deals
with the effects of civil war by focusing on refugee flows (e.g. Dowty and Loescher 1996; Lischer 2005; Loescher 1992; Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006), regional consequences for health (e.g. Davis et al. 2003; Ghobarah et al. 2003) economic decline in the neighborhood (e.g. Murdoch and Sandler 2002, 2004), and contagion effects (e.g. Forsberg 2009; Lake and Rothchild 1998b). The second significant body of work instead focuses on the external events and conditions that make civil war in a country more likely, or affect its durability or outcome. This includes focusing on political, economic, military and other types of external support (Maoz and San-Akca 2012; Salehyan 2007, 2009; Salehyan et al. 2011) and how access to resources and trade networks in a region becomes a crucial driver of conflict and in the formation of war economies (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005; Pugh and Cooper 2004).

The present chapter categorizes the transnational dimensions into three clusters. First, the causes of civil conflict are clustered; second, an ongoing civil war spurs additional conflict in a proximate location due to contagion; and third, conflicts are connected within a region in terms of linkages between issues, actors, and motives. The chapter then proceeds to discuss the implications of transnational dimensions for war-to-peace transitions and durable peace. Last, the chapter discusses some of the remaining lacunae.

Transnational Dimension 1: Clustering

Mapping civil wars display that they are clustered both in space and in time. The spatial clustering indicates that the likelihood of armed conflict in a country partly depends on the presence of armed conflicts in its neighborhood. These clustering patterns are found globally, regardless of which time period (for which data is available) is examined. Moreover, it is not just a visual observation. Statistical research based on global data over time has found evidence for a so-called neighborhood effect of civil war (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Gleditsch 2007; Hegre and Sambanis 2006; Sambanis 2001; Ward and Gleditsch 2002). This entails that a country is signifi-
Transnational Dimensions of Civil Wars: Clustering, Contagion and Connectedness

cantly more likely to experience an eruption of internal conflict, when one or more of its neighbors experiences civil conflicts. Thus, countries located in “bad neighborhoods”, a term suggested by Michael E. Brown (1996), are increasingly likely to experience armed conflict themselves compared to a country located in a region which is predominantly at peace. In fact, this finding has been shown to be one of the most robust predictors of civil war (Hegre and Sambanis 2006).

The observation that conflicts in one place correlates with another conflict erupting nearby can, at first glance, prompt the conclusion that contagion effects are at play, whereby the existence of armed conflict in one location \textit{in itself} brings about an increased risk of civil war elsewhere. However, clustering in time and space may be generated by two distinct processes. On the one hand, the clustering of civil wars may be explained by such contagion effects, that is, the existence of a conflict renders the outbreak of another conflict in a neighboring country more likely. On the other hand, conflicts may cluster spatially as a consequence of a corresponding spatial grouping of the factors that are related to conflict (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Gleditsch 2002; Hegre et al. 2001; O'Loughlin et al. 1998; Ward 2005). If the causes of conflicts are clustered parallel to a similar clustering of conflict, there is a risk that one incorrectly draws the conclusion that one conflict leads to the eruption of another through contagion.\footnote{The observed relationship between the first and second conflict could be spurious. With the contribution by Buhaug and Gleditsch (2008), there seems to be evidence of both processes in place. Thus, spatial clustering of relevant country characteristics generates a neighborhood effect of conflict, but even when removing the impact of these determinants some clustering remains, lending support for contagion effects.}

What determinants of civil wars then are prone to clustering? Some of the factors that the scholarly community identify as having a substantial impact on the risk of civil war tend to cluster geographically, just as civil conflicts do. For instance, countries geographically close to each
other tend to have similar political system and economic standard (Elkink 2011; Gleditsch 2002; Gleditsch and Ward 2000; O'Loughlin, et al. 1998; Ward 2005). In their test of spatial clustering of the determinants of civil war, Buhaug and Gleditsch’s model includes measures for precisely those two variables (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008). It is also possible that some more static conditions, such as some regions being rich in natural resources, may account for some of the clustering. (REF?)

Observed geographical clustering of civil wars may hence be a consequence of a similar clustering of those factors that make conflict increasingly more likely. In such cases, the observed conflicts may in fact not be related to each other but generated by domestic processes. In other words, the clustering is not truly a “transnational dimension” of the civil wars in the sense that the conflicts are causally linked; they are rather clustered because their determinants are. However, as mentioned previously there is also evidence suggesting that some conflicts are in fact causally linked through contagion effects. This process is outlined next.

