Trust and Treason: Social Network Structure as a Source of Flexibility in Peace Negotiations

Jannie Lilja

Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Sweden

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Correspondence
Jannie Lilja, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University
Box 514, SE 751 20 Uppsala, Sweden;
e-mail: jannie.lilja@pcr.uu.se.

Abstract

To reach a negotiated peace settlement, the parties to the conflict have to show flexibility in their negotiation positions. This article examines why some rebel groups are flexible on the main issue of contention, whereas others are not. The study explores rebels' social network structure as a source of negotiation flexibility. The proposition that a rebel group structured as a ''trust network'' can manage the risks of peace making through a ''trust mechanism'' of information sharing, verification, and mutual influence between rebel negotiators and non-negotiating rebel leaders, is consistent with a procedural justice logic. The proposition is analyzed for negotiations between LTTE and the Sri Lankan government, and Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) and the Indonesian government. The findings support the proposition, and highlight the potential of social network analysis to further the understanding of conflict resolution. Policy wise, the evolution of network structure implies that the likelihood of negotiation success varies over time.

> GAM in the field will do anything for Hasan di Tiro, what they won't do is surrender when he asks them to surrender. (Nasryllah Dalawi, in Schulze, 2004: 21)

To reach a negotiated peace settlement, the parties to the conflict have to show flexibility in their negotiation positions. Flexibility is decisive for creating an overlapping bargaining space, thus making it more likely that a peace process will produce a final settlement (cf. Hopmann, 1974; Druckman, 1993; Druckman & Mitchell, 1995c). This study focuses on the neglected issue of flexibility on the rebel side. Peace negotiations

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may, in fact, represent a greater risk for rebels than continued armed struggle, particularly for those with separatist objectives. Talks about solutions short of separate statehood may lead to accusations of ''selling out the cause,'' and could jeopardize a rebel group's *raison d'être*. The risks of peacemaking have been pointed out in previous research (Darby, 2001; Stedman, 1997). Given the risks involved, the question is, however, why some rebel groups, participating in peace negotiations, are flexible on the main issue of contention whereas others are not.

Prevailing research would explain rebels' flexibility largely as a reflection of their perception of power relative to the government and their relative military strength in particular (cf. Fearon, 1995; Powell, 2004). The concept of ''best alternative to negotiated agreement'' (BATNA) captures the degree to which a party perceives a situation as hurting and is dependent on a negotiated solution. The better the alternative to a negotiated agreement, the less dependent the party is on a negotiated outcome. The worse the BATNA, the more flexibility is expected (Lax & Sebenius, 1991; Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1992; Odell, 2002, 2009). Both the BATNA concept and the traditional bargaining theory focus on the relationship between the adversary parties. The weakness of these approaches, however, is that of treating the parties as unitary actors. While resting on a perceptual basis, both approaches fail to specify the subjects holding perceptions (cf. Reiter, 2003: 36; Stanley & Sawyer, 2009).

This article therefore suggests another source of rebel flexibility found in rebels' social network structure. What is emphasized is the interconnectedness between rebel negotiators and nonnegotiating rebel leaders and how this affects their calculation of risks. Whereas networks have been studied in connection to, for example, terrorism and organized crime, their significance in peace processes is less understood.

This study represents a first attempt to systematically explore the association between the social network structure and the flexibility of a rebel group in peace negotiations. ''Flexibility'' is defined in behavioral terms as a sustained movement on the main issue of contention from an initial position toward a compromise position. The proposition here is that a rebel group structured as a ''trust network'' (Tilly, 2005) will be more likely to demonstrate flexibility.[1] Two cases of peace negotiations between rebel groups and their respective governments are examined: the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) and the Indonesian government in 2005, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan government in 2002–2003.

The findings support the proposition that a structure, resembling that of the trust network, consisting of nondyadic and reciprocal relationships, facilitates calculated risk-taking by rebel negotiators and nonnegotiating rebel leaders. This structure gives rise to a ''trust mechanism'' that makes the access to, and verification of, information by nonnegotiating rebels possible. The structure also implies mutual influence between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders whereby the former consult with, and seek approval from, the latter. Hence, when a new position is declared, it already has the buy-in of key nonnegotiating leaders and is more likely to sustain. What is noteworthy about the mechanism is that it serves key procedural justice functions of transparency, fair representation,

[1]A detailed definition of the trust network follows below.

fair treatment, and fair play. ''Internal'' procedural justice concerns within a rebel group thus turn out to be important for their negotiation flexibility. In a nontrust network, the negotiator may show flexibility in spite of disagreement from nonnegotiating leaders—followed by group fractionalization, peace-process collapse, or failed treaty implementation.

Why is it relevant to focus on rebels' social networks to explain their flexibility in negotiations? Social network analysis helps to link structural—collective level—conditions with causal agents at the individual level (cf. Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). Although social network analysis could be applied both to the state and nonstate party to civil war, a difference between the two is the lack of institutionalized checks, roles, and mandates on the nonstate side, even if only by degree. The situation faced by a rebel negotiator is likely to be different from that of the government counterpart who may, first, be an elected representative; second, have assumed political office on a platform of peace and thus been mandated to show negotiating flexibility; and, third, be granted security protection meaning that his or her physical safety does not depend on the outcome of talks. These conditions are less likely to be present on the rebel side, and the result is a greater degree of risk associated with peace talks. This said, government representatives also face risks, as exemplified by the assassination of the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin because of his involvement in the Middle East peace process (Peri, 2000).

On the rebel side, many risks associated with a peace process thus stem from within. The rebel negotiator risks being accused of treason and corruption for ''selling out the cause,'' resulting in sanctions by fellow rebels. The rebel negotiator may be killed, denounced, or lose authority over subordinates. The risks are mirrored by those perceived by nonnegotiating rebels who are at a disadvantage when it comes to the ability to access and verify information from talks, or to influence negotiation positions. These nonnegotiating rebels may therefore sense that deals are struck by self-interested negotiators who withhold information from the talks and do not fairly represent the collective interest (cf. Stedman, 1996; King, 1997; Walter, 1997). The uncertainty that marks the relationship between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders is likely to affect the negotiating flexibility of the rebel group.

Since the association between rebels' network structure and their negotiation behavior is largely unmapped, the next section outlines what is more broadly known about the relationship between social network structure and collective action; section three explains the method; section four describes the social network structures of LTTE and GAM at the time for peace talks, followed by an analysis of how they affected negotiating flexibility. The conclusion discusses implications of the findings.

Trust Networks and Flexibility in Peace Negotiations

What do we know about the relationship between rebels' network structures and their behavior in peace negotiations? This study explores the relevance of the *de facto* structure of the rebel group, which takes the form of a social network made up of individuals with relationships of a certain quantity and quality.

Various social science literatures take a growing interest in the impact of social network structure on collective action. Social network analysis has furthered the

understanding of terrorism (Farley, 2003; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Jones, 2008), violence (Asal & Rethemeyer, 2008), organized crime (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001a), conflict diffusion (Hammarström & Heldt, 2002), and democracy (Putnam, 2000). However, knowledge of what aspects of network structure are most relevant to collective action is still incomplete (Siegel, 2009: 122–123; Scholz, Berardo, & Kile, 2008: 405). Network analysis has, except for a few efforts, not been applied to peace making (Gleditsch, 1967; Galtung, 1968; Böhmelt, 2009). There is an overall awareness that the way rebel groups are constituted affects their willingness to negotiate and sustain talks (Stedman, 1991: 238; Mac Ginty & Darby, 2001). Findings suggest that war ''endings'' are complicated for highly decentralized groups (Kurth Cronin, 2009: 52, 59). Yet, we in fact have little systematic understanding of how rebels' network structures affect their flexibility in peace processes.

Flexibility Defined

This study explores the association between social network structure and flexibility. ''Flexibility'' is defined in behavioral terms as a sustained, that is, nontemporary, movement from an initial position toward a compromise position (Druckman, 1995: 62). This directional change in negotiation position concerns the main issue of contention, and the movement is counted in relation to the position held at the outset of talks. The initial position does not need to be explicitly stated as talks commence, but must be widely known (cf. Druckman & Mitchell, 1995c: 213–214; Bartos, 1995; Lewicki, Saunders, & Minton, 1999; Fisher et al., 1992). The issue of contention explored is separate statehood. A position change during negotiations could thus be a stated willingness to consider alternative solutions to separate statehood, that is, complete independence; an actual discussion of alternative solutions to a separate state, such as autonomy or federation; accepting or signing a settlement short of separate statehood. Whereas the first measure constitutes temporary position change, the second and third measures represent sustained change of increasing degrees (cf. Druckman & Mitchell, 1995c: 213–214).

