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Ceasefires as bargaining instruments in intrastate conflicts: ceasefire objectives and their effects on peace negotiations

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Chapter One: Ceasefires in Intrastate Conflicts

When President Santos publicly confirmed that peace talks between the Government of Colombia and the guerilla organization Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were underway in August 2012, he emphasized that military operations would continue until the parties reached a peace agreement. The FARC leadership had reluctantly accepted this condition, though they continued to press for a bilateral ceasefire. During the public phase of the talks, the FARC declared a unilateral ceasefire on six occasions. For the most part, the government continued its military offensives, even as the FARC complied with its own ceasefire declarations. However, against earlier public assurances, two and a half years into the talks, President Santos ordered a suspension of air strikes against the guerilla organization. This move sowed discord in military circles and was met with heavy criticism by the political opposition. A little more than a month later, a FARC ceasefire violation triggered the resumption of air strikes, before Santos suspended them once more following a negotiated agreement to expedite peace negotiations and de-escalate dynamics in the battlefield. In the last year of negotiations, there were virtually no deaths in the conflict dyad, despite the often-cited principle of ‘talking while fighting’.

The events in Colombia relating to the long-standing armed conflict between the government and the FARC and leading up to the final peace agreement in 2016 raise important questions with regard to the role of ceasefires in peace talks: what explains such shifts in battlefield dynamics over the course of a negotiation process? Why do some conflict party leaders declare a unilateral ceasefire or agree on a bilateral arrangement, while others refuse to engage in a ceasefire? And how does the use of ceasefires affect progress in peace negotiations?

To date, we lack a clear understanding of the systematic role of ceasefires as part of a larger military or political approach to an armed intrastate conflict. Ceasefire literature discusses the manifold roles of ceasefires in peace processes, but fails to systematically link them to strategic decision-making processes. Bargaining theory offers a framework to make such a link, but tends to view ceasefires in opposition to fighting, or conflates them conceptually with peace agreements. This introductory chapter lays out how conceptualizing ceasefires as part of a strategic bargaining process addresses these shortcomings.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section discusses the aim of this thesis and its understanding of ceasefires. The second section presents the research question and its academic and policy relevance. The third section introduces the analytical framework that serves to analyze how conflict party leaders' decisions are shaped and constrained by their interactions with the opponent and with and between various constituent groups. The fourth section outlines the overarching logic of the thesis, showing how individual chapters contribute to a comprehensive approach to understand ceasefires as bargaining instruments.

1. Aim of this thesis

The aim of this thesis is to increase our understanding of the role of ceasefires in the settlement of violent, political conflicts between a state and an armed non-state actor. To conceptualize ceasefires as strategic bargaining instruments, it theorizes how conflict party leaders use ceasefires as part of a larger military or political process that is aimed at maximizing their side's outcome in the conflict.

1.1. Theoretical approach

This thesis uses a bargaining framework to understand strategic decision-making processes from the perspective of conflict party leaders. Actors may go to war for various reasons, pursuing a wide range of issues. The bargaining theory of war adds a level of abstraction, disregarding the nature of contested issues or how they arose. Instead, it seeks to understand why – in cases where there are contested issues – some parties go to war or fail to settle wars, and to analyze the conditions under which the parties may agree on negotiated settlement. This level of abstraction allows identification of the commonalities, rather than the differences, of dynamics in a broad range of intrastate conflicts, helping identify patterns of interactions and the effects they have on conflicts and their settlement. Case studies help to empirically assess the theory and illustrate the implications of the theory on the basis of real cases.

The term *bargaining* – as used throughout this thesis – does not refer to a specific approach to addressing a conflict.⁴ Rather, it encompasses all approaches conflict parties may use to solve a conflict, whether politically or militarily. These include the use of fighting (see Wagner 2000), negotiations (see Filson and Werner 2002; Powell 2004) and, as this thesis argues, ceasefires. The thesis thus uses an instrumental understanding of war, based on the assumption that conflict parties are not interested in violence per se, but rather use it to achieve a wider political goal (see discussion in chapter three; Slantchev 2003, 623). It limits the analysis of bargaining processes to the period between the onset of an armed conflict and the conclusion of a peace agreement. In this conceptualization, challenges related to the implementation of a peace agreement affect bargaining dynamics only in as far as the anticipation of such challenges affects the process of reaching an agreement.

This thesis seeks to contribute to our understanding of conflict settlement, i.e. how conflict parties engaged in intrastate conflicts manage to reach a peace agreement in which they address the key contested issues and dismantle the status of war (see Clayton, Mason, and Sticher 2020). This thesis also refers to this period as the ‘transition from war to peace’, seeing a peace agreement as a “tipping point” that may lead to positive peace (see Diehl 2016, 9). The underlying motivation is to better understand the conditions that facilitate negotiations, in order to be able to identify effective third party engagement supporting progress towards conflict settlement.