<Figure 5.1 near here>

Transnational Dimension 2: Contagion

The second transnational dimension discussed in this chapter involves the situation when civil war in one location renders civil war in a nearby location increasingly likely. This process lacks conceptual consensus and a plethora of terms are used including contagion, diffusion, infection, bandwagoning, imitation, emulation, horizontal escalation, etc. For simplicity, this chapter uses the term contagion, defined as a process whereby internal conflict in one location alters the probability of another internal conflict erupting in another location at a later point in time.\(^5\) The fact that contagion is defined as a process and involves two units – one with conflict and one that is potentially affected – has led different studies to apply fundamentally different conceptualiza-
tions and empirical foci. I will return to some of the implications of these complexities later in this chapter. Below follows a review of existing explanations for contagion, categorized as direct and indirect forms of contagion.

Direct Forms of Contagion

Direct contagion takes the form of tangible factors such as arms, refugees, and other factors relating to the direct spillover of conflict externalities across borders and linked to the onset of a new conflict. First, both scholarly accounts and policy-reports suggest that refugee flows may contribute to the spread of civil conflict (Lischer 2005; Loescher 1992; Loescher and Monahan 1989; Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006; Stedman and Tanner 2003; Weiner 1992/1993, 1993; Whitaker 2003). Several mechanisms are suggested, including that a large refugee flow may disrupt the demographic balance in the host state, exacerbate competition over scarce resources, or through the militarization of refugee camps. In a large-N study with global coverage, Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006) show that countries that harbor large refugee flows indeed are at higher risk of experiencing a civil war onset. Second, when conflict is underway in one state, it often leads to an increased availability of arms. When border control is insufficient, these arms may be transferred to neighboring states where aggrieved groups may be willing to initiate violent conflict as soon as they have the ability to do so. The inflow of weapons at knock-down rates may provide them with such capacity. Data scarcity has so far made it difficult to test this claim. Third, a civil war in one country affects the economy of the surrounding states. As noted by Murdoch and Sandler (2002, 2004), civil wars may lead to a reduction in trade and investment in proximate countries, which in turn heightens the probability of conflict.

Fourth, characteristics of the border between the conflict country and a neighbor have been suggested to affect the likelihood of direct spillover. If two states share a mountainous border it
may make spillover less likely, since this would hamper the movement of, for instance, arms and mercenaries from the conflict state to the neighboring state. It has also been suggested that spillover is more likely when two states share a long border. A long, shared border is more difficult to monitor; hence, it is associated with an increased likelihood that weapons and armed groups move from the conflict state to its neighbor. However, as with a mountainous border, evidence that supports this proposition is lacking (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008). Given that separatist conflicts typically are fought close to international borders, spillover effects may be more likely in such conflicts compared to civil wars concerning government power, as also demonstrated by Buhaug and Gleditsch (2008).

Last, some forms of direct spillover may be prevented. Beardsley (2011) has identified peacekeeping as a factor that decreases the risk of contagion. Peacekeeping operations are frequently deployed with the specific purpose of preventing contagion by securing borders, preventing large-scale refugee flows and assisting repatriation. His analysis supports the notion that peacekeeping indeed decreases the risk of contagion.

Indirect Forms of Contagion

Indirect contagion is the intangible process whereby conflict in one country provides lessons, inspiration, and clues for actors in other countries. This can be in the form of strategic learning (for example, Bakke 2013; Elkins and Simmons 2005; Hill et al. 1998) or that conflict in one location makes groups in other locations perceive an increased likelihood of success (for instance, Lake and Rothchild 1998a). As such, conflict in one state may inspire one or more groups in another state to increase their own demands and decide to pursue demands using violent means (Byman and Pollack 2008). However, the effect is not clear-cut. While it is possible that conflict in one place may lead other actors to update its beliefs about the likelihood of success in such a way that conflict becomes more likely, it may also in some cases horrify rather
than inspire. For instance, Buhaug and Gleditsch (2008) argue that more intense conflicts, in terms of fatalities, make contagion more likely. However, their analysis finds no support for this claim. One possible interpretation is that while high-intensity conflicts create more direct spillover, they may also horrify rather than inspire potential insurgents in other countries.

