



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Sticher, V.

Citation

Sticher, V. (2021, May 11). *Ceasefires as bargaining instruments in intrastate conflicts: ceasefire objectives and their effects on peace negotiations*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3176458>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3176458>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3176458> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Sticher, V.

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

Issue Date: 2021-05-11

Chapter Two: Literature Overview

This chapter discusses the state of the debate of bargaining and ceasefire literature, and how this thesis contributes to these two bodies of work. The first section provides an overview of key insights from bargaining theory and discusses insights and gaps with regard to the conceptualization of ceasefires as bargaining instruments. The second section does the same for ceasefire literature. The third section shows how merging insights from these two bodies of literature contributes to our understanding of the role of ceasefires in bargaining processes. It also outlines specific contributions to bargaining and ceasefire literature.

1. Bargaining theory

In the broad literature on armed conflicts, the bargaining theory of war works at the most abstract level. It does not explain the roots of conflicts, i.e. why there are contested issues between conflict parties in the first place. Instead, it seeks to answer three key puzzles: why do parties go to war, given that, ex post, war is always inefficient? Why do they fail to settle costly war through a negotiated agreement? And why do some wars recur after they have been settled?⁷

Scholars have identified two types of answers to these questions. The first type relates to the bargaining space. It builds on the basic assumption that conflict parties only accept a negotiated agreement if the expected outcome of negotiations is better than what they expect to gain through continued fighting. For a bargaining space to emerge, the ranges of acceptable agreements of the conflict parties need to overlap. A lack of such a bargaining space may explain why conflict parties engage in wars (Fearon 1995; Powell 1999; Schelling 1960; Reiter 2003; Walter 1997; 2009).

The second type of answer, commonly referred to as the problem of credible commitment, essentially relates to a lack of external enforcement. It argues that conflict parties fail to convince and be convinced about the opponent's commitment to enforce a deal post agreement, in view of time inconsistent incentives. This may lead to war onset, but the problem of credible commitment is more commonly associated with the failure to settle once

⁷ See Walter (2009) for a comprehensive discussion of these three question.

war has already broken out (see Fearon 1995; Walter 1997; 2009; Reiter 2009). The following sub-sections discuss insights from the literature related to these two types of answers and the interaction between the two, before demonstrating the gap with relation to the research question.

1.1. Imperfect information

At the heart of the bargaining problem is the lack of a compromise solution or the perceived lack thereof. A negotiated settlement requires parties to find a mutually acceptable agreement, necessitating the consent of both sides. As long as at least one of the conflict parties believes that what it can achieve outside of negotiation is better than the agreement that is currently on the table (even after accounting for the costs of war), then continuing war is rational behavior. But could the other side then not simply offer a better deal, one that makes a rational actor choose to stop fighting? Ex post, wars are always inefficient, as one could reach the final arrangement through negotiation without the costs of fighting. Conflict parties thus have an incentive to negotiate an agreement that leaves them better off than if they fight (Fearon 1995; Lax and Sebenius 1986; Raiffa 1982, 14–15; Schelling 1960; Walter 2009).

A key rationalist explanation why they may fail to do so is due to imperfect and asymmetric information. Parties have an incentive to misrepresent information about their fighting capabilities and their resolve in order to extract concessions from the other side. This may lead to a situation where parties cannot find an agreement that is mutually acceptable, even if in the presence of perfect information such an agreement might exist (Fearon 1995; Lax and Sebenius 1986; Powell 1999; Schelling 1960). Walter (2009, 245–46) argues that the problem of asymmetric information is particularly troubling in intrastate wars: information about non-state armed actors is more difficult to obtain than information about state actors, and non-state actors have a strong interest in keeping such information private to avoid exploitation by the state. Governments in intrastate wars also have a stronger incentive to misrepresent information, especially their resolve, to signal to potential challengers that they should not even think about taking up arms (Walter 2009, 250–51).

Fearon (1995) originally conceived the imperfect information theory as a rationalist explanation for the *onset* of war, but many have extended its implications to explain the duration and settlement of war. These expanded conceptualizations seek to explain how,

through fighting, conflict parties reveal important information about their relative capabilities and resolve that eventually leads to convergence in the expected military outcome (Wagner 2000; Werner and Yuen 2005; Walter 2009; Powell 2004). Negotiations offer an additional mechanism to provide information about real strength and resolve. This mechanism is usually conceptualized simply through the threat of a return to costly fighting: an actor that refuses a settlement offer accepts the costly continuation of fighting, a decision from which the opponent can induce information regarding the actor's capabilities or resolve (Filson and Werner 2002; Slantchev 2003; Wagner 2000; Powell 2004). Slantchev distinguishes between fighting as a non-strategic, non-manipulable, and imprecise information channel, and negotiations as a manipulable, strategic and precise information channel, arguing that both are necessary and complementary to reduce uncertainty about a mutually acceptable outcome (Slantchev 2003, 628).