1.2. Definition of a *ceasefire*

There is no clearly established definition of a ceasefire. In official peace processes, the use of terminology is often negotiated, as one party may assign a specific meaning or implication to a term such as *ceasefire*, *cessation of hostilities* or *truce* (Akebo 2013, 22). Laypersons and the mainstream media tend to use *ceasefire* as an umbrella term to refer to any stop in the fighting, with varying degrees of formality and modalities (Lyons 2016). In academia, some understand ceasefire agreements to be an outcome of a process (e.g. Beardsley et al. 2006;

⁴ In some bodies of work, the term bargaining has a different meaning, referring for example to a specific style of negotiations (see chapter three, *Terminology and limitations*).

DeRouen, Bercovitch, and Pospieszna 2011), or as an agreement that starts a process (e.g. Akebo 2013; Kreutz 2010).

This thesis builds on a broad understanding of ceasefires as “all arrangements by or between conflict parties to stop fighting from a specific point in time” (Clayton et al. 2019, 2). This offers an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of different arrangements, ranging from informal unilateral announcements to stop fighting to highly formalized, comprehensive agreements between conflict parties detailing the process of terminating conflict violence. Conceptualizing ceasefires as bargaining instruments implies a focus on the process of implementing ceasefire agreements. This leads to the following slightly adapted ceasefire definition used throughout this thesis:

A ceasefire is the process that follows a declaration by at least one conflict party to suspend or terminate conflict violence from a specific point in time.

Only considering arrangements that follow an explicit declaration limits our understanding of ceasefires to those stops in fighting that have been declared *ex ante*, an important qualification in terms of the signaling functions a ceasefire can offer, as discussed later in this thesis. The requirement that a ceasefire suspends or terminates violence from a specific point in time serves to distinguish ceasefires from more loose promises to stop fighting and allows the opponent and third parties to assess compliance with such a declaration or agreement (Clayton and Sticher, forthcoming; Clayton et al. 2019).

The terms *ceasefire declaration* (for unilateral ceasefires) and *ceasefire agreement* (for bilateral or multilateral ceasefires) are used to refer to the starting point of the ceasefire. While it is straightforward to identify a declaration or an agreement as a starting point, it is often more difficult to pinpoint a clear end of a ceasefire. In some cases, a ceasefire with temporal limits expires at a precise moment in time. In others, a ceasefire may be superseded by another declaration and agreement. Often, however, ceasefire violations or a re-eruption of hostilities make it difficult to say if a ceasefire continues to hold. In general, this thesis uses a conflict party perspective to determine whether a ceasefire holds, assuming that a ceasefire is in place as long as the parties claim that it is in place. They may suspend an ongoing ceasefire, stop referring to it or argue that it has collapsed. In chapter seven, a different (third party) measure for determining the end of a ceasefire is introduced, as the aim of chapter seven is specifically to assess the impact of ceasefires on violence suspension.

There are two main types of ceasefires: those that are put in place before a peace agreement is reached (here called non-definitive ceasefires) and those that form part of or are associated with a peace agreement (here called definitive ceasefires, see Clayton et al. 2019, 2). Non-definitive ceasefires form part of the bargaining process, while definitive ceasefires are a key outcome of this process (and form part of a new process, i.e. of the dismantling of the status of war). As this thesis focuses on ceasefires as bargaining instruments, and due to its narrow understanding of a bargaining process as the period between the onset of armed conflict and the conclusion of a peace agreement, the research focus is on non-definitive arrangements. For simplicity, the term *ceasefire* is used to refer to non-definitive ceasefires, unless stated otherwise. Definitive ceasefires are discussed in as far as the anticipation of the effect of such arrangements influences the bargaining process.

2. Research question

Conceptualizing ceasefires as bargaining instruments challenges established ideas about the processes that lead up to conflict settlement, and about war re-emergence, with important implications for our understanding of war and peace.

2.1. Ceasefires as bargaining instruments

The various arrangements that fall under the umbrella term *ceasefire* share one characteristic: they seek to suspend or terminate conflict violence, but do not address the main incompatibilities between the conflict parties (Clayton, Mason, and Sticher 2020; Kreutz 2010). Yet, as is argued throughout this thesis, ceasefires are tightly intertwined with the process of addressing the contested issues between the belligerents.