Indirect forms of contagion may be conditioned by the characteristics of a civil war. As noted above, Buhaug and Gleditsch (2008) find that separatist conflicts are more likely to lead to contagion compared to wars fought over government power. This may be due to more spillover effects, but also because such conflicts typically involve regional ethnic groups that have ties to kin across borders, who are more likely to act on demonstration effects. The importance of such transnational ethnic groups are noted by multiple researchers (for example, Ayres and Saideman 2000; Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Cederman et al. 2009; Forsberg 2008, 2013, 2014b; Gleditsch 2007; Saideman and Ayres 2000; Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006). In these studies it is suggested, and generally supported empirically, that the involvement in conflict by a group in one country increases the likelihood of conflict erupting in a nearby country that shares the same group; the rationale being that such groups are more likely than other groups to be inspired to increase their own demands.

Last, it has been suggested that contagion is more likely when the rebel side is successful, supposedly due to stronger inspiration effects (Hill and Rothchild 1986; Hill, et al. 1998). Related to this, there is a widespread supposition that territorial concessions granted to separatist groups may spur other proximate ethnic groups to demand similar concessions. Within states, Walter (2003, 2006) has found evidence of such domino effects. However, until recently there has been scant investigation of the cross-border effects of granting territorial concessions. Using new data with global coverage, Forsberg (2013) finds no evidence of domino effects either
across or within borders; territorial concessions granted to rebel groups do not appear to inspire other groups to rebel.

Susceptibility to Contagion

Regardless of the magnitude and severity of spillover, and regardless of the opportunities for strategic learning produced by a civil war, a country has to be conducive to conflict in order for a contagion process to transpire. As pointed out by Lake and Rothchild (1998a), conflict primarily spreads to those states which are already at risk of conflict and is, conversely, less likely to spread to countries with a low baseline risk of conflict in terms of domestic conditions. Arguments and findings in previous research point to a set of conditions that makes countries more or less likely to be “infected”. First, countries with higher levels of state capacity are suggested to be less susceptible to contagion, which is supported empirically (Braithwaite 2010). As noted by Braithwaite, state capacity includes “stability, control, protection from predation, the extraction of resources, and the ability to adapt and respond to unexpected crises” (Braithwaite 2010:313). Thus, highly capable states have the tools to confine domestic unrest to legal action rather than rebellion. Also, such states are arguably better equipped to set up “firewalls” (Solingen 2012) through efficient border control and thus prevent some of the spillover of war externalities, such as the movement of arms and mercenaries across borders. Second, regime type may have an impact on a state’s susceptibility to contagion. As suggested by Maves and Braithwaite (2013), among authoritarian states, those with elected legislatures are increasingly receptive to contagion since they may breed latent opposition groups. In addition to such institutional features, the ethnic composition of states may matter. Findings in Forsberg (2008) suggest that countries that are ethnically polarized, in the sense that there are a few roughly equally strong contenders, are more susceptible to contagion. Such societies supposedly form a delicate balance in which the input of
a potentially inspirational conflict next-door may create the momentum required for a group to challenge its own state with rebellion.

Last, proximity stands out as the primary medium in which contagion operates. Countries in the near proximity of a country involved in civil war are arguably more exposed both to spillover of externalities and to demonstration effects (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Lake and Rothchild 1998a; Maves and Braithwaite 2013).  

Transnational Dimension 3: Connectedness

The third transnational dimension discussed in this chapter is termed connectedness. While contagion refers to a quite specific process involving a sequence of actions and a direction from one state to another, conflicts can also internationalize more broadly and involve a larger set of countries, issues, and actors. While potentially emanating from, or partly featuring, a contagion process or from the fact that structural factors in a region are conducive to conflict, connections between different conflicts within a region can take on a broader transnational dimension. With time, actors from different conflicts may start to cooperate with each other, they may partly have similar goals or a common enemy, and they may share bonds through ethnic or ideological affiliation. Over time it is also increasingly likely that there will be actors that see significant benefits from keeping the conflicts alive, such as mercenaries and traders involved in war economies.

In the extreme form, trans-border connections between issues and actors within a region is referred to as a regional conflict complex (Wallensteen and Sollenberg 1998). In such cases conflicts are mutually reinforcing to the extent that it may be infeasible to solve just one without considering the regional aspects. While the concept of contagion almost implies a one-off event, or at least a directional process, interconnectedness between actors and issues can be much more
long-standing and complex. To understand the transnational dimensions of civil war, and how
wars may evolve into complex and enduring instability in a region, we also need to address vari-
ous cross-border linkages, including how factors such as trans-border trade in arms and exploita-
tion of resources play a role.