While imperfect information is the most common explanation of a lack in bargaining space, two additional problems are sometime discussed under the same banner: indivisible stakes and war entrepreneurs. If actors perceive the key issue at stake as indivisible, this may imply that any practical arrangement would fall outside one actor's range of acceptable agreements (Pillar 1983, 24–26). Similarly, if some actors thrive on the instability that war creates, they may have an incentive to fuel further conflict (Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom 2004). Some bargaining theorists are skeptical of these arguments. Fearon (1995, 389–90) and Walter (1997, 246–47) discuss that, in theory, indivisible issues could be solved by linking them to other issues or rotating control and ownership, but admit that this may be difficult to do in practice. Indivisible stakes and war entrepreneurs could both – at least in theory – be addressed through side payments (Fearon 1995; Kydd 2010; Walter 2009; 2013). As a result, the bargaining theory of war generally focuses on the problem of imperfect information when discussing a lack of bargaining space.

1.2. Credible commitment

Over the course of a violent conflict, as conflict parties reveal information about their capabilities and resolve, expectations about the expected outcome of fighting converge (Filson and Werner 2002; Powell 2004; Slantchev 2003; Wagner 2000; Walter 2009).

Yet in many long-standing armed conflicts, parties still fail to reach a peace agreement. Bargaining scholars explain this through a second key obstacle to negotiated settlements,

namely, the problem of credible commitment (Fearon 1995; Reiter 2003; 2009; Fearon 1998; Walter 1997; 2009; Wagner 2000). Theoretically, this problem derives from the understanding that conflicts take place in anarchical or quasi-anarchical settings, where the parties lack a jointly recognized overarching authority that could enforce the terms of an agreement. As a result, parties may not be able to credibly promise to implement the agreement, and do not trust the other side to do so (Fearon 1995). This is essentially a version of the iterated prisoner's dilemma (see Axelrod 1980; 1984; Fearon 1998): both sides would profit from cooperation but fail to cooperate because they expect the other to defect.

In interstate conflicts, conflict parties face time inconsistent incentives if an agreement results in power shifts that make it attractive for one party to renege or escalate back to war after an agreement has been implemented (Reiter 2009). However, the problem of credible commitment is arguably even greater in intrastate conflicts (Walter 1997; 2009): a country has only one united armed force, and conflict parties eventually have to settle for an agreement that sees at least one party disarm and demobilize. This may be difficult to achieve in the absence of external security guarantees:

“Negotiations fail because civil war opponents are asked to do what they consider unthinkable. At a time when no legitimate government and no legal institutions exist to enforce a contract, they are asked to demobilize, disarm, and disengage their military forces and prepare for peace. But once they lay down their weapons and begin to integrate their separate assets into a new united state, it becomes almost impossible to either enforce future cooperation or survive attack.” (Walter 1997, 335–36).

As a result, non-state actors may not trust a government to comply with a peace agreement after their own disarmament and demobilization. This may prevent them from signing a peace agreement in the first place, even if such an agreement – if properly implemented – is to their own benefit. Governments face the opposite problem: they cannot credibly promise to implement a peace agreement beyond the point at which the non-state actor is disarmed and demobilized, even if full compliance with a peace agreement left them better off than no agreement at all.

Walter suggests overcoming this problem through strong third party guarantees, such as the presence of a peacekeeping mission “backed by the promise to use force” (Walter 1997, 361). By being involved in the mediation process, third parties may also offer more implicit security guarantees (Fortna 2004, 188). Finally, governments themselves may find some

ways of credibly committing to the implementation of a future peace agreement. One way of doing so is through military power sharing arrangements (Hoddie and Hartzell 2003). The regime type may also play an important role, as democratic actors are more accountable to, and can thus more credibly commit to, public promises than authoritarian regimes (Fearon 1994; Walter 2006b, 209).

The commitment problem in intrastate conflicts is commonly seen as asymmetric in that the government has problems committing, because the non-state actor would be left vulnerable to defection (Walter 1997; Fearon 1998; Walter 2009). However, Svensson (2007) highlights that non-state actors may face similar problems: a peace agreement may help them gain legitimacy, strength and access to administrative and financial resources. All these factors lead to a relative increase in the non-state actor's strength. They thus have to credibly commit to not using their strengthened position to re-start war or to demand additional concessions post-agreement.

Demobilization makes it hard for a non-state actor to return to war, but Svensson (2007, 197) argues that non-state actors are usually not demobilized immediately after reaching a peace agreement. This variant of the credible commitment is therefore related to sequencing. Svensson's empirical analysis shows that mediators who are biased towards the government can mitigate concerns about exploitative post-agreement behavior by the non-state actor.

1.3. Insights and gap with regard to the research question

Bargaining scholars have built on these basic conceptions of bargaining problems to theorize and test expectations about when, how and why wars end, comparing victories to negotiated settlements (e.g. Toft 2010) or assessing the effects of inconsistent battle outcomes (e.g. Filson and Werner 2002), mediation efforts (Beardsley 2008), third party pressure (e.g. Werner and Yuen 2005) or imposed regime change (e.g. Lo, Hashimoto, and Reiter 2008).