Various sources of flexibility exist. A key source highlighted by the negotiation literature is the aforementioned BATNA concept. The BATNA indicates the degree to which a party perceives itself as dependent on a negotiated solution. The assessment of the value of the best alternative is based on factors such as military capability. The worse the BATNA, the more flexibility is expected. A party's BATNA is counted as a situational factor, which may be reassessed in the course of talks (cf. Odell, 2002). Another source of flexibility regards procedural matters, for example, concerning the content of the negotiation agenda, including what issues are on or off the agenda, how issues are sequenced, and the way in which decisions are taken (Jensen, 1995; Albin, 2001). A third source of flexibility is structural. Existing research alludes to the relevance of the relationship between leaders and constituents (Druckman & Mitchell, 1995c).[2] This study probes deeper into the structural dimension by examining rebels' network of

[2] Druckman & Mitchell (1995a) outline the three sources of flexibility.

relationships. The aim here is to shed light on the link between social network structure and its related workings (i.e., processes).

The Trust Network: Concepts and Comparisons

The trust network is a particular type of social network structure. To analyze this structure, we need to clarify a few concepts. A ''social network'' is made up of ''nodes'' (individuals or collectives of individuals) connected by ''ties'' (relationships). The ''rebel network'' and its boundaries are here established on theoretical grounds (Knoke & Yang, 2008). The focus is on leaders of functional or geographic groupings, that is, ''cliques'' in the network, with power to take important decisions on political and military matters.[3] Ties between leaders are of different character. ''Direct'' ties imply that contact and communication does not pass via an intermediary. A ''dyadic'' relationship involves two nodes with ties to one another, and a ''triadic'' relationship involves three nodes with ties to one another. The quality of a tie, that is, the nature of a relationship, is reflected by its direction and value. A ''uni-directed'' tie means that a node has one-sided influence, that is, authority, over another. A ''multi-directed'' tie implies mutual influence. A ''valued'' tie means that an individual subjectively ranks a tie to another according to the level of confidence. A high value could reflect family bonds or shared experience (Knoke & Yang, 2008). In sum, the aggregation of individuals' relationships in terms of quantity and quality makes up a social structure that can be analyzed.

Certain network structures are functional to manage different levels of risk (Evan, 1972; Rothenberg, 2002; Siegel, 2009: 124–126; Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001b: 318). Defining risk-taking in terms of trust, Charles Tilly in *Trust and Rule* (2005) examines the global diamond trade as a collective high-risk endeavor. Throughout history, Jewish diamond-trading diasporas were scattered across countries but obliged to maintain connections over long time periods. Traders were forced to take great risks and to rely extensively on ''trust,'' defined as ''placing valued resources and outcomes at risk of the malfeasance, mistakes or failures of others'' (Tilly, 2005: 16). Trust thus indicates an individual's willingness to be vulnerable to someone whose future behavior is beyond his or her control (cf. Zand, 1972; Gambetta, 1988; Sztompka, 1999; Luhmann, 1979; Williamson, 1993).[4] Tilly finds the trading diasporas to be structured as ''trust networks,'' characterized by ''ramified interpersonal connections, consisting mainly of strong ties, within which people set valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance, mistakes, or failures of others'' (Tilly, 2005: 12).

The trust network allows for high-risk collective action. Compared to other social networks, ties in trust networks more frequently form part of triads and contain more intimacy. The trust network is, more specifically, characterized by the following structure. First, it largely consists of triadic relationships of symmetric (i.e., multidirected),

[3]It is difficult to draw rebel-network boundaries as the insurgency logic prescribes the blurring of combatants and civilians. See Lichbach (1995).

[4]On the view of trust as a foundation for social capital to facilitate collective action, see Putnam (2000), Dorussen and Ward (2008).

nonauthoritative (i.e., nonhierarchical), and strong (i.e., thick) ties.[5] Simultaneous or face-to-face contact between the triad members is not necessary, which means that time lags are allowed. Second, the network has tight and high intimacy connections between cliques. Third, interpersonal ties are relatively strong. Fourth, ties are marked by mutual obligations of aid and support (Tilly, 2005: 4, 43–46).

A calculated type of trust, or risk-taking, is made possible through the network structure. Trust has less to do with the risk-taking dispositions of the individuals involved and more with the structure of network connections—which imply possible rewards, sanctions, expectations of repeated interaction—serving as a check on opportunism and on fears thereof (cf. Williamson, 1993: 476–77; Lewicki, 2006: 194; Sztompka, 1999: 99). The trust network thus has a constraining effect on its members. The rigidities mean that "trust networks do not adjust their organizational strategies flexibly or rapidly" (Tilly, 2005: quote 44, 13). Yet, it is precisely because of this short-term inflexibility that long-term flexibility is enabled. Members can undertake a strategic position shift, but only as a collective (Dunn, 1993).[6]

Blind or reputation-based trust may distinguish dyadic ties. These kinds of trust often characterize relationships in so-called embedded networks (Uzzi, 1997; Granovetter, 1985). However, the more complete the trust, the greater the potential gain from malfeasance. As peace negotiations represent a situation where the risk for malfeasance is extremely high, reputation-based and blind trust are not sufficient.

Proposed Mechanism: From Trust Network to Negotiation Flexibility

The proposed trust mechanism is causal in that it explains how network structure yields flexibility through causal agents. The network structure (collective-level condition) affects an individual's risk calculations, which generates an action, in turn joined by the actions of other individuals. Together, their actions and interactions will yield—or fail to yield—negotiation flexibility at the rebel-group level (collective-level outcome) (cf. Hedström & Swedberg, 1998: 8–9, 11–13, 21–23). Flexibility requires risk-taking by two kinds of actors within the rebel group: rebel negotiators and nonnegotiating rebel leaders. The focus is thus on the structure of ties between them.

The proposition is that negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders will make different calculations of risks and opportunities based on whether or not they form part of a trust network. The negotiator always has an advantage in terms of information and in the ability to shape negotiating positions. However, the negotiator risks sanctions from nonnegotiating rebels if perceived to sell out the group. The nonnegotiating rebel leader has a disadvantage in terms of access to, and verification of, information and in the ability to shape negotiation positions. Yet, he or she has the opportunity to sanction the negotiator, to

[5]A triadic relationship implies three nodes with direct ties to each other: A to B, B to C, and A to C. Compare with the notion of "closed triad" in Prell and Skvoretz (2008).

[6]Tilly's findings are supported by sociological results, holding that networks in which actors are linked through multiple, multi-directed, and strong ties, are associated with trust (Prell & Skvoretz, 2008). Some research suggests that indirect links may be an effective substitute for direct ties (Dorussen & Ward, 2008; Maoz, 2009).

form a splinter group, and to spoil a peace process or the implementation of a treaty. In the case of a nontrust network, the rebel negotiator may take the opportunity of his or her relative information and power advantage, and demonstrate individual flexibility (temporary or sustained) in spite of significant opposition from nonnegotiating rebel leaders (cf. Garriga, 2009). This opportunity of the negotiator is the risk of the nonnegotiator.

In the case of a trust network, however, the opportunity for the negotiator is constrained while the opportunity of the nonnegotiator is enhanced, which decreases the perceived risk for the latter. The negotiator will find it difficult to withhold information or to craft negotiating positions without the buy-in of the nonnegotiating leaders. Nonnegotiators have the ability to access and verify information, and may also influence negotiation positions. Although this process is more cumbersome, it is expected to lead to sustained flexibility by the rebels at the group level.[7] What is, in fact, described are the workings of procedural justice, which is made up of four components: transparency, fair representation, fair treatment and fair play, and voluntary agreement. Transparency has to do with the availability of information. Fair representation means that all actors, affected and bound by the outcome of talks, are represented. Fair treatment implies the opportunity to influence the process and to be heard. Voluntary agreement means freedom from imposition (Albin, 2008; cf. Albin, 2001: 39–43; Young, 1994) (Figure 1).

In short, a trust network structure is expected to increase flexibility, first, by enhancing information transparency and by making information verification by nonnegotiating leaders possible, which induces negotiators to share information and be honest. The structure, second, implies mutual influence in the crafting of negotiation positions between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders. When a position on the main issue of contention is declared, it already has the support of key leaders and is more likely to sustain up to agreement signing and, quite likely, also beyond this.