Connections between conflicts in a region influence both the incentives and capacity of a mul-
titude of actors. When conflicts are interlinked it often means that conflict issues become more
complex. In particular in regional conflict complexes, it will be difficult to separate different
incompatibilities from each other and therefore difficult to solve any given conflict in isolation.
Also, a larger set of actors are likely to have a stake in a given outcome and as a consequence
there are more potential spoilers. With more reasons to choose to use violence, violence also
becomes increasingly likely and more intense. When conflicts are interlinked there is a large
possibility that resources become more available – and more abundant. Easier access to re-
sources then serves to strengthen warring parties’ fighting capacity. Although difficult to resolve,
regional conflict complexes are not completely intractable. Several of the regions that were cate-
gorized as conflict complexes not too long ago, such as Southeast Asia, Southern Africa, and
Central America, no longer exemplify regional conflict complexes.

Below follows a review of two important components of regional connections of civil wars:
external support and war economies. In common for external support and the economic links that
characterize war economies is that they often rely on preexisting networks based on ideological
or ethnic affinity or stem from having a common adversary.

External Support and Proxy Warfare

Many conflicts experience some type of external involvement; in fact, according to the UCDP
External Support Dataset about 75% of all conflict dyads after 1975 have at some point received
external support (Croicu et al. 2011; Högbladh et al. 2011; Pettersson 2011). External support
adds to the complexity of conflict; for instance, evidence suggests that insurgencies that receive outside support generally last longer (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Hazen 2013), are more intensive in terms of combat fatalities (Lacina 2006), decrease the chance for a negotiated settlement (Cunningham 2006, 2010) and increase the likelihood of international disputes and conflicts (Gleditsch et al. 2008a). External support involves a diverse set of actors both on the supply and demand side: both rebel groups and regimes receive support and both state and non-state actors provide support, and the support varies in type and magnitude. For instance, states that are external to a civil war often seek influence by supporting one of the belligerents either directly by participating with troops or indirectly by supplying arms, logistical assistance, financial resources, etc. The examples are abundant: Rebels from the Free Syrian Army seek shelter in neighboring Turkey while the Kurdish Worker’s Party involved in conflict with the government of Turkey relies on sanctuaries within Iraq. The Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) equipped and trained their fighters in neighboring South Africa during the civil war in Mozambique. Perhaps the most extreme form of cross-border military activity is military intervention by an outside power in an ongoing internal conflict, i.e. the direct deployment and involvement of troops by a foreign power, often but not always a neighboring state or regional power. Examples include Vietnam’s backing of the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUFNS) in Cambodia and the intervention to support the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) by Angola, Rwanda and Uganda.

When a state provides support to a rebel group in another country, it is not always primarily driven by solidarity towards the rebel group but rather provide support to destabilize a rival regime (Byman 2005; Salehyan, et al. 2011). Such war by proxy is often two-directional. For instance, the government of Uganda supported SPLA in Southern Sudan while the government of Sudan supported the Uganda-based rebel group LRA. Uganda and Sudan also fought a similar
undeclared war against each other in DRC (Prunier 2004). In this way, two states can be engaged in an attempt to destabilize each other, eschewing the much more costly alternative of direct confrontation (Salehyan 2010). Proxy wars are by definition a transnational dimension of contemporary warfare; moreover, they illustrate that the line between inter and intrastate armed conflict is blurred (Gleditsch et al. 2008b; Mumford 2013).

Apart from outside military support, ranging from sharing intelligence and allowing access to territory to overt military intervention, external support can also be manifested by financial support. For instance, during much of the 1980s, South Africa provided extensive funding to the Angolan rebel group UNITA (UCDP). External economic support illustrates that the transnational dimension of external support may extend far beyond the immediate neighborhood of a civil war. Migrants living in far-off locations tend to transfer large amounts of resources to its kin. Evidence suggest that such support from diaspora and emigrant communities are crucial both for the initiation of rebellion (Miller and Ritter 2014) and for bolstering the fighting capacity of rebel groups engaged in conflict (Gunaratna 2003; Nitzschke and Studdard 2005).