Some of these studies shed light on how the onset (e.g. Cetinyan 2002; Rauchhaus 2006; Walter 2006a), settlement (e.g. Beardsley 2008; Filson and Werner 2002; A. Smith and Stam 2004) and re-emergence (e.g. Beardsley 2008; Mattes and Savun 2010; Werner and Yuen 2005) of war are related to informational problems. Others focus primarily on the role of commitment problems in explaining the when and how of war settlement (e.g. Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Walter 2002) and re-emergence (e.g. Fortna 2004; 2008; Hoddie and

Hartzell 2003). In recent times, scholars have made an effort to include both perspectives to predict and explain specific war outcomes, including when conflict parties accept conflict settlement through a negotiated deal (e.g. Fearon 2013; Findley 2013; Leventoğlu and Slantchev 2007; Wolford, Reiter, and Carrubba 2011).

All these studies offer important insights into the conditions under which we see conflict violence emerge or subside. However, they share a weakness: they tend to focus on armed conflicts that experience conflict violence, without conceptually distinguishing between situations in which conflict parties agree to suspend the violence (i.e. use a ceasefire) and those in which they agree on how to address their underlying incompatibility (i.e. reach a peace agreement) (see Diehl 2016; Greig and Diehl 2005, 629). This is problematic, both in theoretical and in empirical terms. In theoretical terms, it conflates the processes that lead to a ceasefire and a peace agreement. Based on their original conceptions, the problems of imperfect information and credible commitment are major obstacles with regard to how conflict parties agree to settle an armed conflict. Parties do *not* necessarily need to have overcome these problems when reaching a ceasefire agreement prior to or during peace negotiations. In empirical terms, conflating the processes that lead to these different types of agreements risks conflating the end of a ceasefire with the re-emergence of war.

Two widely cited studies, one focusing on inter- (Werner and Yuen 2005) and one on intrastate conflicts (Mattes and Savun 2010), serve as examples to illustrate the implications of conceptually conflating the processes that lead to a ceasefire and a peace agreement, respectively.

Werner and Yuen (2005) seek to explore when and why negotiated agreements between conflict parties last or fail. They theorize that agreements hold longer when reached in a context where most of the uncertainties around relative strength are resolved, which they argue may not be the case for externally imposed agreements. This reasoning is consistent with how the imperfect information problem is commonly conceived. However, Werner and Yuen apply this logic to violence suspending *and* incompatibility addressing agreements (calling both ceasefires). This ignores that violence suspending arrangements – i.e. ceasefires – are part of the bargaining process and do not require parties to have overcome the imperfect information problem. Adding to the inconsistency, Werner and Yuen operationalize externally imposed ceasefires as arrangements that were 1) imposed by third parties and 2) put in place before a settlement was reached. The second criterion leads to a selection bias, as

only violence suspending agreements (from the mixed bag) are included in the analysis. To be consistent in their application of a framework that theorizes about the effect of information on the negotiation of underlying incompatibilities, they would need to test the effect of imposed ceasefires by looking at the stability of peace agreements *following* such ceasefires, and not the stability of the ceasefires themselves.

Mattes and Savun (2010) examine the durability of settlements in intrastate wars. They argue that agreement provisions that reduce uncertainties regarding military capabilities – such as monitoring, requiring parties to submit information to third parties, and verifying such information – can make agreements more stable. They differentiate between negotiated settlements and ceasefires, acknowledging that they have different purposes (Mattes and Savun 2010, 517). However, they do not distinguish between the process leading up to these agreements, applying the same theoretical framework to both. One problem associated with this approach is that some of their independent variables – in particular all agreement provisions – potentially correlate with agreement type. This risks that effects they associate with agreement provisions may in reality be due to the fundamentally different nature of ceasefires and peace agreements.

This thesis argues that the common conflation of ceasefires and peace agreements (or the processes leading up to these types of agreements) in many quantitative studies is due to a lack of a proper conceptualization of ceasefires as bargaining instruments. This relates to two key gaps in extant bargaining theory. First, most bargaining scholars conceive the bargaining space in relation to perceptions of relative capabilities and resolve, assuming that – questions of enforcement set aside – a lack of a mutually preferable agreement relates to imperfect information. As Slantchev (2003, 626) puts it, “War is bargaining, and bargaining is transmission of information.” In such a narrow conceptualization, the only impact of fighting on bargaining is to reveal information, suggesting that fighting increases (or at least never decreases) the bargaining space. This ignores the effect of fighting on other important aspects related to bargaining – such as hatred between conflict parties – that may make it harder, not easier, to reach a peace agreement (see Galtung 2004; Greig and Diehl 2005, 625; Kelman 2007; Kriesberg 2005).