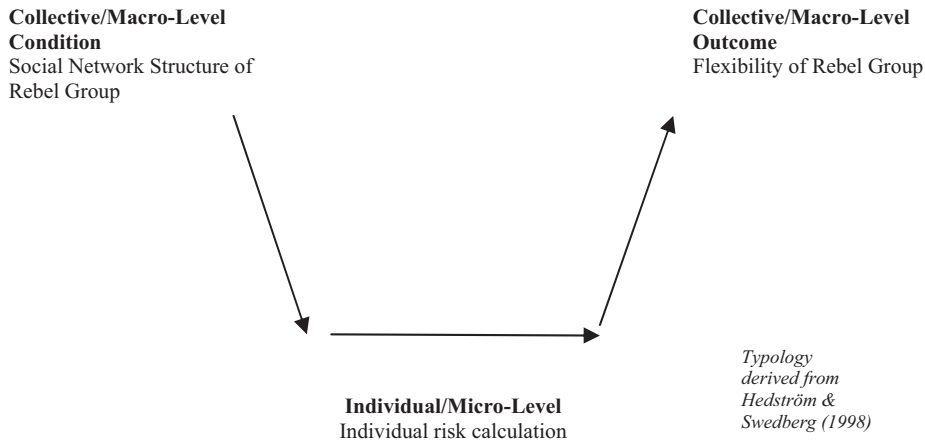

Figure 1. Trust mechanism.

[7]Even though network characteristics such as density or the minimum distance between nodes may be relevant, they are not essential for the functioning of the trust mechanism.

Proposition: When participating in peace negotiations, a rebel group structured as a trust network is more likely to demonstrate flexibility than a group that lacks this structure.

We look for evidence through four operational indicators, which all must be present to establish a trust network. Most important is the existence of *triadic* relationships between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders (in charge of cliques, that is, functional or geographic groupings in the homeland or in exile); second is *direct* and *valued* ties between the negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders, which implies that communication does not pass via intermediaries, and that relationships are of high value; third is *high frequency* of interaction between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders; fourth is their *reciprocal* ties, implying "mutual obligation" interpreted as mutual influence.

Comparing the LTTE and GAM Peace Negotiations

To explore the proposition, a fine-grained analysis of the rebel group as a social network of interconnected individuals is necessary. Different flexibility outcomes make it possible to identify what specific aspects of network structure that could account for the variation. The working of the trust mechanism is therefore highlighted more clearly by contrasting two cases with differing outcomes (cf. George & Bennett, 2005: 80). We search for empirical evidence of a trust network structure and examine the functioning of the trust mechanism in detail.

A structured focused comparison is made between the peace negotiations between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government in 2002–2003, and between GAM and the Indonesian government in 2005. The cases are analytically comparable in that they represent negotiations to end protracted ethno-separatist armed conflicts ongoing since the early 1980s in Southern Asia. Both rebel groups were negotiating peace approximately at the same time, and both had been negotiating previously with their respective governments. Both negotiations were matched in terms of procedure, being mediated or facilitated by Nordic (Finnish and Norwegian) third parties using a noncoercive approach and sequencing the talks into a handful of rounds. The serious intent of both LTTE and GAM with regard to the peace negotiations have been put into question (Kelegama, 2006: 236; Husein, 2007: 5; cf. Aspinall & Crouch, 2003: 4). However, evidence prior to and in the course of talks suggests that both negotiations represented genuine peacemaking efforts, as will be shown later. For LTTE the negotiations were a culmination of a series of informal peace-dialogue meetings from 1999 onwards (Martin, 2006: 102; cf. Uyangoda, 2006; Interviews 152; 34). For Tiger leaders a number of factors pointed in favor of a peace settlement. Among these were the crackdowns on the LTTE's transnational funding operations as part of the global war on terror and the serious illness of LTTE's political strategist, Anton Balasingham, considered to be the person on the LTTE side who would make peace possible. Also GAM had had an informal dialogue going on since mid-2004 (Schulze, 2007: 94; Morfit, 2007: 117; Kingsbury, 2006: 15). Although some GAM leaders supported the idea of a political settlement, there was also resistance to negotiations (Interview 40). One reason were reported attempts by the government to make deals directly with

GAM's military commanders (Schulze, 2007). Finally, it is also worth noting that neither LTTE nor GAM were offered separate statehood by their governments, but were faced with the option of discussing federal alternatives. In sum, LTTE and GAM were at the time of talks comparable on a number of conditions with a possible influence on flexibility.

The two cases yielded different flexibility outcomes. LTTE demonstrated temporary flexibility by stating an openness to explore a federal solution in connection to the third round of talks. This move from the (since 1985) firmly entrenched position on separate statehood was considered a significant breakthrough. However, a few months later, the LTTE walked out of the peace process. GAM showed flexibility in moving from a stated position on complete independence at the first round of talks into signing a final status agreement on Acehnese self-government short of separate statehood.

Next, the LTTE and GAM social network structures at the time of peace talks are examined. Thereafter, the likely impact of the network structure on flexibility is discussed by analyzing what dynamics the structure gave rise to within the rebel groups.

Social Network Analysis and Civil War Research

Rebels' social network structure will be sketched, or more particularly the ties between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders, for the period prior to- and during peace negotiations.

Conventional social network analysis requires detailed data and is sensitive to missing information (Knoke & Yang, 2008: 41). Detailed, systematic, and verifiable information is admittedly a challenge in civil war research, qualitative and quantitative studies alike. There is often more primary material on closed-conflict cases opposed to open ones (cf. Raab & Milward, 2003: 435; Öberg & Sollenberg, 2003). The problem of incomplete network data is shared by criminologists and terrorist researchers (Rothenberg, 2002; Krebs, 2002; Sparrow, 1991).

Information for this study was obtained through primary interviews and secondary sources. The interviews, about 50 in all and 20 at a minimum for each case, were semi-structured and lasted 1–2 hours each. The majority of interviews were tape-recorded by agreement with the informant. Informants mostly include rebels, but also external parties and government representatives. To control for network-position bias, efforts were made to select rebel informants based on belonging to functional and geographic cliques. Rebels thus served negotiating and nonnegotiating (military or political leadership) roles and were either based in the homeland (Sri Lanka and Aceh) or in diaspora locations (United Kingdom, Sweden, and Norway). Nonrebel informants—third parties and government representatives involved in the respective peace processes—were also interviewed. Access to rebel informants differed across the two cases. Whereas all key individuals within GAM were interviewed, this was not the case for LTTE.

Network information was derived from responses to two sets of questions, the first revolving around "quantity" or logistical information on relationships. For example, the presence, number, intensity, and directness of ties between rebel negotiators, military

commanders, and political leaders. A second set of "quality" questions dealt with the content of ties in terms of intimacy, reciprocity, and hierarchy.[8] Questions, for instance, covered who was commanding loyalty, who had ultimate decision-making authority, and whether there was confidence between individuals. (Even when not asked for, some rebel informants used a terminology of trust in depicting their relationships). The use of descriptive accounts of ties deviates from conventional sociological method, requiring data on individual events, such as meetings and phone calls. However, practical constraints in terms of security, budget, and logistics speak for the reasonableness of this approach. A criminologist, for instance, would still attempt to map an organized-crime network, knowing that complete information will never be obtained.[9] The lack of open secondary source data systematically describing the network structure in the manner sought for made it necessary to turn to the primary sources directly. Yet, secondary material could to a large extent be used to support the primary sources, to fill in gaps and thereby to create the structure of the rebel networks.

When it comes to the reliability of primary sources, the following measures were taken (cf. Öberg & Sollenberg, 2003: 11–12). First, informants were part of, or close to, the respective rebel groups and peace talks; second, accounts were gathered close in time to the negotiation processes, about 10 years after for LTTE and 3 years after for GAM; third, whenever possible, the empirical description is based on at least two independent sources (i.e., respondents of different rebel cliques, rebel and nonrebel informants, or secondary sources—including diaries by the rebel negotiators). Accounts were thus cross-checked. If two sources gave conflicting information, attempts were made to derive information from a third source (another respondent or secondary literature). It is also worth remarking that the content of the questions, being relatively factual and detail oriented, was not directly political and had no obvious bearing on the ethnic conflict as such. There is, hence, no apparent systematic direction of bias. The effect of a potential personal bias is mitigated by interviewing different respondents about their own relationships and about the relationships of others. In the GAM case, some frictions appeared between leaders in the post-agreement period. Still, the expected direction of bias is not revealed in the responses. After the breakdown of talks, LTTE reverted to war against the Sri Lankan government and were defeated in 2009. The possible source of distortion would be in the form of missing ties in the LTTE case. Secondary sources, such as the personal account by the LTTE chief negotiator, Balasingham, were used to address this issue, along with detailed first-hand descriptions made by other individuals involved in the peace process.

LTTE and GAM Social Network Structures

This section attempts to map the LTTE and GAM social network structures by the time of peace talks. To establish the presence of a trust network, four operational indicators, concerning the relationships between the rebel negotiators and the nonnegotiating rebel

[8]"Intimacy" was captured through descriptions of ties' value, directness, and reciprocal nature.