Economic Linkages and War Economies

As mentioned above, many warring parties receive financial support during civil wars. However, the transnational economic factors of civil wars extend beyond issues of external support, especially in conflicts located in regions with lucrative resources. As argued by Ballentine and Sherman, economic dimensions of civil war may be those characterized to largest degree of transnationalism: “Both the supply and demand sides of war-making have become internationalized as combatants have exploited the opportunities inherent in weakly regulated national and global marketplaces to trade lucrative natural resources for war materiel and financing” (Ballentine et al. 2003: 9).
When economic activity to a high extent becomes militarized and resources are mobilized to finance warring groups, war economies are formed (Ballentine, et al. 2003; Berdal et al. 2000; Pugh and Cooper 2004). In the type of war economies that often plague civil wars, predation, rent-seeking, and illicit transfers of goods and services become prevalent. The consequences are often detrimental for state capacity, institutional growth, and economic prosperity. It also creates a blurred line between political conflict and criminal activity. These war economies have a strong transnational character.

Many war economies center on illegal cross-border trade in natural resources, which may become a way of financing rebellions. When actors are involved in armed conflict they are sometimes the target of international sanctions. To uphold fighting capacity, these actors may come to rely on regional trade networks as a way to escape formal sanctions. Not discounting that grievances and ideological conviction drive many conflicts, there are also many examples indicating that some actors are motivated by financial gain and profit from continued warfare. To provide some examples, alluvial diamonds were important in the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Angola; timber in Burma/Myanmar, the Philippines, and Cambodia; and drugs in the conflicts in Colombia and Afghanistan (Le Billon 2001).

A second important trade commodity in war economies is arms. More often than not, rebel groups fighting a civil war do so using weapons that originate outside their own state. Although most arms are manufactured legally in the industrialized world, once they make its way into conflict regions, they become an element of regional smuggling. Arms and natural resources are often part of the same trade network, whereby arms is procured in return for access to natural resources. For example, when Charles Taylor was ruling Liberia, he provided mercenaries, arms and territorial bases for rebel groups operating in neighboring Sierra Leone. He did so having an
interest of gaining control of regional economic networks and diamond mines. In the end, this tactic led to the involvement of other states in West Africa, such as Guinea and Burkina Faso.

The illicit trade mentioned above – be it in arms, mercenaries, or resources such as drugs and diamonds – are often made available through various types of political and social networks, including ethnic ties. In addition, it should be noted here that different types of links and networks often overlap. For instance, the establishment of illicit economic networks usually requires some preexisting network based on for instance political or ethnic affiliations. While political and social networks are based on affinity, the networks are often motivated by a shared animosity towards one or more other actors.

Implications for Civil War Outcomes

The fact that civil wars have external dimensions has a number of important implications for their duration and likelihood to transition from war to peace. It also entails that peace in one state may have effects that cross borders. The coming sections explore some of the transnational dimensions that shape the prospects for a civil war to end and for peace to become durable.

External Dimensions that Obstruct Peace

The transnational dimensions of civil war have several implications that may make a war-to-peace transition less likely. First, when conflicts are connected across borders there are more stakeholders. Particularly in regional conflict complexes there is a high risk that there are actors that benefit from continued warfare. This includes those involved in illicit trade and war economies, those that attempt to destabilize adversaries through proxy warfare, and mercenaries and private security firms. Many of these actors are not driven by grievances or ideological conviction and for them peace could mean unemployment or the discontinuation of lucrative com-
merce. With more stakeholders involved there is also increased uncertainty due to changing alliances. EX: Zaire/DRC. With a larger set of stakeholders it will typically also be more difficult to craft a settlement that all major parties conceive of as a better option than continued conflict. Hence, if a peace process is initiated there are more internal and external spoilers (Stedman 1997).

Second, a common feature of highly internationalized conflicts is that more resources are available and also more to fight for. When warring parties receive large amounts of economic and military support from external actors, they are likely more able and willing to continue fighting (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Hazen 2013). With material inducement, warring parties may also consider a peace settlement as a less attractive alternative (Cunningham 2006, 2010). Abundant resources and trade networks across borders also imply more stakeholders, as mentioned above, many of which have a vested interest in keeping peace at bay. Thus, economic dimensions of war imply key challenges for peacemaking (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005; Nitzschke and Studdard 2005).