Second, and on a related note, bargaining theorists tend to view ceasefires as the mere opposite of fighting, i.e. an interruption of the information provision process (see Greig and Diehl 2005, 628; Findley 2013; Werner and Yuen 2005). This is misleading in two respects.

Firstly, related to the point above, ceasefires may fulfil functions that foster progress in peace negotiations but are currently not captured under the narrow bargaining space conceptualization that only focuses on information. Secondly, even with regard to information provisions, it appears shortsighted to see ceasefires as an interruption of this process. Because they are difficult to enforce, ceasefires may reveal types of information that parties could not reveal through fighting alone (Akebo 2016; Höglund 2011).

The following section discusses how, by providing rich insights into the relationship between ceasefires and conflict dynamics, ceasefire literature complements bargaining theory but fails to provide a systematic framework linking ceasefires to strategic decision-making processes.

2. Ceasefire literature

Much of the scholarly insight into ceasefires originates from the larger conflict resolution literature. This type of literature does not focus on ceasefires specifically, but discusses ceasefires among other components of peace processes (e.g. Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 2004; 2005; Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2011; Gartner and Melin 2009). In the past two decades, a distinct body of research on ceasefires has started to emerge, focusing first on interstate and, more recently, on intrastate conflicts (see Clayton, Mason, and Sticher 2020).

Much of this literature takes a third party perspective, assessing the effects of ceasefires on conflict management or conflict settlement initiatives. Those adopting a conflict management perspective tend to investigate why and when ceasefires last (e.g. Fortna 2003; 2004; Lundgren, Karakus, and Svensson 2019), while those with a conflict settlement perspective seek to better understand the role of ceasefires as part of a peace process (e.g. Akebo 2013; 2016; 2019; Höglund 2011). Some researchers compare the effects of ceasefires on conflict management and settlement (Greig and Diehl 2005; Mahieu 2007). Finally, some scholars adopt a conflict party perspective, studying why actors may enter into a ceasefire (e.g. Chounet-Cambas 2011; Höglund 2011), or why they may fail or refuse to commit to such an arrangement (e.g. J. Smith 1995; Dukalskis 2015).

While ceasefire literature focusing on interstate conflicts comprises a mix of research methods, most intrastate ceasefire research to date uses a qualitative approach. This is at least partially due to the limited data available on ceasefires in intrastate conflicts. The

forthcoming release of the ETH/PRIO Civil Conflict Ceasefire dataset (Clayton et al. 2020)⁸ will likely trigger a new wave of quantitative research, producing new insights into the onset, durability and effects of ceasefires in intrastate conflicts.

The following sub-sections provide an overview of the insights generated from the existing studies and discuss the gap with regard to the research question.

2.1. Conflict management perspective

Scholars who research the conditions that make ceasefires more durable generally understand peace as the absence of war, or what others call negative peace (see Diehl 2016). Some seek to explain the effects of conflict and actor characteristics (Winokur 2018; Cunningham 2011) or actor behavior (Long 2014) on how long ceasefires last. The key debate in this field, however, relates to the role of ceasefire provisions, or more specifically, to whether conflict parties can design agreements in a way that increases their durability.

Ceasefire provisions in interstate conflicts

Fortna (2003; 2004) started a new wave of ceasefire research with her seminal study on the effects of ceasefire provisions on interstate conflict. She investigates whether and how conflict parties can design self-enforcing agreements, theorizing that they may do so by including provisions to raise the costs of ceasefire violations, reduce uncertainties and contain incidents. Based on a quantitative analysis of 48 ceasefires in interstate conflicts after the Second World War, and complemented by two qualitative case studies, Fortna establishes a positive correlation between the quality of an agreement (measured by the number of provisions included) and the ensuing absence of violence. Provisions for withdrawal, demilitarized zones, explicit third party guarantees and joint commissions to resolve disputes are the most effective mechanisms (Fortna 2003, 356–63; 2004, 210).

Fortna's research triggered a number of follow-up studies, all focusing on interstate conflicts. Chiba (2011) supports Fortna's findings, but adds a temporal dimension: she finds that the agreement strength is less relevant directly after an agreement has been reached, but

⁸ The author contributed to the conceptualization of this dataset. A pre-release version of the dataset was used for the comparative case study in chapter six.

increases over time. Lo et al. (2008) challenge the influence of agreement strength, finding almost no evidence of this in their analysis with an expanded dataset. Werner and Yuen (2005) also challenge Fortna's findings, arguing that agreements are epiphenomenal. They demonstrate that the durability of a ceasefire increases if parties share the expectation that no better terms can be gained through renewed war.

Ceasefire provisions in intrastate conflicts

To date, we lack an adaption of Fortna's theoretical framework to the specificities of intrastate conflicts and a comparable empirical analysis. Given the relative increase in intrastate vis-à-vis interstate conflicts, and the related increase in literature focusing specifically on intrastate conflicts, this is a curious gap.