[9]See Krebs (2002) for open source network mapping.

leaders, are looked for. Their ties, first, need to be *triadic*; second, *direct* and *valued*; third, of *high frequency*; and, fourth, *reciprocal* in nature.

LTTE Social Network Structures

The large-scale armed conflict between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government commenced in July 1983. In its political form, the conflict, however, dates back to the time of Sri Lanka's independence from British colonial rule in 1948. The conflict largely revolves around Tamil minority grievances pertaining to constitutional issues, language, education, and land (cf. Wilson, 2000; de Silva, 2005). Since 1983, the conflict has witnessed five peace negotiations (Shanmugaratnam, 2008). The last process under study here produced a ceasefire agreement in 2002, but effectively broke down during peace talks in 2003. Violence escalated and in the spring of 2009, the Sri Lankan government launched massive attacks against LTTE's last strongholds. With the LTTE and its leaders militarily defeated, the political conflict remains.[10] Here follows a description of LTTE's social network structure by the time of the 2002–2003 peace negotiations.

LTTE: Structure of Relationships

The network hub consists of LTTE leader Velupillai Prabakaran and a handful of military commanders who make strategic decisions for the entire network. Prabakaran as the military commander-in-chief and head of the infantry has veto power (Gunaratna, 1997: 30; Wood, 2009: 151; Interview 26). The rest serve functions as the leader of the navy (Soosai), intelligence (Pottu Amman), police (Nadesan), and airwing (Shankar), respectively (Gunaratna, 1997; Chalk, 2000; Interviews 34, 77, 74). The clique is occasionally enlarged to handle particular issues (Interview 77; cf. 22).

The rest of the LTTE network, that is, functional and geographic cliques, operate in separation. The LTTE civilian wing deals with political matters, including negotiations, while the military wing handles war-related issues. Leaders of LTTE civilian functions, such as the Political wing (Tamilselvan), the Peace Secretariat (Pullidevan), and the Judiciary (Pararajasingham), have only distant military backgrounds (cf. Gunaratna, 1997; Interviews 50, 34, 150, 77). The part of LTTE's network in exile seems separated from the Sri Lanka network. Since the 1980s, a global network of cells carrying out supporting tasks such as political advocacy, resource generation, and arms procurement had been established (Gunaratna, 1997; Chalk, 2000; Swamy, 2003: 269–270).

None of the LTTE negotiators are drawn from the leadership hub, although they are selected by Prabakaran. For the first round of talks, the negotiation team, led by an LTTE ideologue based in London, Anton Balasingham, are all drawn from exile. Balasingham is accompanied by his wife Adele, inspirateur to the LTTE women's wing, a legal advisor from New York (Rudrakumar), and a development expert from Australia (Jay Maheswaran) (Balasingham, 2004; Weerakoon, 2006; Interviews 31, 90,

[10]The majority of LTTE members analyzed here were killed.

77). Only for later rounds are the negotiators joined by the leaders of the Political wing (Tamilselvan), the Peace Secretariat (Pullidevan), and the Eastern military command (Karuna). The composition of the negotiation team reportedly reflects security concerns, as Prabakaran and his military commanders are listed by Interpol. Karuna is the highest ranking LTTE military who is able to travel abroad (cf. Interpol, 2009).

The chief negotiator and other negotiators are thus not part of the civilian command structure in Sri Lanka. That Balasingham has no position in the civilian structure is captured in statements such that he is ''able to articulate [positions] on behalf of the LTTE'' (Interviews 33 (quote), 50, 152; cf. Gunaratna 1997: 47–52; Balasingham, 2004: 342). Yet, during the ceasefire negotiation that had preceded the peace talks, and coming into existence through shuttle diplomacy, Balasingham had been LTTE's only point of contact. Balasingham, in turn, had Prabakaran as his main point of entry into the network. Although Balasingham had a relationship to Tamilselvan, he regarded the latter as politically junior (Interviews 27, 150, 152).[11] ''Balasingham was probably not in touch with the other military leaders. To do that he most likely had to go through Prabakaran'' (Interview 150). In sum, relevant ties between negotiators and the nonnegotiating leadership are dyadic and based on negotiators' personal relationships to Prabakaran. No apparent evidence suggests triadic relationships between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders.

LTTE: Level of Intimacy

The personal relationship that counts is that to Prabakaran (cf. Gunaratna, 1997: 30; Interviews 152, 22, 5). Prabakaran seemingly bases his value ranking on a person's demonstration of sound, often military, judgment. Prabakaran's most valued and direct relationships are with his top military leaders (Interview 26; cf. interview 11). The notable exception is Prabakaran's tie to his chief negotiator, which, largely speaking, is one of complete confidence, tracing back to shared personal experiences in the 1980s (Swamy, 2003: 53–54, 101; Interview 90). Balasingham is said to have an important influence on Prabakaran for the initiation of peace talks and for the formulation of negotiation positions (Interviews 33, 32, 75).

Civilian leaders on the negotiation team, such as Tamilselvan, also have valued ties to Prabakaran. Prabakaran's relationship to the Eastern military commander, Karuna, is of high value as proven by the unprecedented choice to grant Karuna joint military and financial control (Interviews 77, 31, 22). In spite of this, it is unclear to what extent Prabakaran and Karuna could be in direct contact since the devolution of power to the East had been made because of logistical difficulties. In sum, while relevant ties are of high value, they are dyadic and running between individual negotiators and the top military leader. Security constrains their directness and frequency.

[11]Gooneratne (2007: 12) on Balasingham's role. Gunaratna (1997: 9) implies that Balasingham via Adele also was connected to the LTTE Women's Wing.

LTTE: Frequency of Ties

To communicate with Prabakaran and the top military leaders, people often need to go via intermediaries, suggesting a relatively low frequency of direct interaction with the hub (Swamy, 2003: 272; Interviews 11, 21, 72). Balasingham meets directly with Prabakaran and other military and political leaders at least twice during the 2002–2003 peace process. The first time is before the first round of talks in March 2002 to receive the negotiation mandate (Balasingham, 2004: 363–364; Interviews 72, 90). Balasingham meets Prabakaran a second time in March 2003 following the fifth round of talks (Balasingham, 2004: 418–423, 461).

Prabakaran and Balasingham appear to be in frequent, possibly daily, phone contact when negotiations go well. When this is not the case, Balasingham withdraws. His withdrawal may result from disagreement with Prabakaran and little space of maneuver, reinforcing the notion that progression in peace talks is contingent on their personal relationship (Interviews 26, 22). During the negotiation rounds abroad, the negotiators communicate with the leaders in the hub via satellite phone. Messages are also passed through the Tamil diaspora in the negotiation locations (Interview 22; cf. 31, 90, 72). In sum, although there is a certain frequency of interaction between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders, security precautions suggest that it is relatively low.

LTTE: Reciprocal Ties

The LTTE network is hierarchically organized with Prabakaran and his military commanders exerting ultimate authority in spite of the devolution of power with separate structures for the Northern and Eastern region (cf. Gunaratna, 1997: 30; Interview 2). Even second-tier military commanders do not have much power, but must undergo geographic rotation, Karuna being the only exception (Interview 151). The setup also implies that LTTE civilian leaders are subordinated to the military (Gunaratna, 1997: 30; Chalk, 2000; Interviews 74, 31, 32, 79). Activities are carried out in a duty-based manner after orders from above (cf. Swamy, 2003: xix).

In spite of this, Prabakaran allows individual LTTE members to influence his decision making at different periods in time. The leaders in the hub take decisions on warfare but not on political issues (Interviews 72, 90, 150). There is a distinct separation of civilian and military functions (Interview 34; cf. 75). The difficulty to influence Prabakaran may be due to his physical isolation, but it also suits him to not be seen as conducive to pressure (Interview 31).

True reciprocity between LTTE negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders seems to be lacking. Not even Balasingham's influence on Prabakaran should be overstated as the latter reportedly is "not easily influenced by people who are remote." Civilian leaders, such as Tamilselvan, lack influence over Prabakaran, viewing the former as his successful junior apprentice (Interviews 33 [quote], 77; cf. Chalk, 2000).

The LTTE intelligence wing compensates for the lack of reciprocity and power balance between cliques. LTTE intelligence monitors and ensures that the information comes together at Prabakaran's decision-making hub. LTTE intelligence checks up on

everybody: military leaders and civilian wing LTTE, especially those dealing with finances. Even the work of the intelligence section is cross-checked by Prabakaran's own people (cf. Swamy, 2003: 271–272; Wood, 2009: 150–151; Interviews 2, 3, 12, 34, 74, 77, 78, 90). "Investigation teams" had for example been dispatched from the hub to investigate accusations of Karuna squandering money (Interviews 2, 32). There is an LTTE "accountability system through spying" (Interview 78). In sum, the degree of hierarchy and functional separation suggests that ties are not reciprocal.