Third, an increasing number of actors involved in conflict, and more sustained cross-border linkages, typically also bring with it a wider set of conflict issues and incompatibilities, for example refugee flows and repatriation. To exemplify, the armed conflicts in Southern Africa involved a set of deeply connected issues, such as the status of Namibia, the apartheid system, and South Africa’s involvement in Angola and Mozambique (Wallensteen 2002). As such, it proved difficult to settle just one conflict.

Fourth, peace processes that are successful in a national perspective may have negative consequences regionally. As with contagion of conflict, this process may manifest itself both as indirect inspirational spill-over and direct material spill-over. Peace has the potential of indirectly raising the probability of conflict elsewhere through demonstration effects (Kuran 1998; Lake
and Rothchild 1998a). When a civil war ends by a negotiated settlement, rebel groups typically gain concessions. If such concessions are generous, they may inspire groups in neighboring countries to increase their own demands and challenge the ruling power, which may escalate to a violent outcome. The relevance of such demonstration effects are difficult to assess empirically, as it involves cognitive processes that are not readily observable. However, a recent study using global data finds no support for the suggestion that granting territorial concessions to rebel groups are linked to new onsets among neighboring states (Forsberg 2013).

Peace in one state may also cause direct material spill-over. This includes the transfer of weaponry and ex-combatants to new locations following a conflict resolution process, resulting from a failed DDR process. If weapons are not collected and ex-combatants not provided with an alternative, former fighters may become mercenaries fighting wars in neighboring countries. If not fully integrated into post-conflict society, formed combatants are easy targets for mobilization by other actors. By using existing networks and bonds of affinity, based on ethnicity or former military cooperation, armed groups in nearby countries can recruit demobilized combatants lacking economic opportunities in their home countries (Nilsson 2008a; Themnér 2011). Arms trade can also be a major problem that causes regional instability when conflict ends. When DDR programs fail, regional networks can take advantage of large quantities of arms becoming easily available to exploit. These arms can make their way into new areas, precipitating an eruption of new conflict somewhere else.

External Dimensions that Promote Peace

While cross-border linkages carry with them several complexities that work against a war-to-peace transition, there are also several external dimensions that could potentially promote peace.

First, the involvement of external actors through, for instance, third party mediation and peacekeeping missions have proven valuable to reach and sustain peace in many places. In the
216 peace agreements identified by the UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset in the 1975-2011 period, third parties were involved as mediators and/or signatories in more than 80% of the cases (Harbom et al. 2006; Högbladh 2011). Also, third party mediation makes negotiated settlements more likely (REF).

Second, peace in one place, or a key event in one place, can bring with it a positive domino effect whereby additional conflicts are resolved. In other words, conflict resolution may have positive externalities: the settlement of one civil war may pave the way for settling other wars in the neighborhood. As noted by Wallensteen (2002), such peace spillover can transpire both as a consequence of settling the hard case (the most difficult conflict) first or by starting with the case most open for resolution. Evidence in favor of such “peace by piece” strategies has also been substantiated by Nilsson (2008b).

Third, a number of those regional obstacles identified above can also increase the prospects for peace if put in reverse. For instance, external support often prolongs and intensity conflict by bolstering the parties’ fighting capacity. A logical corollary to this is that the withdrawal of support may increase the prospects of the parties reaching a peaceful settlement, since lack of resources may push parties towards war weariness and a mutual hurting stalemate where a settlement becomes a more attractive option (Hazen 2013). As noted by Ballentine and Sherman (Ballentine, et al. 2003), such an effect was witnessed in Mozambique, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Related to this point, regional trade networks increase the pool of resources available to warring actors and involve actors who profit from sustaining conflict. But a warring party which is reliant on a continuous flow of resources is also quite sensitive to the fact that there is no guarantee that resources will continue tomorrow (Hazen 2013). As a consequence, external efforts to obstruct illicit trade and monetary transfers may indirectly or directly work to promote peace (Hazen 2013). If warring parties rely on external parties to sustain its fighting capacity, then
sanctions regimes and joint efforts to monitor illicit trade may at least in theory increase the like-
lihood of peace (Wallensteen 2011).

Remaining Knowledge Gaps

As evidenced by empirical patterns and systematic research, we can safely conclude that all civil
wars have transnational dimensions, with variation found in magnitude and types. Several find-
ings can be considered empirically robust. First, several studies point to the importance of war
economies and cross-cutting allegiances in sustaining conflicts. Second, there is strong support
for a neighborhood effect of civil war, stemming from both clustering of civil war determinants
and contagion effects. Third, third parties are important actors in both reaching negotiated set-
tlements and in mitigating the regional effects of wars. Yet, many knowledge gaps remain, due
to methodological challenges, data scarcity, and underdeveloped theories. This section will out-
line some of these lacunae.

