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

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## **Chapter Three: Research Design**

This chapter presents the research design. The first section discusses the research philosophy. The second section provides an overview of methodological choices for the theory building and empirical assessments in each chapter of parts two and three. The third section details the case selection strategy for the case study, the comparative study and the statistical analysis. The fourth section provides an introduction to the 2012–2016 peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC that serve as a case study throughout this thesis.

### **1. Research philosophy**

The research subject of this thesis are intrastate conflicts, defined in the introductory chapter as violent, political conflicts between a state and a non-state actor. Much of the theory builds on bargaining theory, which uses a rationalist framework that is commonly associated with a positivist school of thought. At the same time, the theory draws heavily on literature from conflict and peace studies and (in chapter five) on framing literature – bodies of work that are commonly associated with a constructivist worldview. By drawing on both bodies of work, this thesis seeks to transcend the boundaries between positivist and constructivist approaches, aiming to build a synthesis of the two (see Adler 2012, 112; Fearon and Wendt 2002).

This fits with a research philosophy that some call pragmatic realism (see Adler 2012; Sosa 1993). Pragmatic realism assumes that there “exists a material reality outside human interpretations” (Adler 2012, 118), but that individual and collective readings of this reality make up the social world in which we live. An illustrative example of how rationalist and constructivist approaches are combined is the integration of social preferences into a rationalist bargaining model in chapter four. The treatment of preferences relates to a key debate between rationalists, who tend to view preferences as fixed and exogenously given, and constructivists, who are precisely interested in how such preferences are shaped (Fearon and Wendt 2002, 63–64). Yet, while fixed and exogenously given preferences simplify formal analysis (in which many rationalists are interested), a rationalist approach does not necessarily exclude the accommodation of constructivist insights (Fearon and Wendt 2002, 66). By integrating social preferences into a rationalist model, chapter four allows us to theorize how such preferences are shaped by effects of bargaining dynamics and are thus (at least partially) endogenous to the bargaining process.

## **1.1. Normative assumptions**

This thesis has a problem-solving focus. Its underlying motivation is normative: it seeks to understand the bargaining dynamics between conflict parties (and their use of ceasefires as part of these dynamics) in order to identify strategies that promote progress towards conflict settlement. This builds on the assumption that conflict settlement is preferable over a military solution to an armed conflict.<sup>11</sup> The implementation of the research question, by contrast, is analytical. In the theoretical and empirical analyses, strategic moves and the context in which they occur are analyzed without value judgement. Such assessment is necessary to best answer the underlying, inherently normative motivation of the research: to better understand how we can effectively support conflict parties to reach a mutually acceptable conflict settlement.

## **1.2. Understanding of rationality**

Accounting for both the incentive structures and social psychological factors that guide human behavior are key to understanding the behavior of conflict parties in armed conflicts. This poses a challenge: on the one hand, the research question – the role of ceasefires as bargaining instruments – requires a framework that allows for a systematic analysis of incentives and constraints. On the other hand, a history of violence between conflict parties – both physical and narrative – results in relationships that cannot be compared to ordinary bargaining situations. Assuming that actors in armed conflicts have the same fixed, exogenously given preferences as actors engaging in an everyday financial transaction is highly problematic and potentially misleading. To manage the balance between a need for a strategic decision-making framework and account for the extraordinary situation actors experiencing the pain of war face, a ‘thin rationality’ assumption is used (Fearon and Wendt 2002; Ferejohn 1991). Thin rationality is interested in intentional explanation, but makes no assumptions regarding the beliefs, desires or preferences of the actors (Fearon and Wendt 2002, 59). This contrasts from most rationalist models, which commonly assume thick rationality, i.e. that conflict parties have a fixed preference for maximizing self-centered

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the implications of conflict settlement versus a military outcome, see e.g. Diehl (2016) and Toft (2010).

welfare. Specifically, the theory in this thesis builds on the assumption that actors *behave* (rather than *are*) rational, i.e. that their choices and actions are consistent with their preferences and their reading of a bargaining situation, both of which may change as conflict progresses (see also Lake 2011, 9–10). Rational behavior may occur unconsciously, when individuals choose a course of action that they perceive to be their best available option given their assessment of the situation and their preferences. In other cases, such decisions are taken consciously and in the pursuit of a (often pre-defined) long-term goal. This thesis uses the term *strategic* to describe such intentional decisions.