A key assumption of the research question is that ceasefires affect the negotiation of the underlying conflict incompatibilities. A simple, yet powerful hypothetical counterfactual underscores this assumption: if conflict parties could cease fire without changing the bargaining process, then why would they ever use costly fighting? If the suspension of conflict violence does not change conflict dynamics, we would not expect wars to exist.

Yet although ceasefires suspend conflict violence, it would be shortsighted to conceptualize them as the mere opposite of fighting. Important characteristics differentiate them from de facto stops in fighting. Most importantly, a ceasefire contains a declaration ex

ante, which commits an actor to a course of action that can be evaluated by others, including the opponent (see Fearon 1997). Whether declared in good faith or to gain a military advantage, and whether eventually complied with or violated, ceasefires send a signal to the opponent about the willingness or ability to deliver on a promise.

Importantly, it is much harder to deliver on a ceasefire promise than to continue fighting, as delivering on a ceasefire renders an actor vulnerable to spoiling. A mid-level commander who disagrees with a leadership decision to continue fighting is unlikely to change the course of a bargaining process. The same is not true in the case of a ceasefire: a mid-level commander's disagreement with a ceasefire may lead to actions that cast doubt upon the willingness or ability of the conflict party leadership to settle a conflict, with important implications for the bargaining process. Finally, while fighting does not require the consent of the opponent, ceasefire arrangements are often bilateral, requiring a joint approach between parties that are at war. When evaluating the costs and benefits of a ceasefire, leaders thus need to consider the intent of the opponent and their ability to deliver, adding to the complexity of strategic decision-making.

In short, there are important reasons to assume that ceasefires affect bargaining dynamics, and there are key differences between ceasefires and a de facto stop in fighting. This leads to the main research question of this thesis: what is the role of ceasefires as bargaining instruments? Specifically, this thesis seeks to shed light on *when* and *why* conflict party leaders use *what types of ceasefires* as part of a larger bargaining process.

Main research question	What is the role of ceasefires as bargaining instruments?
Primary sub-question	When and why do conflict party leaders use what types of ceasefires as part of a larger bargaining process?
Secondary sub-question	How do ceasefires affect bargaining dynamics, in particular the negotiation of the contested issues between the conflict parties?

Table 1: Research question. Source: author's own compilation.

As a secondary question, it explores how the use of ceasefires as bargaining instruments affects bargaining dynamics, in particular the negotiation of the contested issues between the parties. An important underlying assumption is that conflict party leaders use ceasefires deliberately, as a means to pursue an overarching aim. It is also assumed that they act rationally, i.e. that their decisions are consistent with their preferences and their assessment

of the best course of action. The theory is developed for violent, political conflicts between a state actor and a non-state actor, which are referred to simply as intrastate conflicts. The research philosophy, key terminology and scope conditions will be discussed in more detail in chapter three (*Research design*).

2.2. Relevance

Conceptualizing ceasefires as bargaining instruments contributes to our understanding of war-to-peace transitions, with important implications for the policy community.

Academic relevance

Bargaining theory focuses on the function of fighting (Wagner 2000; Werner and Yuen 2005; Walter 2009; Powell 2004) and, to a lesser degree, of negotiations (Filson and Werner 2002; Slantchev 2003; Wagner 2000; Powell 2004) in overcoming bargaining problems. These studies, however, tend to leave the role of ceasefires unspecified (e.g. Filson and Werner 2002; Slantchev 2003; Wagner 2000) or define them as the converse of fighting (e.g. Findley 2013; Werner and Yuen 2005). Because bargaining theory informs much of the quantitative research on the onset, settlement and re-emergence of wars, our understanding of war and peace has been shaped by its framework. Two major issues arise because ceasefires are not conceptualized as part of the bargaining process.

Conflating ceasefires and peace agreements

The first issue that arises due to this oversight in the research is that many scholars conceptually conflate ceasefires with peace agreements (e.g. Fortna 2003; 2004; Chiba 2011; Werner and Yuen 2005; Lo, Hashimoto, and Reiter 2008) in that they view both as the “beginning points for measuring peace duration” (Greig and Diehl 2005, 624). This may be less problematic in interstate conflict, where most of these studies are located, as conflict parties can keep their own armed forces and a suspension of violence may be sufficient to return to a state of normalization. In intrastate conflicts, however, parties have to agree on a common governance structure to settle a conflict, requiring the non-state actor to disarm and

demobilize (Walter 1997; 2009).⁵ We should thus expect that the impacts of ceasefires and peace agreements differ.