A Recap: The LTTE Network Structure

To conclude, as seen in Figure 2, the overall LTTE network does not demonstrate a trust network structure, but seems to take on a star-like shape. Different functional and geographic cliques are connected to Prabakaran's military leadership hub but do not seem to be in direct contact with each other. The leadership hub itself can be regarded as a trust network within the larger LTTE network. The composition of the hub, vested with ultimate decision-making authority, means that although civilian and military cliques have separate chains of command at lower levels (ties to underlying command structures in gray), civilian leaders are subordinated to the military. Intelligence

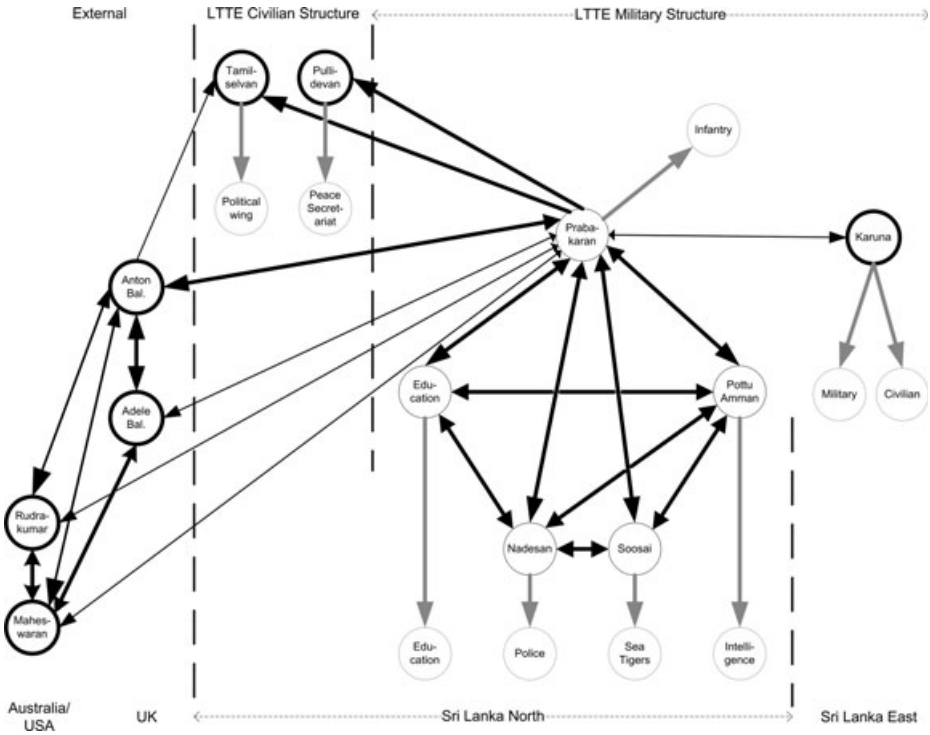

Figure 2. LTTE network structure.

operatives verify activities, although they in turn may be monitored by agents from the hub. (In contrast, in a trust network, verification and control are exercised through direct and reciprocal cross-checking between cliques.) The figure indicates that LTTE negotiators—whose nodes are bold—are not drawn from the military leadership hub. The chief negotiator and other negotiators are not part of LTTE's regular civilian structure, and the negotiators who are, are subordinate to the military leaders. The ties between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders are not triadic but dyadic.

GAM Social Network Structures

The separatist conflict between GAM and the Indonesian government in Aceh-Indonesia has, since its inception in violent form in 1982, witnessed three sets of negotiations. Being about economic and religious grievances and discontent with central government policies, the Acehnese political conflict dates back to the time of Indonesia's independence from Dutch rule in 1949 (Miller, 2009). The last peace process commenced in January 2005 and resulted in a peace treaty the same year. Below follows a description of the network structure of GAM in connection with this period.

GAM: Structure of Relationships

The GAM network is made up of a handful of functional cliques, scattered across different countries. The political leadership, exiled in Stockholm-Sweden since 1980, had formed a shadow government consisting of GAM's historical leader and president (Hasan di Tiro), his deputy since 2002 (Malik Mahmood), the foreign and health minister (Zaini Abdullah), the information minister (Bhaktiar Abdullah), and the defense minister and head of military procurement (Zakariah Saman). Mahmood and Saman are counted to the "Stockholm leadership" despite being based in Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand respectively, before Saman's settlement in Aceh 2003 (Schulze, 2003: 243–244, 2004: 10–11; cf. Husein, 2007: 21–25, 33–36; Interview 96). The Stockholm leadership reportedly serves as the strategic coordination hub taking ultimate decisions for the network. Yet, decision making in practice is relatively decentralized (cf. Schulze, 2004: 4, 19; Aspinall & Crouch, 2003: 48; Interviews Zaini 2008, 39).

The GAM military network, under commander-in-chief Muzakir Manaf, seems largely confined to Aceh in terms of ties. Only four GAM military have "contact power" to the Stockholm leadership—among them Manaf and Saman (Interviews 83, 96).[12] For instance, GAM's military intelligence coordinator Yusuf Irwandi had only been in touch with the Stockholm political leaders a few times in 2004. Irwandi, however, had frequent and direct ties to cells and units in the military network, including Manaf and his deputy (Sofyan Dawood). One such cell in Jakarta, named "Jamaica," served as a military information hub (cf. Husein, 2007: 11, 100; Interviews Irwandi 2009, 83).

Ties between the Stockholm political leaders, the top military leader Manaf, and the seventeen military district commanders appear strong. Malik Mahmood, being communicative and above all, strategically positioned in Singapore and Malaysia, had served as

[12]Husein, 2007: 9 on the military network.

the key bridging node (Schulze, 2004: 13, 2003: 244; Interviews Zaini 2008, 82, 83, 102). Mahmood describes himself as ''the man in between.'' GAM couriers who came to meet Mahmood in Malaysia and Singapore came both from Aceh and Europe (Interview Mahmood 2009).

Other civilian-wing functions are GAM ambassadors and ''civil society'' (Husein, 2007: 21–25; Schulze, 2003). A civil society student movement, SIRA, advocating independence through referendum, created in 1998, had been considered to serve a political advocacy role ''complementary'' to GAM. SIRA had established an international network of advocacy offices (cf. ICG, 2008: 4; Schulze, 2004: 18; Interview 99).

Gerakan Aceh Merdeka leaders of the various cliques seem connected (Husein, 2007: 21–25). GAM uses a code of conduct in their dealings with the government. A GAM representative is not allowed to meet with government representatives without reporting both to Mahmood and to Manaf. The latter, as the military top leader in Aceh, is not allowed to take political decisions (cf. Husein, 2007; Aguswandi & Zunzer, 2008: 17; ICG, 2005; Interviews 96, 102). Reversely, the Stockholm leaders cannot take decisions on their own (Interview 83).

Besides the decision-making rules, information about communications with the government can be verified independently both by the Stockholm political leaders and by the Aceh military leadership (Interview 83). Despite the calling powers, the Stockholm leaders can bypass military district commanders by communicating directly with their subordinates.[13] The military commander-in-chief is also in contact with other exile GAM, which makes the cross-checking of information from Stockholm possible (Interview Manaf 2009).

Whereas some GAM negotiators are individuals drawn from exile, most core negotiators are leaders from the ''Stockholm'' civilian command structure.[14] Also participating on the GAM core team are Nur Djuli from Malasyia and Nurdin Abdul Rahman from Australia, along with an Australian academic, Damien Kingsbury. The military top leader Manaf cannot attend for security reasons (Kingsbury, 2006: 23–25; Interview 102). However, by the third negotiation round the GAM military intelligence chief, Irwandi, joins the team (Schulze, 2004: 3; Interviews 82, 42). In sum, GAM's network structure at the time of peace talks suggests triadic ties between civilian and military leaders and between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders.

GAM: Level of Intimacy

Direct and valued ties between the Stockholm political leaders and the military commanders (the commander-in-chief and the 17 district commanders) had been established in Libya in the 1980s (Schulze, 2003: 245; Aguswandi & Zunzer, 2008; Interview Zaini 2008; Interview 42). Since then, every military GAM field commander had been nominated by the Stockholm leadership (Interview 40). The ties between di Tiro and the military commanders are described in terms of ''love'' or deep confidence based on

[13]Schulze (2004: 13) speaks of a ''triangular'' relationship; Schulze (2003: 254); Husein (2007: 132, 33).