Methodological Issues

With contagion, researchers face a number of methodological challenges. First, contagion is a
process which, at least in a quantitative setting, is unobservable. What we do observe, and what
we draw inference from, is a correlation in time and space whereby conflict in one location at t₁
is followed by conflict in a proximate location at t₂; such strategy risks both over- and underes-
timating instances of contagion. The risk of overestimation stems from the fact that just because
two conflicts erupted in sequence close to each other does not necessarily mean that they are
linked. The risk of underestimating cases of contagion comes from the fact that contagion may
travel further distances both in time (i.e. compared to any standard time lag) and in space (i.e.
beyond the immediate neighborhood).
Second, contagion is complex to model empirically as it involves two units – one with conflict (a potential source or initial stimulus for contagion) and one that is potentially affected (a target of contagion). This has led researchers to apply different conceptualizations and empirical strategies when studying contagion, for instance if contagion should be studied with monadic or dyadic units of analysis. The most common approach in quantitative studies is to use the monadic country-year approach (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Gleditsch 2007; Hegre and Sambanis 2006; Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006; Ward and Gleditsch 2002). In these studies, neighborhood conflict is either collapsed into a dichotomous variable (a spatial lag) or a summary measure of some kind (for example, a weighted index of conflict in the neighborhood). An alternative strategy is to use a dyadic setup, consisting of a state with conflict and one panel for each state considered at risk for contagion (Black 2012; Forsberg 2008, 2014b). As these two strategies follow different conceptualizations of conflict contagion, it is no surprise that they generate different findings (for a discussion, see Forsberg 2014a). Since contagion is a process involving a chain of events and at least two units, there may not be one perfect modeling strategy. However, future work should strive to identify the unit of analysis that best captures contagion, while being cognizant of the inherent methodological challenges.

As a final methodological issue, an important strategy to improve our understanding of the transnational dimensions of civil war is to further study puzzling variations and deviant cases. What is with e.g. Malawi, Botswana and Zambia that have withheld them from experiencing armed conflict when they according to existing findings in civil war research should be high risk cases? In particular Zambia has some of the features that would make it likely to experience civil war, with ethnic competition, significant involvement in the region including some direct meddling in some conflicts, and several neighboring countries experiencing civil wars.
Data Issues

The study of contagion and connections between different conflicts is further hampered by empirical gaps. These data issues fall into three categories: data is not available, data is not readily observable, and data does not provide a good match with the theoretical argument. First, several propositions have not been systematically tested due to data scarcity. For instance, several studies suggest that clandestine external support help sustain and escalate conflict. However, the fact that not all support is overt by definition makes it difficult to collect data with decent coverage. The same can be said regarding the impact of regional networks that smuggle arms for natural resources across national borders. However, some data gaps might be more easily overcome. For instance, theoretical arguments suggesting that refugee flows create instability in host states when ethnic balances are upset have until recently been tested with proxies since data on the ethnicity of refugees were lacking. Recent efforts to trace the ethnicity of refugees (Rüegger and Bohnet 2012) as well as the location of refugee camps (Bohnet et al. 2013) are thus promising. In addition, it should be feasible to conduct a broader data collection regarding the success rate of DDR programs, which could help test the assertion that failed processes could lead to the movement of arms and ex-combatants to neighboring hot-spots.

Second, some of the theoretical suggestions have been difficult to assess because data is not readily observable. This pertains mainly to indirect processes involving strategic learning. Such cognitive processes have typically been inferred only by proxies. Although difficult, an avenue to pursue could involve the collection of survey data on how individuals respond to, among other things, learning.