Some scholars distinguish conceptually between ceasefires and peace agreements, but view both types of agreements as *outcomes* of the bargaining process (e.g. Mattes and Savun 2010; Toft 2010). By extension, they conflate *the process of reaching* a ceasefire with the process of reaching a peace agreement. A key problem with this approach is that agreeing on how to address the main incompatibilities requires parties to have overcome key bargaining problems, such as imperfect information or the problem of credible commitment. This is not the case for non-definitive ceasefires. On the contrary, as will be discussed in chapters six and seven, these types of ceasefires may even help parties overcome bargaining problems associated with specific bargaining situations.

Equating peace with violence suspension

The second issue that ensues due to the false conceptualization of ceasefires, much related to the above conflation of ceasefires and peace agreements, is that most quantitative research rooted in bargaining theory tends to equate peace with *negative* peace, i.e. periods in which conflict violence is absent (Diehl 2016). In such an understanding, any period in which parties comply with a reciprocal ceasefire would be regarded as a period of peace. This is not just a narrow definition that ignores the harm of structural violence: equating periods of violence suspension to periods of peace also blurs our understanding of conflict settlement and of war re-emergence (see Diehl 2016; Gartner and Melin 2009, 4). It risks conflating the conditions that lead parties to address incompatibilities with the conditions that lead to a ceasefire. While insight into both sets of conditions add to our understanding of war and peace, conflating them may mean that we fail to understand either. Similarly, if we conflate violence suspension with peace, we may wrongly capture an end of a ceasefire as an instance of war re-emergence. We need to treat the conditions that lead to the end of a ceasefire separately from the conditions that lead to a re-emergence of armed conflict to sharpen our understanding of war.

⁵ Alternatively, combatants of the non-state actor may be integrated into the government forces. This thesis focuses on the more common approach of disarmament and demobilization, but alternative options are discussed in chapter seven, *Ceasefire provisions in intrastate conflicts*.

The focus of the research question – understanding the role of ceasefires as bargaining instruments – helps addressing these shortcomings. By conceptualizing ceasefires in this manner, we can treat them as part, rather than as the outcome, of bargaining processes. This enables us to distinguish between agreements that seek to suspend conflict violence (ceasefire agreements) and agreements that seek to address the incompatibilities underlying a conflict (peace agreements).

Policy relevance

Policy advisors and policy makers seeking to promote conflict settlement need to understand how their engagement is likely to affect the behavior of conflict parties. This requires a thorough understanding of the incentive structures and constraints conflict party leaders face.

A much-debated question in the policy community relates to the use of ceasefires in peace negotiations, i.e. whether ceasefires promote or inhibit conflict settlement. Scholars have discussed the wide range of possible objectives actors may pursue through a ceasefire (e.g. Chounet-Cambas 2011; Harrison and Kyed 2019; Höglund 2011; Mahieu 2007; Sosnowski 2019). Yet, because we lack a framework that systematically links these objectives to wider bargaining processes, policy makers may find it difficult to apply existing insights to new, ongoing cases.

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of third party guarantees (e.g. Fortna 2003; 2004), shown a potential tension between peacekeeping and peacemaking (e.g. Greig and Diehl 2005), and highlighted the risk that imposed ceasefires may create time inconsistent incentives (Findley 2013; Werner and Yuen 2005). By conceptualizing ceasefires as bargaining instruments, this thesis shows how the role of ceasefires in bargaining processes evolves over time. This suggests that third party engagement should adapt over time, as the same interventions may have a different impact at various stages of a conflict. Consequently, third parties need to tailor their interventions to the prevailing bargaining context to ensure that their engagement is effective and does not cause harm.⁶

⁶ See discussion in chapter eight, *Implications for third party engagement*.

3. Analytical framework

This section provides the intellectual scaffold to analyze how an incumbent government's interactions with the leadership of an armed non-state actor are shaped and constrained by its interactions with various actor sub-groups. The analytical framework shows how parts two and three of this thesis build on extant theories to devise a comprehensive approach to the research question. Bargaining theory guides the analysis with regard to conflict party leaders' strategic, interactive decision-making under structural uncertainty. Insights from socio-psychological peace and conflict studies (e.g. Galtung 2004; Kelman 2007; Kriesberg 2003) and behavioral economics (e.g. Bearden 2001; Fehr and Schmidt 1999; Rabin 1993) help theorize how violent conflict, as well as changes in conflict behavior may shift constituent preferences. Framing theory (e.g. Benford and Snow 2000; Chong and Druckman 2007; Druckman 2001) informs how elites may seek to shape such preferences. Other bodies of literature – on elite competition (e.g. Brooker 2010; Sniderman et al. 1991), principal-agent theory (e.g. Jensen and Meckling 1976; Przeworski 1999), and domestic-international negotiation dynamics (e.g. Putnam 1988; Schelling 1960) – help theorize how preferences and perceptions at constituent level in turn affect strategic decision-making process by the conflict party leadership.