There are, however, studies that assess the impact of ceasefire provisions and other process choices on local level dynamics in the Syrian conflict. Karakus and Svensson (2020) find that, from all ceasefire provisions, only the inclusion of confidence building mechanisms had a positive effect on the likelihood that a ceasefire held. Internal mediators also had a positive effect on ceasefire implementation. Using new statistical models and an expanded dataset, Lundgren et al. (2019, 13–14) find that stepwise implementation and short term compliance were associated with a greater reduction in conflict violence.

The term *ceasefire*, in these two studies, is understood to be an arrangement between a sub-set of conflict party actors in a multiparty conflict, thus including the numerous ceasefires between two or more armed groups opposed to the government. Such ceasefires arguably follow a different logic than ceasefires between actors with underlying incompatibilities. We can therefore not generalize the findings of these two studies to other intrastate conflicts, particularly not if we are interested in ceasefires between the main protagonists of a conflict.

2.2. Conflict settlement perspective

The conflict management perspective treats ceasefires as a main outcome of a conflict, with little distinction as to whether a ceasefire is meant to permanently stop an armed conflict or to temporarily suspend violence while parties seek a political solution to the conflict. The distinction is particularly important for intrastate conflicts, in which parties need to agree on a joint governance structure and on the monopoly of force (see Walter 1997; 2009). Many

emerging studies, particularly those with a qualitative approach, seek to address this problem by conceptualizing ceasefires as part of a larger peace process (Winokur 2018, 8; e.g. Akebo 2013; 2016; 2019; Chounet-Cambas 2011; Höglund 2011). Their research contributes to our understanding of the relationship and potential tension between conflict management and conflict settlement initiatives, and how parties may mitigate a tradeoff between the two.

Relational aspects

Akebo's (2013) case comparison of the Indonesian and Sri Lankan peace talks focuses on how ceasefires affect the attitudes, behaviors and relationships between the conflict parties. Her findings show that ceasefire compliance can help build confidence between the actors and facilitate movement towards a peace agreement. Ceasefire violations, in contrast, are highly visible breaches of commitment and undermine the trust and credibility of a negotiation process more generally. Ceasefires thus bear the potential of exposing conflict party leadership to criticism from within. Akebo highlights the relevance of personal relationships, which may be established through negotiating and implementing a ceasefire. Her research also draws attention to intraparty dynamics in understanding ceasefires and their role for peace negotiations.

In a more recent case study, Akebo (2019) analyzes the case of Mindanao (Philippines), where a long-standing ceasefire generated cross-conflict relationships. She shows how the ceasefire improved the security situation and mitigated other consequences of the armed conflict, such as internal displacement. The ceasefire also helped broaden the peace process, allowing civil society actors to play a role. At the same time, her research demonstrates the potential risks of a drawn-out process when a relatively stable ceasefire is in place.

Höglund (2011) analyzes whether demands for ceasefires by state actors facilitate or impede negotiations with groups that are listed as terrorist organizations. She shows how successful ceasefires can help build trust and goodwill, helping governments “fend off criticism from those opposed to negotiations with terrorists” (Höglund 2011, 238). This is important because internal criticism tends to undermine progress in negotiations. At the same time, her research shows how demanding a ceasefire as a pre-condition for peace negotiations may lead to impasses or a fragmentation of the armed actor – an important impediment to a negotiated conflict settlement.

Tension between conflict management and settlement

Greig and Diehl (2005) quantitatively assess the potential tradeoff between conflict management and conflict settlement. Their study focuses on peacekeeping missions, but in their theoretical reasoning, they are specifically interested in how a (externally enforced) suspension of conflict violence promotes or hinders conflict settlement. They summarize insights from various bodies of work, showing how different theories render different expectations: based on bargaining (e.g. Fearon 1995; Wagner 2000) and ripeness theory (e.g. Zartman 1989; 2001), we would expect a halt in hostilities to reduce the flow of information and reduce hurting costs, thus inhibiting progress towards a peace agreement. From more socio-psychologically oriented peace and conflict studies (e.g. Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 2004), we would expect a calm in hostilities to help parties reach a peace agreement. By reducing intense conflict, such engagement helps protagonists build trust, reduces domestic constraints, and helps parties focus on long term outcomes. The empirical assessment of Greig and Diehl (2005) provides support for the expectations of bargaining and ripeness theory: externally enforced suspensions of hostilities help stabilize conflicts but make it less likely for parties to reach a peace agreement.

Mitigating the tradeoff through process design

Aware of a potential tension between conflict management and settlement, some researchers and practitioners explore ways of mitigating the potential tradeoff between violence suspension and progress towards a negotiated settlement. Of particular interest to third parties are the effects of agreement and process design. This is because mediators and ceasefire experts may help shape agreements and processes, but they have no influence over other factors that affect the trajectory of a ceasefire, such as the geopolitical context, the leadership structure or the coherence of conflict parties.