[14]Negotiation authority had reportedly been delegated to Mahmood, Zaini, and Bakhtiar by 80-year-old di Tiro for reasons of failing health.

shared experience, reportedly not necessitating direct face-to-face meetings. "'*Between di Tiro and the men, there developed a sort of an emotional bond… almost like love* '" (Interview Zaini 2008). That the GAM negotiators are largely synonymous with the Stockholm political leadership ensures that relevant ties are intimate.

GAM: Frequency of Ties

The mobile phone communication between GAM political and military leaders had been of relatively high frequency for over a decade (cf. Schulze, 2004: 13; Husein, 2007: 34; Interview 98). Mahmood claims daily communication with the military commander-in-chief, confirmed by the latter (Interviews Mahmood 2009; Manaf 2009). Military commanders in Aceh are making extensive use of mobile communication internally (Husein, 2007: 25; Interview Saman 2009). Face-to-face meetings had taken place less frequently. Aceh-based military and political leaders would go to Malasyia, Sweden, and other locations to meet the Stockholm leaders (Husein, 2007: 38; Interview Zaini 2008; Interview 82). GAM military commanders could travel to Malaysia without passports (Husein, 2007: 37; Interviews 39; 83; 96). Mahmood's base on the Asian mainland allowed him to shuttle intensely. Half a year before the peace talks commenced, twenty GAM leaders had a meeting in di Tiro's Stockholm home (Interview 40). During the peace talks, the negotiators communicate extensively with military leaders in Aceh (Interview Mahmood 2009; Interview 83; cf. 42). In sum, there is a relatively high frequency of telecommunication between cliques, facilitated by Mahmood, occupying a central position in the network.

GAM: Reciprocal Ties

Gerakan Aceh Merdeka's civilian-military functional separation appears real although there is mutual dependence between the functions (Husein, 2007: 33; Interview 82). Significant decision-making powers on warfare are devolved to the Aceh military (Aguswandi & Zunzer, 2008: 12; Interview 96). The Stockholm political leaders are "approving substance positions taken in Aceh" (Interviews Zaini 2009; Saman 2009; cf. Yahya 2009). Mutual dependence between the Aceh military and the exile civilian wing had become prominent during intense security-force crackdowns. The former had to rely on the latter for procurement and logistics (cf. Schulze, 2003: 244–245, 2004: 5). Mahmood as the political leader and Saman as the head of procurement had been close, ensuring a smooth military–political coordination (Interview Irwandi 2009).

Mutuality had also been embodied in GAM's internal code of conduct stipulating that no meetings between or taking of decisions by GAM representatives and the government could happen without the approval from other GAM cliques. Neither the Stockholm political leaders nor the Aceh military commanders could therefore cut any deals with the government alone as they then would have been suspected of bribery and treason (Husein, 2007: 21, 41, 65; Kingsbury, 2006; Interviews Irwandi 2009, Manaf 2009, 83, 82). In the negotiation room, decisions could only be taken in the presence of all GAM core negotiators (Interview Zaini 2008; Schulze, 2007: 94, 2003, 2004; Kingsbury, 2006: 11, 18–19; cf. Aspinall & Crouch, 2003: 27).

During the peace talks, the communication between the GAM negotiators and non-negotiating field commanders is for fact-gathering purposes as well as to influence the latter to buy into negotiating positions (Interview 82; Husein, 2007). In sum, ties between civilian and military leaders seem broadly reciprocal.

A Recap: The GAM Network Structure

The GAM overall network structure resembles that of a trust network as seen in Figure 3 below. Yet, the military, largely confined to Aceh, appears to be structured more like a star network. GAM negotiators, whose nodes are bold, are largely synonymous with the Stockholm political leaders headed by Mahmood. The composition of the negotiation team implies that many relevant ties are direct, valued, and of high frequency as peace talks commence. Mahmood, placed in Malasyia and Singapore, had served as a bridging node between the Stockholm leaders, GAM advocates in exile, the military logistics head in South East Asia, and the military leaders in Aceh. The fact that the military GAM network was mostly confined to Aceh made the participation of the only military representative, Irwandi, on the GAM negotiation team important (cf. Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001b: 327).

LTTE and GAM Flexibility and the Impact of Social Network Structure

This section discusses how the network structures of LTTE and GAM impacted their negotiating flexibility. The proposition was that a trust network would be associated with flexibility through the following causal mechanism: First, by facilitating information

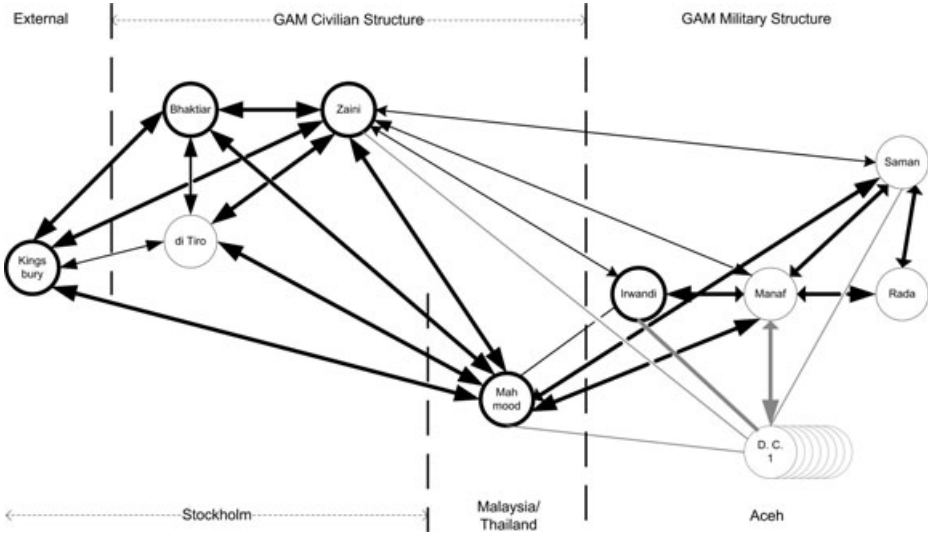

Figure 3. Gerakan Aceh Merdeka network structure.

sharing between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders; second, by enabling information verification by nonnegotiating leaders; and third, by allowing for mutual influencing by negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders. The risks associated with position change on the main issue of contention, separate statehood, would hence be reduced.

LTTE Flexibility

At the start of talks, LTTE chief negotiator Balasingham stated a clear initial position on the need to normalize the economic conditions in the conflict-affected areas, but was silent on political issues, including that on separate statehood (Balasingham, 2004; Interviews 90, 77). This seemed to reflect LTTE's probing stance *vis-à-vis* the government, manifested in the evolution of the Tigers' negotiation team after the first round. Negotiators from Sri Lanka joined in something like a stepping-up process, as Balasingham reportedly convinced Prabakaran about the government's serious intent (Interview 33, cf. 5). Although the extent of Balasingham's mandate is not clear and negotiators continuously would revert to the top leader, Balasingham seemed to have significant room of maneuver to move from initial positions (Interviews 34, 90, 77). LTTE's political leader, Tamilselvan, was in contrast described as tight-lipped, absorbent of others' views, and reverting back to Prabakaran for decision making (Interview 76; cf. 51).

Some days before the third negotiation round, Prabakaran, in his annual speech on November 27, declared LTTE's new stand on statehood in terms of "regional autonomy" (TamilNet, 2002a; Balasingham, 2004: 400–405). During the December 2–5 round, Balasingham stated LTTE's willingness to explore federal options. The advance in LTTE's negotiation position happened after consultations with Prabakaran (Balasingham, 2004: 400–405; Interviews 90, 27).[15] The statements represented a striking shift in LTTE's position, which since 1985 had been cemented around the vision of a separate Tamil state. A week thereafter, the LTTE delegation, headed by Balasingham and also comprising Karuna and Tamilselvan, undertook a "federalism study trip," reported in Tamil media (TamilNet, 2002b). Yet, by December 26 the LTTE "leadership," in a press statement from its Sri Lanka headquarters, declared that the government side was imposing unacceptable conditions for the resettlement of displaced Tamils (TamilNet, 2002c). On December 29, Balasingham retracted the LTTE's new position, stating that discussions on core issues could not be undertaken as long as thousands of Tamils were unable to return to their homes (TamilNet, 2002d). Balasingham had apparently "fallen out" with the LTTE military leadership and was dissociated, or "kept out," from the hub. Balasingham's access to Prabakaran and the military leaders became restricted (Interviews 5, 22, 78). By April 2003, LTTE's participation in talks was indefinitely suspended, although on other pretexts (Balasingham, 2004: 414–417).