3.1. Underlying assumptions

In line with extant bargaining theory, the analytical framework assumes that the bargaining space is shaped by the preferences and by the perceptions of the expected outcome of a conflict. However, the framework challenges the conceptualization of conflict parties as unitary actors, which is a common simplification in formal bargaining models of war. Instead, it distinguishes between the conflict party leadership, key constituent groups, and political competitors vying for a leadership position. These different entities are referred to as sub-groups of the conflict party. In line with rationalist assumptions, individual members of these sub-groups favor a negotiated settlement over continued fighting if, given their preferences and their perceptions of the bargaining situation, the expected outcome of settlement is higher than that of continued fighting. Again departing from established bargaining theory, it is assumed that preferences are not fixed and exogenously given, but are instead at least partly endogenous to the bargaining process. Chapter four discusses in more

detail how, as a result of these assumptions, violent conflict behavior that arises from a bargaining problem may affect preferences in a way that entrenches existing or creates additional bargaining problems.

3.2. Sub-groups for democratic state actors

Sub-groups vary for different types of actors and regimes. With Colombia serving as a case study throughout this thesis, the specific sub-groups and the interactions that shape leadership decisions are here discussed from the perspective of a democratic state actor. For leaders of democratic states, citizens – or more concretely, citizens with voting rights – are a key constituency in view of future election outcomes. To a certain extent, this is the case even in situations where leaders do not personally run for re-election (see Keller and Yang 2008; Mintz 2004; Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020). In the context of peace negotiations, the armed forces and their commanders also form a key constituency, as the armed forces need to follow orders to fight, suspend or terminate a war (see Schirmer 2019). Members vying for the leadership position usually include leaders of political parties that compete against the incumbent government, or competitors within the government party (Brooker 2010, 27–33; Sniderman et al. 1991). They are often referred to as political opponents or the opposition. In the context of this thesis, they are referred to as political competitors, as the term opponent is used to describe the opposing conflict party.

Reducing the democratic state actor to these four sub-groups – incumbent government, political competitors, citizens and armed forces – is still a stark simplification. We may further distinguish between citizens associated with a specific political party and swing voters, or discuss dynamics within the armed forces, such as the relationship between commanders at different levels and in different regions, or between factions. There may also be specific sub-groups for individual governments. For example, some governments may draw support from specific interest groups, such as wealthy landowners, or from religious communities, pointing to an influence of religious leaders. The sub-groups included in the analytical framework are those we can expect to find across democratic states that experience a violent political conflict with an armed non-state actor. The level of abstraction is guided by the need to balance the ability to account for key dynamics of actual peace negotiations (calling for complexity) with the ability to formalize relationships (calling for simplicity).

For other types of actors, such as autocratic regimes or non-state actors, the relevant sub-groups may differ. Wherever relevant, the theory section discusses the effects of regime and actor type on theoretical expectations, assessing whether and how interactions with different sub-groups affect bargaining dynamics.

3.3. Levels of interactions

Figure 1 depicts the interactions between conflict parties and actor sub-groups from the perspective of the incumbent government. It focuses on the direct interactions between the incumbent government and other state actor sub-groups, and on the main interactions between sub-groups of the two conflict parties, in as far as they directly constrain or shape elite decision-making. Interactions that only indirectly constrain or shape the decisions of the incumbent government, such as the interactions between citizens and the armed forces, are not illustrated.