Chounet-Cambas (2011) and Brickhill (2018) offer guidance on how to link ceasefires to a larger peace process. Brickhill conceptualizes the negotiation of security arrangements in peace processes in three strategic phases: 1) the ceasefire process (negotiating a locally owned, context specific agreement), 2) the transitional ceasefire implementation and security management phase, and 3) the final status of forces agreement, where reform issues such as security governance, the legislative framework or disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) are addressed. Brickhill emphasizes the importance of the second phase,

noting that third parties rarely pay sufficient attention to it. In line with such a multi-stage process, Chounet-Cambas (2011) shows how calling for disarmament too early in a process risks derailing negotiations. He argues that primary responsibility for monitoring and verification should rest, if possible, with conflict parties, echoing Brickhill's (2018) focus on conflict party ownership.

Multiple scholars focus on the timing of ceasefires, identifying arguments in favor and against ceasefires early in peace talks.⁹ An argument *for* an early ceasefire is the predictability of projected lives saved: short-term losses are more predictable than long-term losses, and a decision based on immediate considerations is therefore more likely and easier to justify (Mahieu 2007, 209; Touval 1995, 336). Others argue that ongoing hostilities make it hard to attain a comprehensive settlement, particularly if one of the conflict parties refuses to engage in political negotiations while the war is waging (Chounet-Cambas 2011, 8; Mahieu 2007, 209; J. Smith 1995, 155–62). More generally, it may be easier to negotiate on the basis of stable relations on the ground, which a ceasefire can help create (Mahieu 2007, 210).

Two main arguments are presented *against* a ceasefire early in negotiations, both arguing that ceasefires prolong the conflict and thus increase the overall number of deaths. Firstly, if conflict parties use a pause in fighting to regroup, rearm and reposition their armies, they may emerge stronger and more determined to fight to victory (Chounet-Cambas 2011, 7–8, 20; Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 2004, 158; Gartner and Melin 2009, 566). Secondly, a ceasefire may take away the pressure and urgency to negotiate. In intrastate conflicts, this tends to play out in favor of the government, as non-state armed groups lose their main leverage vis-à-vis the government. A ceasefire therefore introduces a pro-status quo bias, and risks freezing the situation and engendering a 'no war no peace' situation (Chounet-Cambas 2011, 15–16; Mahieu 2007, 211, 217).

With this tension in mind, and comparing five peace processes with different timing strategies, Mahieu (2007, 207) suggests to best "interrupt the fighting during the negotiation

⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of the main arguments, see Mahieu (2007, 208–12).

process, after the belligerents have attained a broad consensus on how to deal with the political issues at the root of the conflict.”

2.3. Conflict party perspective

Scholars have identified a wide range of reasons why conflict parties may engage in a ceasefire or refrain from such an engagement, contributing to our understanding of ceasefire onset from the perspective of conflict parties.

Reasons to refuse a ceasefire

Smith (1995) provides a comprehensive overview of why conflict party leaders may *refuse or fail to engage* in a ceasefire. These include the wish to avoid looking weak, a failure of the inner circle to voice disagreement when a leader misjudges the relative strengths between the parties, a lack of control over military forces, and anticipating the failure of the other side to deliver. Party leaders may also trap themselves – inadvertently or on purpose – in uncompromising hardline statements that make it difficult to stop the fighting. Smith also discusses the role of third parties, arguing that they can help conflict parties overcome obstacles, but add further complexities. This is particularly the case if low powered mediators are perceived to be biased, or if high powered mediators coerce parties into a ceasefire without providing sufficient guarantees for it to hold. This may end up prolonging the war, as distrust increases after each failed ceasefire attempt.

Research from Myanmar by Dukalskis (2015) shows that parties are more likely to refuse engaging in a ceasefire if they administer territories and if legacies of intra-societal distrust build up over time. The case study further demonstrates how, in the absence of a link to political negotiations, non-state actors with a strong ideology will find it harder to agree to a ceasefire. Chounet-Cambas (2011) argues that the link between negotiations and a ceasefire is particularly relevant when it comes to disarmament and demobilization, as non-state actors will refuse ceasefires with such provisions if the contested political issues remain unresolved. Fortna (2003, 341) elaborates how, even when leaders are interested in a ceasefire, they may fail to agree if they are uncertain about each other’s intent.

Reasons to enter into a ceasefire

A conflict party may have a genuine interest in improving the humanitarian situation and see a ceasefire as the best way to reduce suffering or to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Yet in the context of violent, political conflicts, the use of conflict violence plays an essential role in the bargaining dynamics (Sisk 2009; Mahieu 2007). Ceasefires for purely humanitarian reasons thus tend to be linked to specific, limited objectives (Wiehler 2020) and are thus almost always temporary.