[15]"[T]he parties agreed to explore a solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil speaking peoples, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka." (Balasingham, 2004: 405)

LTTE and the Trust Mechanism

The proposed trust mechanism offers insight as to why the LTTE negotiator could undertake position change but why it could not be sustained. The trust mechanism explanation interestingly takes the group's military strength into account, but not in the way commonly understood. Balasingham could make the short-term position change, thanks to his high-value dyadic relationship with the top leader whom he appeared to have convinced. Yet, Balasingham's individual efforts did not translate into a sustained change among other military leaders (cf. Balasingham, 2004: 403, 408; TamilNet, 2002a; Interviews 22, 32, 76, 77, 90, 100). The key relationship between Balasingham and Prabakaran, and the latter's buy-in alone, was not sufficient. The consent of Prabakaran's fellow military commanders was needed (Interviews 27, 152).

The overall star structure of the LTTE network reflected its militarily offensive approach through conventional warfare and terrorism, as well as its terrorist proscription. The compartmentalization of LTTE's network hampered the interaction between the military and political parts in the following ways: First, by complicating information sharing between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders. Balasingham as the chief negotiator seemed to mainly have direct access to Prabakaran as the top leader. Aside of the Balasingham-Prabakaran dyad, there seemed to be little direct communication on negotiating positions between negotiators and nonnegotiating military leaders. The separation of civilian and military functions implied that LTTE political wing leaders were not in direct contact with the military leaders (Interview 77).

Second, the nonnegotiating leaders must have found it difficult to verify disseminated information. Unlike LTTE standard procedure whereby the intelligence wing would cross-check information, the same was difficult for the closed-door peace talks. LTTE's extensive reliance on dyadic ties (as opposed to triadic ties present in a trust network) not only complicated verification on negotiation substance, but also on what happened outside of the negotiation room. LTTE negotiators were reportedly exposed to corruption attempts. Karuna as the only military negotiator took the opportunity to liaise with his government counterpart. Karuna's subsequent defection to the government side was reportedly due to differences between him and the higher military commanders, rather than with Prabakaran himself (Interviews 31, 32).[16]

Third, the negotiators thus had limited opportunity to influence the nonnegotiating military leaders aside of Prabakaran. Reversely, military commanders did not appear to provide input on negotiation positions. Given that communication was transmitted in the Balasingham-Prabakaran dyad, it must have been difficult for Balasingham to effectively convince the other military leaders—"Balasingham would have to defend the process" (Interview 150). Although Balasingham could influence relevant military commanders during his stays in LTTE-controlled areas before the commencement of talks and before their suspension in March 2003, this may have been insufficient.

[16]Karuna's defection had a decisive impact on the entire course of the conflict. With Karuna's help, the government could re-capture the Eastern and Northern provinces of Sri Lanka and thereby militarily defeat the Tigers.

In social network terms, the LTTE chief negotiator made up a peripheral node that could be cut off, or dissociated from, the rest of the network. Balasingham was relying entirely on his dyadic tie with the nonnegotiating top military leader. Although Prabakaran listened more to civilian leaders during the early phase of negotiations, as the other military leaders felt that negotiators were incapable of delivering desired ends, the latters' opinion re-gained prominence for Prabakaran. The subordination of the civilian function was apparent (Interviews 5, 77, 150).

Other explanations for LTTE's inflexibility have been suggested. One relates to Prabakaran's lack of intent and to his use of negotiations to buy time to re-mobilize militarily (cf. Kelegama, 2006: 236). However, given LTTE's previous commitment to separate statehood, the federalism statement along with the federalism study trip may be interpreted as rather costly signals of intent. Another explanation has pointed to the uneasy co-habitation on the government side, resulting in the Sri Lankan President taking over the Ministry of Defense from the incumbent UNF party coalition and dissolving parliament (Kelegama, 2006; cf. Weerakoon, 2006). Yet, the governmental crisis, which shifted power to the opposition critical to the peace negotiations, happened about 1 year after LTTE had retracted its position on statehood (in November 2003). In the meantime, the government and LTTE had presented differing proposals on the administrative management of the contested provinces (Weerakoon, 2006: 24–28). One interpretation of LTTE's proposal on an Interim Self Governing Authority was that it represented an extreme measure of regional autonomy and thus sustained position change. However, the proposal was clearly influenced by a state-making agenda. It conflicted with the Sri Lankan constitution and still called for a negotiated political settlement (cf. Uyangoda, 2007: 16–17, 40). Hence, it is reasonable to view LTTE's position change as temporary. Although all these factors together contributed to the ultimate breakdown of the peace process, the suggestion here is that LTTE's lack of flexibility to a significant extent resulted from their network structure.

GAM Flexibility

Gerakan Aceh Merdeka put forward a position on separate Acehnese statehood at the first round of talks (Kingsbury, 2006: 30–31; Schulze, 2003: 246–247, 2004: 19–20). The mediator's initial stand that GAM needed to accept an agreement within the Indonesian constitution was considered as tendentious (Morfit, 2007: 132–133; Kingsbury, 2006: 30). The Indonesian government countered by calling for GAM to surrender. The negotiation immediately threatened to end in stalemate. By the second round, the concept of "self-government," short of statehood, emerged. By the fourth round, GAM had dropped its independence demand entirely (Kingsbury, 2006: 33–34; Interviews Irwandi 2009, 42). A substantive peace treaty was signed by which Aceh gained the status of self-government with governance powers (Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), 2005).

Gerakan Aceh Merdeka's military commanders in Aceh were, however, initially against dropping independence and were skeptical of the self-government concept coined by the negotiators in Helsinki. The commanders called for an exit strategy from

the peace process (Kingsbury, 2006: 44, 65, 86; Interview Zaini 2009). "We feared that the majority of district commanders would disagree… then that would have meant a problem because they had arms in hand… they had experienced the hardship and did not want to surrender," a negotiator explains (Interview Irwandi 2009; cf. Schulze, 2004: 12–13, 21).

The star-like confined structure of the military network in Aceh made the participation of the only military negotiator, Irwandi, critical. Irwandi was invited to the negotiations because of communications. "I was the only person who knew Jamaica and the only one who knew how to contact the [entire military] network in Aceh. This had not been done before" (Interview Irwandi 2009). When Irwandi joined the talks by round three, district commanders' resistance could be addressed (Interview Mahmood 2009, cf. Husein, 2007: 100, 110 on Irwandi's role). "We feared that the district commanders would disagree [with the self-government concept] and that would have meant a problem because they had arms in their hands… and were in command of troops below them" (Interview Irwandi 2009). An information-sharing and decision-making phone conference was arranged with all field commanders to enhance transparency. Another phone conference was held by the fifth round when commanders were asked to accept the final settlement (Interview Irwandi 2009).

During the talks, information would be shared every 12 hours by two or more negotiators in Helsinki to Saman or Manaf in Aceh. Manaf would convey information to district commanders who could also turn directly to Saman for clarifications. "I could not hide anything," Saman explains. "It was important to tell the truth to everyone" (Interview Saman 2009). The Stockholm leaders seemed to be in contact with about 20–25 persons in Aceh, Malaysia, Scandinavia, and Australia. Negotiators verified field-based information with military leaders, suggesting that single individuals were not trusted. The cross-checking could result in 12- to 36-hour delays before a negotiating position was declared (Interview 83).

There was mutual influence between negotiators and nonnegotiating military leaders. Mahmood seemed apprehensive about field commanders not saying things they would not accept (Interview 40). The chief negotiator continuously asked for explicit mandates to take decisions. "We were asking for authority to make decisions. So that whatever decisions we would take they would follow" (Interview Mahmood 2009). GAM's nondyadic network structure used during the war was used for peacemaking.

GAM and the Trust Mechanism

The trust mechanism makes clear that there was nothing automatic about GAM's negotiating flexibility. Even though military capacity also played a role for GAM, it did so in a way not conventionally understood. GAM's network structure, demonstrating a higher interconnectedness between civil and military parts, reflected the group's defensive guerrilla approach with no ambition to "win" militarily and its lack of international terrorist proscription, which facilitated civilian exile leaders' activities (cf. Aguswandi & Zunzer, 2008: 10; Schulze, 2003: 259; Interview Irwandi 2009). GAM also made deliberate efforts during the peace talks to improve interconnectivity with the nonnegotiating leaders.

First, GAM's overall trust network structure facilitated information sharing between negotiators, and nonnegotiating leaders. Information was disseminated frequently to enhance transparency. However, the information also needed to reach a larger number of military commanders in Aceh directly. The seventeen district commanders were linked simultaneously to the negotiators. Their ability to pose questions to, and receive immediate answers from, negotiators increased negotiators' credibility.