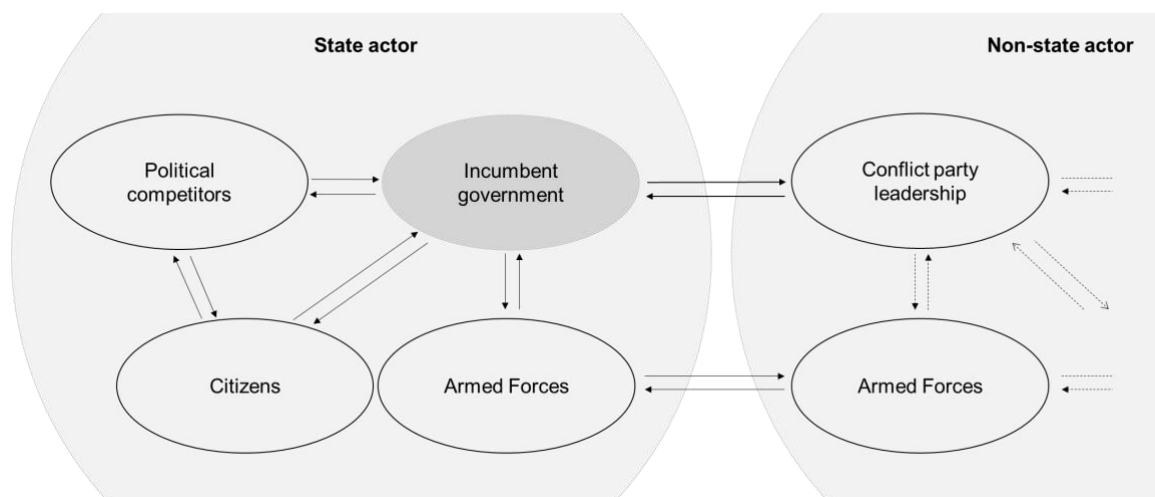


Figure 1: interactions with and between key actor sub-groups from the perspective of a democratic government. Source: author's own visualization.

Interactions between conflict party leaderships

The interactions between the incumbent government and the leadership of the armed non-state actor stand at the center of this analysis. Often, the leadership of a conflict party is not involved directly in peace negotiations, instead delegating the process to representatives. However, guidance of the process and the final decision rests with the leadership, which is why the interaction is depicted at this level.

The interactions between leaders consist of a choice between, or a mix of, consensus based and unilateral approaches to solve the conflict through military or political means. Consensus based approaches imply that both conflict party leaderships agree to a joint approach to address or manage the conflict. This suggests that both sides see a benefit in using such an approach. By contrast, unilateral initiatives may, as the name suggests, be taken unilaterally by any actor. They do not depend on the consent of the opponent and do thus not require meeting the criterion of perceived benefits on both sides. However, even without consent, a unilateral initiative by one actor often triggers a reaction by the opponent, resulting in an interaction. In the context of this analysis, political negotiations and the use of bilateral ceasefires are key consensus based approaches, while fighting and the use of unilateral ceasefires are key unilateral initiatives. Conflict parties may use only consensus based approaches, only unilateral approaches, or a mix between them, as the various examples in Table 2 illustrate.

Example	Consensus based approaches	Unilateral approaches
Conflict parties pursue negotiations while fighting continues	Peace negotiations	Fighting
One side declares a unilateral ceasefire during peace negotiations	Peace negotiations	Unilateral ceasefire (conflict party A), fighting or formal/informal replication (conflict party B)
One conflict party declares a unilateral ceasefire in the absence of peace negotiations	N/A	Unilateral ceasefire (conflict party A), fighting or formal/informal replication (conflict party B)
Conflict parties fight without any peace negotiations	N/A	Fighting
Conflict parties agree on a bilateral ceasefire during peace negotiations	Bilateral ceasefire, peace negotiations	N/A
Conflict parties agree on a bilateral ceasefire in the absence of peace negotiations	Bilateral ceasefire	N/A

Table 2: examples of how conflict parties may use consensus based and unilateral approaches during an intrastate conflict. Source: author's own compilation.

Constraints and influence on leadership decisions

Leadership decisions about the use of consensus-based approaches are constrained and shaped by the interactions with and between actor sub-groups. The following paragraphs focus on the interactions between sub-groups that are directly pertinent to leadership decisions, narrowing in on the perspective of the incumbent government.

Government – citizens

An elected government takes decisions on behalf of its citizens. When setting its policy choices, it pursues its own interests, while also anticipating the effect of policy decisions on political support, including on future election outcomes (Jensen and Meckling 1976; Przeworski 1999; Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020). In the context of peace negotiations, governments need to consider the impact of various decisions related to conflict settlement – i.e. the decision to enter into negotiations, commit to a ceasefire or accept a peace agreement – on the level of political support they receive. This need is accentuated if a government has to submit a peace agreement to a popular referendum.

A government may also seek to influence the acceptability of a peace initiative or a peace agreement by framing conflict dynamics in a way that supports their policy decision (see Benford and Snow 2000; Chong and Druckman 2007; Druckman 2001).

Elite competition

This thesis uses the term *elite* in a narrow sense to refer to the political leadership of a conflict party and their political competitors. Competition between such elites influences constituent support and shapes leadership decision-making processes (Riker 1995, 33; Sniderman et al. 1991, 349).

As they vie for leadership positions, political competitors will likely seek to exploit tensions between government and citizen preferences, including with regard to the decision to seek a settlement to a conflict. Governments and political competitors will seek to rally support for or against settlement. By countering the portrayal of conflict party leaders, political competitors constrain the ability of incumbent leaders to shape constituent preferences and perceptions (Druckman 2004; Haenggli and Kriesi 2012, 261; Chong and Druckman 2007, 110–11).