There are, however, numerous reasons for conflict parties to engage in a ceasefire, to further their military or their political goals. Many scholars point to cases where parties used ceasefires to buy time in order to regroup, rearm, or to improve their military position (e.g. Chounet-Cambas 2011, 7–8, 20; Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 2004, 158; Gartner and Melin 2009, 566). In Sri Lanka, for example, the government and the separatist movement Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are both believed to have entered a ceasefire in 2002 “with a view to gaining ‘breathing space’ and consolidating their military positions” (Chounet-Cambas 2011, 10). A ceasefire proposal can serve to discredit the opponent if the proponent expects their adversary to reject it or to fail to comply. This helps them blame the continuation of the violence on the opponent, potentially scoring points with third parties (Kriesberg 2005, 72). Some power holders may be interested in implementing a ceasefire to deal with the negative consequences of the conflict without any intention of moving towards a peace deal (Chounet-Cambas 2011, 15).

By contrast, conflict parties may engage in a ceasefire to enable peace negotiations. Ongoing hostilities often make it difficult to attain a conflict settlement, and one side may request a ceasefire as a pre-condition to engage in negotiations (Chounet-Cambas 2011, 8; Mahieu 2007, 209; J. Smith 1995, 155–62). Some armed non-state actors, especially those designated as terror organizations, may seek international legitimacy to facilitate third party engagement or support (Chounet-Cambas 2011, 8; Höglund 2011). Others use it to demonstrate good faith (Akebo 2013, 201–3) or internal cohesion and a functioning chain of command (Akebo 2016, 163; Höglund 2011).

In some cases, one side may have a stronger interest in a ceasefire than the other. In these cases, the opponent may use the ceasefire – or the timing of the ceasefire – as a bargaining chip, trading it with other substantive issues. In Burundi, for example, several

rebel movements signed a ceasefire in exchange “for inclusion in the political process and the power-sharing government” (Chounet-Cambas 2011, 18). Finally, recent research has highlighted the role of ceasefires for state-building purposes by both state (Sosnowski 2019) and non-state actors (Harrisson and Kyed 2019).

2.4. Gap with regard to the research question

In short, extant literature provides key insights into the effects of ceasefires and shows the breadth of possible objectives that parties may pursue through a ceasefire. Yet, we lack a systematic framework that links these objectives and effects to a larger bargaining process. Such a framework is crucial to understanding the role of ceasefires as bargaining instruments.

Conceptualizing ceasefires as bargaining instruments requires viewing them as part of strategic decision-making processes by conflict party leaders. This is linked to two fundamental assumptions. First, it assumes that conflict party leaders do not view ceasefires in isolation, but rather as part of the overall bargaining dynamics. This suggests that, when deciding on whether to engage in a ceasefire, conflict party leaders take into consideration the expected effect of such a decision on the outcome of a military or political approach to the conflict. The second assumption is that conflict party leaders act rationally, i.e. that they behave in a way that they believe maximizes their expected outcome of the conflict, given their preferences and their reading of the conflict context.¹⁰

Table 3 shows how the existing ceasefire literature can be located with regard to these two key assumptions. Scholars listed in the upper fields discuss ceasefires in isolation, while scholars listed in the lower fields conceptualize ceasefires explicitly as part of a larger process. Similarly, scholars on the left assume that conflict parties behave rationally, whereas scholars on the right make no such assumption. Some scholars are not easily located in the two-by-two outline, as they link some objectives to a larger peace process while discussing others in isolation. They are listed in the upper right field, as they do not conceptually embed ceasefires in a larger process, nor do they consistently assume rational behavior by the conflict party leadership.

¹⁰ See chapter three, *Understanding of rationality*.

This mapping reveals interesting characteristics of the literature. First, much of the existing ceasefire literature builds on one of the two underlying assumptions, but not on both combined, with the notable exception of Greig and Diehl (2005). Table 3 also shows how the two key assumptions align with several other characteristics of ceasefire research. Scholars with a conflict management perspective tend to view ceasefires in isolation and assume rational behavior, whereas those applying a conflict settlement perspective tend to view ceasefires as part of a larger process, without necessarily assuming rational behavior. It further reveals differences with regard to data analysis methods: those viewing ceasefires in isolation tend to use quantitative research methods, while those viewing ceasefires as part of a larger process use primarily qualitative research methods, again with the exception of Greig and Diehl (2005).

	Assumption of rational behavior	No assumption of rational behavior
Ceasefires in isolation	<u>Conflict management perspective</u> <i>Quantitative research methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chiba (2011) • Fortna (2004) • Karakus and Svensson (2020) • Lo et. al (2008) • Lundgren, Karakus, and Svensson (2019) • Werner and Yuen (2005) 	<u>Conflict management perspective</u> <i>Qualitative research methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dukalskis (2015) • Smith (1995)
Ceasefires as part of a larger process	<u>Conflict settlement perspective</u> <i>Quantitative research methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greig and Diehl (2005) 	<u>Conflict settlement perspective</u> <i>Qualitative research methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Akebo (2013; 2016; 2019) • Brickhill (2018) • Chounet-Chambas (2011) • Crocker, Hampson and Aall (2004; 2005) • Haysom and Hottinger (2010) • Höglund (2011) • Mahieu (2007) • Touval (1995)

Table 3: mapping of ceasefire literature with regard to two key assumptions linked to my research question. Source: author's own compilation.