## **2. Methodological choices**

In line with most research situated in the pragmatic paradigm, this thesis uses a multi-method research design. Methods are chosen by their suitability to respond to a specific research need, rather than by association with a specific ontology (see Kaushik and Walsh 2019, 255). The different elements of theory building vary in formality, ranging from a formal choice model (George and Bennett 2005, 54–57) to deductive reasoning (see Whicker 1986; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2016, 144–46). In the empirical analysis, quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method techniques are employed. The following sub-sections discuss these methodological choices for all chapters of part two and three, i.e. the chapters containing the main theoretical and empirical contributions of this thesis. The aim is to provide an overview; the individual chapters contain more detailed discussions on how these choices were executed.

### **2.1. Chapter four: analytic narrative**

The primary aim of chapter four is to integrate social preferences into a standard bargaining setup and to discuss the implications of such a modification. The structure follows the logic of an analytic narrative, combining the use of a formal choice model with a qualitative case study that demonstrates the plausibility of the theory (Bates et al. 2000, 697). The theory building part builds on the parsimonious choice model first proposed by Fearon (1995), adding two specific parameters to represent changed assumptions about decision-making in intrastate conflicts. One parameter accounts for the social preferences of individual constituents, while a second parameter represents the sensitivity a leader has towards constituent preferences. The model is kept as parsimonious as possible to isolate the effect of

shifting constituent preferences on elite decision-making processes. The formal model allows for internal consistency necessary to derive testable implications (George and Bennett 2005, 182). The empirical assessment tests and illustrates these implications on the basis of the Colombian case.

## **2.2. Chapter five: deductive reasoning and natural language processing**

The primary aim of chapter five is to understand how elites use frames in communication to create or negate space for a mutually acceptable agreement, and the conditions that facilitate or hinder such framing. For the theory building part, deductive reasoning is used. Merging the revised bargaining framework of chapter four with insights from framing theory, expectations are generated concerning the characteristics of the narratives of a pro-settlement government (peace narrative) and its political competitors (war narrative). From these two ideal-type narratives, testable hypotheses are derived, such as differences in the use of a specific tense or an actor reference, both in general and in the absence/presence of a ceasefire. For the empirical assessment, a novel way of analyzing qualitative data with quantitative data analysis techniques is applied, using pre-trained natural language processing libraries and models on text data gathered from the Twitter feeds of two key protagonists in the Colombian peace negotiations. To assess whether reported differences in proportions are statistically significant, chi-square tests are conducted. A number of robustness tests, in which assumptions are modified, serve to increase the confidence in the validity of the findings.

## **2.3. Chapter six: formal analysis, comparative study and congruence method**

The primary aim of chapter six is to identify how the strategic goal of conflict party leaders evolves over the course of a bargaining process, and how the role of ceasefires shifts in line with this evolving goal. For the theory building part, deductive reasoning is used, supported by a formal analysis of the revised bargaining setup presented in chapter four. This leads to the identification of three distinct bargaining contexts. Conflict party leaders transition from one context to another as their reading of the bargaining situation shifts. To test the framework, a two-stage empirical assessment is pursued. In a first stage, two key implications are derived from the framework and tested in all contemporary cases that meet

the scope conditions and where the implications are theoretically expected to be present.<sup>12</sup> In a second stage, observable implications are derived for the use of key bargaining instruments (fighting, negotiation and ceasefires) in the bargaining contexts. The formal analysis in the theory building part ensures the required clarity and internal consistency to derive specific expectations in this regard (see George and Bennett 2005, 182). A within-case congruence test on the basis of the Colombian peace negotiations is then conducted (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 4; George and Bennett 2005, 181–204). To do so, events at the negotiation table are analyzed with the aim of identifying visible signs that the party leadership has transitioned to a new bargaining context. Events in the battlefield are then assessed, to test whether the nature of fighting and ceasefires aligns with the pre-identified contexts.

#### **2.4. Chapter seven: survival analysis and counterfactual analysis**

The primary aim of chapter seven is to generate insights into the adoption of different ceasefire classes and the impact they have on conflict dynamics, specifically with regard to the violence suspension following a ceasefire agreement. For the theoretical framework, deductive reasoning is used. Two key hypotheses are generated with regard to the expected effect associated with different classes of ceasefire design. Based on existing conflict violence data and a new ceasefire agreement dataset compiled specifically for this purpose, models of ceasefire survival are estimated, with conflict deaths as the main measure of whether a ceasefire remains in place. Such analysis helps determine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between ceasefire class and the ensuing absence of conflict violence. Multiple tests with modified assumptions are conducted to assess the robustness of the findings. A counterfactual case study (Mahoney and Barrenechea 2019; Tetlock and Belkin 1996) completes the statistical analysis to increase the confidence in the validity of the theory and its proposed mechanism.