Interactions between the armed forces

While the negotiation of a ceasefire happens at or under the guidance of the conflict party leadership, the implementation of a ceasefire takes place at the intersection between the armed forces of the two conflict parties. The need to delegate implementation of directives to the armed forces shapes and constrains decisions of the leadership. An incumbent government thus has to anticipate its ability to implement an agreement, as members of the armed forces may engage in spoiling behavior if they disagree with the course taken by the government (Stedman 2008; Zahar 2008). Strong disagreement with leadership decisions by parts of the armed forces may threaten to negatively affect the cohesion of the armed forces (see Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012). Dynamics in the battlefield also affect the ability of elites to rally for or against an agreement (De Graaf, Dimitriu, and Ringsmose 2015, 8; Freedman 2015, 25).

In short, various interactions with and between actor sub-groups shape the ability and willingness of a leader to engage in a ceasefire and to pursue conflict settlement. A government is *willing* to commit to a ceasefire or conclude a peace agreement if it sees the benefit of doing so, compared to a purely military approach. It is *able* to follow through on such engagements if it has sufficient support from key constituent groups and can ensure compliance on the ground.

4. Overarching logic of the thesis

This thesis is structured in four parts. Part one (*Introduction*) embeds the research question in the theoretical and methodological state of the debate. It introduces the research subject and the analytical framework, shows how this thesis contributes to the existing ceasefire and bargaining literature, and presents the overall research design.

The four chapters of parts two and three contain the main theoretical and empirical contributions. Guided by the analytical framework introduced above, they theorize how actor sub-group interactions shape elite decision-making processes with regard to ceasefires and peace negotiations. Part two (*Bargaining Barriers to Conflict Settlement*) assesses the relationship between battlefield dynamics and the space for a negotiated agreement. Adapting bargaining theory to account for the specificities of violent conflicts, it theorizes how constituent preferences constrain elite decision-making processes and how leaders seek to

overcome such constraints. Part three (*Ceasefires as Bargaining Instruments*) conceptualizes ceasefires as bargaining instruments, building on the revised theory presented in part two. This contributes to our understanding of why and when leaders use what types of ceasefires as part of a larger political or military approach to a conflict.

Part four (*The Role of Ceasefires in the Transition from War to Peace*) takes a bird's-eye view on these contributions, discussing theoretically and illustrating empirically how the elements of the analytical framework jointly shape the transition from war to negotiated peace. It then discusses academic and policy implications of the main findings of the thesis.

The following paragraphs provide an overview of the contents of these four thesis parts. They summarize the key findings of the chapters that form the backbone of this thesis – parts two and three – and discuss briefly what aspects of the analytical framework the chapters focus on. A more comprehensive discussion of how each theoretical part relates to the analytical framework can be found in the respective chapters.

Part one: Introduction

Part one consists of chapters one to three. Chapter one, i.e. this introduction chapter, introduces the research question and provides the analytical framework that guides this thesis. Chapter two (*Literature Overview*) discusses the state of the debate in the existing ceasefire and bargaining literature, detailing how this thesis contributes to these two bodies of literature. Chapter three (*Research Design*) presents the multi-method research design and discusses the case selection strategy and the methodological choices for the following parts of this thesis. It also introduces the main case used for the qualitative part of the empirical assessment, i.e. the 2012 to 2016 Colombian peace negotiations between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Part two: Bargaining Barriers to Conflict Settlement

Part two builds on existing bargaining theory and revises some of its underlying assumptions to account for constituent constraints on leadership decisions. It helps us understand why and when battlefield dynamics affect popular support for conflict settlement.

Chapter four: The Problem of Costly Concessions

Chapter four discusses how conflict dynamics, in particular a history of violence between the conflict parties, affect constituent preferences in a way that constrains the ability of a conflict

party leadership to settle a conflict through negotiations. It thus focuses on the interplay of relations between the armed forces, between citizens and the incumbent government, and between conflict party leaders (see chapter four, *Focus of chapter four* for a more detailed discussion).

Revising bargaining theory to account for social preferences and for constituent constraints on elite decision-making, chapter four introduces a hitherto undertheorized explanation of why conflict parties may fail to settle a costly armed conflict. Citizens not only care about what they get out of an agreement, but also want to avoid rewarding the non-state actor through concessions. Yet concessions on both sides are necessary to achieve a mutually acceptable agreement. Modifying a standard bargaining setup to account for this dilemma, the chapter identifies the conditions that render conflict settlement difficult or impossible. The empirical analysis demonstrates how bargaining dynamics in the Colombian peace negotiations align with expected implications of the theory, offering support for the validity of the framework.

Chapter five: War of Narratives

Chapter five theorizes how elites, in the context of elite competition, may use frames in communication to rally support for or against a negotiated settlement. It focuses primarily on the interplay of relations between the incumbent government, political competitors and citizens. It then expands the focus to also include relations between the armed forces (see chapter five, *Focus of chapter five*).