Third, the data used for empirical tests do not always match the theory well. For instance, many of the conditions found to correlate with contagion are structural factors, such as characteristics of the initial conflict and state capacity. However, structural conditions cannot in and of themselves cause contagion, but merely work as enabling factors, or mediums (Solingen 2012).
Some explanations for contagion focus on potential actors, such as transnational ethnic groups and refugees, but are usually tested empirically using country-level data. Also, as pointed out by Black (2012), much of the existing scholarship disregards the role of state action in driving or blocking contagion. To address this gap, he advances an explanation that suggests that contagion is unlikely to take place without deliberate state action. However, deliberate action by regimes may also block contagion, as suggested by Braithwaite (2010). Also, other social agents may be important. For instance, third parties may (strive to) impede contagion through mediation, coercive diplomacy, intervention, sanctions, etc. However, with the important exception of Kathman (2010, 2011), who finds that states intervene to prevent contagion to high-interest regions, such attempts have been under studied thus far. In sum, more research is needed on the agents that could potentially drive or block contagion. Another point related to matching theory and data concerns the unit of analysis. The transnational dimensions of civil war by definition require that analyses bring in a regional perspective. Yet, at the same time, one can also argue for the need to disaggregate. Many of the theoretical arguments pertaining to contagion (e.g. through transnational ethnic ties, or inspiration); external support and intervention; and the motives driving war economies concern the behavior of, and links between, groups. Assessing such arguments using country-level data, which is still the dominant strategy, may not be the most adequate method. Hence, more systematic research on actors rather than countries is imperative.

Conclusion
References


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Prepared for Mason, T. David and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell (Eds) *What Do We Know About Civil Wars?* Rowman & Littlefield. The sections on contagion draws on work previously published in Forsberg, E. (2014) Diffusion of Civil War: A Cautionary Tale, *International Studies Review*, 16(2). A number of people have contributed directly or indirectly to the present book chapter, including the book editors T. David Mason and Sara Mitchell; my colleagues at Uppsala University Mats Hammarström, Magnus Öberg, Hanne Fjelde, Marga Sollenberg, and Niklas Karlén; as well as Tanja Börzel, Etel Solingen, Aida Hozic, Detlef Jahn, Thomas Risse, and Arthur Stein.

Civil war is defined as a situation where the government of a state and a non-state opposition movement have a declared incompatibility and the parties’ use violence to achieve their goals results in at least 25 annual fatalities (Pettersson and Themnér 2012). The terms “internal conflict”, “civil conflict”, and “civil war” are used interchangeably.

However, even conflicts that are short in duration and located in a relatively isolated place may have significant transnational dimensions. For instance, the brief coup in the Comoros 1989 was spearheaded by the French mercenary Bob Denard. After seizing control of the country, France and South Africa pressured Denard to leave the Comoros (UCDP).

Ross and Homer (1976) provide an illustrative example of this phenomenon. Conditions relating to weather, such as average temperatures and precipitation, are clustered geographically and the technologies used for farming are clustered in a similar manner. However, the fact that farmers adopt similar technologies may not necessarily be a consequence of them mimicking each other (diffusion) but may simply be the result of the farmers being faced with the same conditions favoring a specific technique. This difficulty in distinguishing between diffusion and
spatial clustering is sometimes termed Galton’s Problem (Galton 1889; for a recent application, see Jahn 2006).

5 This definition of civil war contagion is in line with the commonly used definition of diffusion as an event or transition in one place affecting the likelihood of a similar event or transition happening at another place at a later point in time (Elkins and Simmons 2005; Strang 1991).

6 However, it should be noted that spatial proximity has typically not been treated as an important determinant of contagion, but as a selection criterion used to identify high-risk cases of contagion. This hampers our ability to draw inference about its relative importance.

7 In other words, the three dimensions that help structure the present chapter are not fully mutually exclusive but may conceptually and empirically to some extent be difficult to discern from each other.

8 For an excellent review of how the reasons, resources, and resolve of actors (i.e. the Triple-R typology suggested by Ohlson (2008)) relate to transnational linkages of conflicts, see Fjelde (2012).

9 These problems are discussed in more detail in Forsberg (2014a)

10 This allows for testing explanations for contagion that vary across dyads. For instance, it has been suggested that refugees fleeing from a conflict to a neighboring country may cause conflict contagion. With the dyadic setup, it is possible to examine the number of refugees fleeing from the conflict country to an at-risk country, rather than aggregating all refugees hosted by a given state, with no reference to their origin.
Figure 5.1: Clustering

Contextual factors
(e.g. poverty, regime type)

Civil war 1

Civil war 2

Figure 5.2: Contagion

Civil war 1

Civil war 2
Figure 5.3: Connectedness

- Civil war 1
- Civil war 2
- Civil war 3
- Civil war 4
- Civil war 5

Connections between Civil wars 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.