3. Contribution of this thesis

With its assumption of rationality and its modelling of interactive decision-making under structural uncertainty, bargaining theory offers the intellectual scaffold to analyze ceasefires as bargaining instruments. However, to date, it undertheorizes how behavior during conflicts shapes bargaining processes and outcomes. In particular, it does not conceptualize ceasefires in relation to the wider bargaining process, despite the wide-spread use of ceasefires as part of a military or political strategy during armed conflicts. Ceasefire literature, by contrast, offers insights into the various roles of ceasefires in conflict dynamics, but does not provide a systematic framework linking them to larger bargaining processes.

The key contribution of this thesis is to merge insights of the two bodies of literature, showing how ceasefires can be conceptualized as bargaining instruments. This allows, at an abstract level, to identify when and why conflict party leaders engage in what types of ceasefires. It also allows to draw context-specific implications for the use ceasefires on the trajectory of the conflict and its military or political solution. This thesis empirically assesses and illustrates these implications through a mixed methods design. By integrating insights of theories rooted in different schools of thought, this thesis also provides a theoretical and empirical example of a fruitful synthesis of rationalist and constructivist approaches (see Adler 2012; Fearon and Wendt 2002).

Contribution to bargaining theory

In addition to the integration of the two bodies of literature, this thesis contributes to both individually. To bargaining theory, it makes three key contributions:

- 1) Chapter four revises a standard bargaining setup (Fearon 1995; Powell 1999; see Lake 2011, 10) to account for shifting social preferences over the course of a conflict. This sets the stage to understand the role of fighting beyond information provision, accounting for a widely shared understanding within conflict resolution literature that open hostilities may hinder, not facilitate progress in peace negotiations (see e.g. Galtung 2004; Kelman 2007). It prepares the ground for conceptualizing ceasefires as part of the bargaining process.
- 2) Chapter five offers a framework to analyze how, through the use of specific frames in communication, actors may seek to create or negate space for a negotiated settlement and how conflict behavior – such as fighting or ceasefires – affect the effectiveness of

such framing. Bargaining scholars widely agree on the importance of perceptions in bargaining dynamics, yet underexplore how actors may actively seek to shape perceptions beyond fighting and the acceptance or refusal of settlement offers.

- 3) Chapter six theorizes how strategic goals of a conflict party leadership shift over the course of a bargaining process, and how leaders adapt their use of fighting, negotiations and ceasefires accordingly.

Contribution to ceasefire literature

By linking ceasefires to a larger bargaining process, this thesis adds a layer of strategic decision-making and allows to anchor empirical research on ceasefires in bargaining theory. Chapters five to seven demonstrate that a bargaining framework can serve as a basis to increase our understanding of ceasefires in relationship to conflict management *and* conflict settlement, and that both perspectives may be assessed through multiple research methods (see Table 4).

In addition, this thesis adds to existing literature on ceasefires in three distinct ways:

- Chapter five demonstrates how ceasefires enable a narrative transition that paves the way for conflict settlement, a role of ceasefires that has hitherto been undertheorized.
- Chapter six shows how the strategic use of ceasefires shifts over the course of a bargaining process, with important implications for how ceasefires and ceasefire violations may shape the trajectory of a conflict and its settlement.
- Chapter seven theorizes and assesses the effects of ceasefire agreement provisions on violence suspension in intrastate conflicts, filling a curious gap in the existing literature.

The thesis focuses on a conflict party perspective. Yet because the theory is anchored in bargaining theory, it allows for a systematic discussion of its implications for third party engagement, such as the expected effects of third party monitoring, security guarantees and imposed ceasefires.

	Assumption of rational behavior	No assumption of rational behavior
Ceasefires in isolation	<u>Conflict management perspective</u> <i>Quantitative research methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chiba (2011) • Fortna (2004) • Karakus and Svensson (2020) • Lo et. al (2008) • Lundgren, Karakus, and Svensson (2019) • Werner and Yuen (2005) 	<u>Conflict management perspective</u> <i>Qualitative research methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dukalskis (2015) • Smith (1995)
Ceasefires as part of a larger process	<u>Conflict settlement perspective</u> <i>Quantitative research methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greig and Diehl (2005) <i>Mixed methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter five <i>Qualitative research methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter six <u>Conflict management perspective</u> <i>Quantitative research methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter seven 	<u>Conflict settlement perspective</u> <i>Qualitative research methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Akebo (2013; 2016; 2019) • Brickhill (2018) • Chounet-Chambas (2011) • Crocker, Hampson and Aall (2004; 2005) • Haysom and Hottinger (2010) • Höglund (2011) • Mahieu (2007) • Touval (1995)

Table 4: contribution of this thesis to the gap in the literature with regard to the research question. Source: author's own compilation.