Building on the revised bargaining theory introduced in the previous chapter and on framing theory, chapter five proposes two ideal-type conflict narratives. It suggests that supporters of a negotiated agreement promote a forward-oriented peace narrative, emphasizing the costs of war and the benefits of settlement, and making a settlement primarily about the gains for the own conflict party. Meanwhile, political competitors promote a backward-oriented war narrative, highlighting negative behavior by the non-state actor and emphasizing concessions, thus making settlement primarily about the opponent. A machine-learning supported analysis of tweets in the 2012–2016 Colombian peace negotiations offers supporting evidence for the two narratives, suggesting that leaders and their political competitors indeed seek to shape support for an agreement through strategic framing.

Chapter five then theorizes how conflict behavior by the non-state actor affects the government's ability to promote a peace narrative. In line with the theoretical expectations, the Twitter analysis reveals a shift in framing during FARC ceasefires: fighting and ceasefire violations provided munition for the war narrative, whereas compliance with ceasefires created space for the government to promote the peace narrative.

Part three: Ceasefires as Bargaining Instruments

Building on the revised bargaining theory presented in part two, part three conceptualizes ceasefires as bargaining instruments. Its two chapters theorize when and why conflict party leaders use what types of ceasefire arrangements to further their objectives in bargaining processes.

Chapter six: The Shifting Role of Ceasefires

Chapter six theorizes how a government's assessment of the expected benefits of continued fighting shape its decision to commit to a ceasefire as part of a larger bargaining strategy. It thus focuses on the interplay of relations between the armed forces and relations between conflict party leaders (see chapter six, *Focus of chapter six*).

Building on the bargaining theory presented in part two, chapter six specifies three distinct bargaining contexts. In the Diminishing Opponent context, leaders believe that a military approach to the conflict offers a better outcome than what they may achieve in negotiations. In the Forcing Concessions context, they prefer conflict settlement in the long-term, but believe that continued conflict will help them achieve further concessions. In the Enabling Agreement context, expectations about a military outcome converge and fighting is no longer seen as a useful means of improving a negotiated outcome. In line with these readings, leaders adapt their strategic goal, from pursuing a military advantage, to boosting their bargaining power, to improving the chances of reaching conflict settlement. Leaders may use ceasefires in the pursuit of any of these three goals, shifting the function of a ceasefire as they gain a better understanding of the bargaining situation.

A comparison of violence and ceasefire patterns in contemporary peace processes and a congruence test in the Colombian case offer support for the theoretical framework. The findings highlight the important, and shifting, role of ceasefires in the transition from war to negotiated peace.

Chapter seven: Logics of Ceasefire Design

Chapter seven theorizes how conflict party leaders' strategic goals drive the design of a ceasefire. It argues that both the underlying design logic and provisions included in an agreement influence how long a ceasefire is expected to hold. In terms of actor sub-groups, it focuses on the interplay of relations between conflict party leaders and relations between the armed forces (see chapter seven, *Focus of chapter seven*).

Building on the bargaining contexts introduced in chapter six, chapter seven discusses how conflict party leaders use three distinct classes of ceasefires to address the key challenges they face in different bargaining contexts. In the Diminishing Opponent and Forcing Concessions contexts, parties will likely use a ceasefire without monitoring provisions – i.e. a cessation of hostilities arrangement – to keep the costs of defection low or to avoid costly implementation in the context of uncertainty about an opponent's intent. In the Enabling Agreement context, parties will likely use a ceasefire with compliance mechanisms to make it resilient to non-strategic violations and create a conducive negotiation environment. Chapter seven extends the analysis to the implementation phase, arguing that parties use definitive ceasefires – i.e. ceasefires that include demobilization provisions and are linked to incompatibility provisions – to conclude the bargaining process and dismantle the status of war. Two hypotheses are derived from the theoretical framework and statistically tested on a new dataset that was coded specifically for this analysis. The empirical assessment shows that definitive ceasefires, followed by preliminary ceasefires, are associated with longer periods of violence suspension than cessation of hostilities, offering support for the framework.

Part four: Ceasefires and the Transition from War to Peace

Part four summarizes the findings and discusses their wider implications in the concluding chapter of this thesis, chapter eight (*Findings and Implications*). Building on the main findings of the previous parts, chapter eight assesses the individual contributions of chapters four to seven and discusses how they interrelate. It recounts the Colombian case to illustrate key bargaining dynamics, before relating the theoretical, conceptual and empirical findings of the thesis to existing bodies of literature. It then discusses the implications of this thesis for third party engagement.