Second, information was verified continuously both from Helsinki and from Aceh. More than one negotiator was communicating with nonnegotiating leaders. Different parties could cross-check information. The existence of nondyadic ties, including the negotiator, was important for verifying information. The commander-in-chief (Manaf) could receive reports from the defense minister (Saman), but also verify them with the chief negotiator (Mahmood), or with the military negotiator (Irwandi).

Third, GAM's nondyadic structure of relationships, encompassing at least three nodes—including the negotiator—with direct ties to one another, reduced reliance on dyadic trust and on the behavior of individual negotiators. That the *de facto* top leader, Mahmood, negotiated on behalf of GAM did not matter greatly as even he needed the approval of other leaders. GAM's decision-making rules requiring relevant leaders' buy-in proved important. The Helsinki negotiators formulated positions in direct contact with field commanders from whom they got continuous approvals to take decisions. Nonnegotiating rebel leaders were influencing negotiating positions.

Another explanation that is suggested to have generated GAM's flexibility was the tsunami disaster, which weakened GAM militarily and thus worsened their BATNA. Yet, both non-GAM and GAM sources assert that the tsunami, while speeding up the negotiation process, was not decisive (Interviews Zaini 2009, 97). There were still GAM military leaders who were skeptical toward the concept of self-government and who had the opportunity to spoil the peace process. For the rebel group to undertake sustained strategic shift on statehood as a collective, the support of the military leaders was necessary.

Comparing the LTTE and GAM Processes

Whereas negotiators were trusted individuals in both groups, the LTTE case suggests that the high-value dyadic relationships between negotiators and nonnegotiating rebel leaders, marked by reputation-based trust, were insufficient to generate flexibility. The GAM case shows that, despite valued ties between military and political leaders, amounting to blind trust, there were also fears of treason and corruption that had to be taken seriously. For GAM, ties between negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders were nondyadic, implying that at least three persons, including at least one negotiator, were interconnected. These nondyadic ties were used to disseminate and verify information and to exert mutual influence.

The two cases support and clarify the workings of the trust mechanism. Merely studying GAM could have led to the conclusion that flexibility was attained because of blind or reputation-based trust between the chief negotiator and top political leader (Mahmood), and the nonnegotiating top military leader (Manaf). Such an explanation would

have exaggerated the importance of their dyadic relationship and downplayed the risks perceived by other nonnegotiating GAM leaders. Whereas the LTTE chief negotiator, Balasingham, had a high-value dyadic relationship with Prabakaran as the nonnegotiating leader, he was unable to sustain the position change.

Some may object that the LTTE negotiators were subordinate to the military, whereas this was not the case for GAM, and that this could have affected the flexibility. However, GAM military commanders were in possession of resources critical to the network and had the ability to spoil the negotiations: ''GAM in Aceh is divided into a civilian government and military structure, the latter technically subordinate to the former. In practice, however, decisions on the ground are dictated by the realities of the conflict and thus military imperatives'' (Schulze, 2004: 11). On the LTTE side, even Prabakaran as the highest (military) leader had a political agenda. Although Prabakaran and fellow his commanders knew how to fight, war was not considered to be a ''solution'' to the ethnic conflict.[17] Certainly, the military leaders were—in all likelihood—not intimately familiar with the political alternatives under consideration, including variations of federalism and self-autonomy. In this respect, improved and verifiable information about the alternatives being negotiated, along with their implications, could possibly have generated more flexibility by the LTTE.

Conclusion

Taking negotiators' flexibility as a prerequisite for peace talks to succeed, this article asked the question why some rebel groups participating in negotiations are flexible, whereas others are not. The proposition was that a rebel group structured as a trust network would be better equipped to be flexible in the sense of sustaining a movement on the main issue of contention. Findings from the two cases support and clarify the proposition.

The article demonstrates how rebels' social network structure affects their ability to manage the risks associated with flexibility in peace negotiations. The trust network structure makes possible a ''trust mechanism'' of information sharing and verification, and reciprocal influence. The mechanism implies that the risks associated with flexibility are reduced. The opportunities of rebel negotiators are constrained while those of nonnegotiating rebel leaders are enhanced. The latter get access to information, are represented in the talks—short of participating directly—and have the ability to influence decisions. In other words, the trust mechanism serves key procedural justice functions of transparency, fair representation, fair treatment, and fair play.

One of the most prominent rival explanations for the differing flexibility outcomes is the BATNA centered on military strength. A BATNA explanation would predict a party that is militarily stronger to be less flexible. Hence, LTTE's temporary flexibility would be seen as a sheer reflection of its military strength. GAM's sustained flexibility would

[17]See Prabakaran's annual Heroes day speeches on each 27 November 2000–2008, available at http://www.tamilnet.com/.

be interpreted to mirror its relative weakness to fight and therefore its dependency on a negotiated outcome.

With regard to the BATNA concept, this study suggests, first, that although the main difference between GAM and LTTE lay in their respective military strength, it was not this that primarily impacted upon rebels' negotiation behavior. That is, rebels were not inflexible chiefly because they assessed that the war option constituted a better alternative. Instead, this article argues that military strength was relevant in the way it compartmentalized rebels' social network structures. The structures were associated with rebels' different military strategies—offensive for the LTTE and defensive for GAM. Hence, LTTE's inflexibility may not necessarily have reflected a motivation for war through BATNA, but a structural weakness to negotiate peace through an over-reliance on dyadic relationships. LTTE's statements on federalism, put forward both by its top leader and by its chief negotiator, along with the LTTE federalism study trip signaled a serious intent with regard to the peace negotiations.

The second more serious issue with the BATNA concept and conventional bargaining theory is that of treating parties as unitary actors. While both approaches take into consideration the perception of the parties, they fail to specify who holds perceptions, and who makes assessments (cf. Reiter, 2003: 36; Stanley & Sawyer, 2009). The negotiations commenced in both cases because of the intent at the rebel-group level to explore the modalities of a political agreement as opposed to military struggle. Yet, as negotiations proceed, the assessment of BATNA may change (cf. Odell, 2002).

The social network approach both challenges and complements the BATNA concept and the bargaining perspective. The network analysis both supports and is supported by research on procedural justice. This study argues that even though a negotiated agreement may have individual rebel proponents considering it a better alternative to fighting, it has to be supported by key leaders within the group. The argument, therefore, is that the perception of the approaching agreement may be a greater concern than the perception of its alternatives. The question is what a better alternative means for nonnegotiating military leaders if they have no verifiable information on what the negotiations are about, or if they cannot, or are not supposed to influence the negotiation positions. Compared to the known alternative of continued fighting, the unknown alternative of an agreement drafted behind closed doors with a distrusted adversary may appear as a high-risk option. The finding that military leaders need to support a peace process is not new (cf. Stedman, 1991). Information asymmetries and commitment-related issues not only influence the relationship to the government adversary, but also the relationships internal to the rebel side. The explanatory power of the trust network account lies in its specification of a causal mechanism for rebels' negotiating flexibility, involving individual decision makers. In fact, the results of this study are supported by findings that procedural justice helps achieving peace agreements, made by other researchers (Albin & Druckman, forthcoming; Hollander-Blumoff & Tyler, 2008).

The findings imply that whereas it is possible for rebels to conduct "decentralised war" through terrorist or guerilla campaigns with parts of the network operating independently, peace through negotiated settlement may rely on rebels' interconnectedness. Whereas "cohesion" is often viewed in terms of ideology, or ethnicity, this study

suggests that it should be understood in terms of rebels' social network structure. In an embedded network, weak ties improve cohesion by serving as channels for information diffusion between people belonging to different groupings (Granovetter, 1973). In peace negotiations, weak ties are, however, not sufficient. Instead, what is necessary are strong ties between individuals in possession of resources critical for the network, such as command over foot soldiers. These ties are both used to diffuse *and* cross-check information, *and* to exert influence. Although there may be practical challenges in dealing with a very large network, size is not so much of an issue as the distribution of critical resources, that is, the level of decentralization. While social network analysis has been applied to areas of organized crime and terrorism, this study suggests its relevance for peacemaking.

Various policy implications follow. First, that the changing nature of the rebel network may affect rebels' peacemaking capability, through their negotiating flexibility, over time. In the interest of optimizing the ''timing for talks'' and to ensure the successful implementation of concluded agreements, third parties may want to get a grasp of how rebel negotiators and nonnegotiating leaders are interconnected. Second, while situational exposure of rebel negotiators—be it through third-party positive inducements or threats—may increase individual negotiators' propensity to short-term position change (Druckman & Mitchell, 1995b: 17), it may also increase the perceived insecurity on the part of nonnegotiating rebel leaders, which could compel them to break off talks or to spoil a peace process.

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Jannie Lilja, PhD, is an associate researcher at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, Sweden. This article was written during her stay as a visiting researcher at the Center for the Study of Civil War, International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Norway.