### **3. Case selection**

This section discusses scope conditions and case selection procedures, laying out key criteria used to identify cases for the empirical assessments in chapters four to seven.

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<sup>12</sup> See *Case selection strategy and data collection*.

### **3.1. Scope conditions**

The theory building parts of this thesis focus specifically on violent, political conflicts between a state and an armed non-state actor, simply referred to as intrastate conflicts. The focus on this type of armed conflict and the limitation to one conflict dyad seeks to balance between a desire to have a broadly applicable theory (calling for loose scope conditions) and one that is precise and specific (calling for clear, limiting scope conditions). In order to isolate the incentives and constraints of conflict parties before assessing the implications for third party engagement, the analysis is further limited to cases where conflict parties negotiated or attempted to negotiate conflict settlement, excluding processes where an agreement was imposed on them. In the following sub-sections, implications of these choices and terminology are discussed.

#### **Specific nature of intrastate conflicts**

Distinguishing intrastate conflicts from other types of conflicts, particularly from conflicts between states, ensures that the conflicts in discussion share key characteristics and face comparable bargaining challenges.

##### *Intra- versus interstate conflicts*

Formal bargaining theory was originally developed for interstate conflicts (e.g. Fearon 1995; Powell 1999; Reiter 2003; Wagner 2000; Werner and Yuen 2005), but has since been adapted to reflect the specific nature of intrastate conflicts (e.g. Findley 2013; Mattes and Savun 2010; Walter 1997; 2009). Interstate conflicts are widely understood as conflicts between states, whereas intrastate conflicts take place within the territory of a single state and involve a government (see Sambanis 2004 for a comprehensive discussion). Inter- and intrastate conflicts share important characteristics that result in shared bargaining challenges. Both 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 or provide accurate information with regard to the parties' relative strengths (see Fearon 1995; Findley 2013; Reiter 2003; Wagner 2000; Walter 1997).

There are, however, important differences. With regard to the role of ceasefires as bargaining instruments, two fundamental differences relate to the need for a joint governing structure and the lack of geographical separation between the conflict parties. In interstate

conflicts, conflict parties can keep their respective armies, whereas in intrastate conflicts, they need to agree on a joint governing structure, requiring at least one actor to disarm and demobilize. This accentuates the credible commitment problem (see Walter 1997; 2002; 2009). At the same time, the need to distinguish between ceasefires and peace agreements is particularly important in intrastate conflicts, as ceasefires do not re-establish the monopoly of force to the state. Another important difference relates to geography: in interstate conflicts, conflict parties may put in place physical barriers that raise the costs of attack, such as troop withdrawal or demilitarized zones (Fortna 2003; 2004); in intrastate conflicts, the state claims monopoly of force throughout the country and conflict parties are often not clearly separated. Accordingly, the actors have limited opportunities to use physical barriers to strengthen their ceasefire agreements. These distinct characteristics of intrastate conflicts are taken into account as part of the theory building.

#### *Actor and regime type*

The actor and regime type affects bargaining dynamics: the considerations of democratic governments differ from those of authoritarian regimes (Filson and Werner 2004; Fearon 1994) and state and non-state actors face some distinct bargaining challenges (Svensson 2007; Walter 1997; 2009). The analytical framework is illustrated from the perspective of a democratic state actor. However, the scope conditions do not reduce the analysis to democratic states. Where relevant, the theory building discusses the interactions between state and non-state actor and specifies how different regime types (democratic or authoritarian) may influence these interactions. The main case study is based in a democracy (Colombia), but the case comparison in chapter six and the large N statistical analysis in chapter seven include democratic and authoritarian states, with the aim of generalizing for intrastate conflicts regardless of regime and actor type.

#### **Terminology and limitations**

In the following, the key components of the scope conditions are discussed in more detail.

The term *conflict violence* (or short violence, violent), as understood in this thesis, implies the use of force by the main conflict parties to advance a political goal or to guard against changes to the status quo. This is an instrumental view of violence, suggesting that the conflict parties care only about the underlying incompatibility and do not benefit from fighting directly (see next paragraph and Slantchev 2003, 623). By limiting the research

subjects to violent conflicts, cases where parties resolve a conflict through exclusively non-violent instruments (such as dialogue or negotiations) are excluded. The criterion that the main conflict parties use force further excludes conflicts where violence is one-sided. Finally, use of the term *violence* in this thesis refers to open, direct violence, as opposed to structural violence (see Galtung and Fischer 2013).

The term *conflict*, as employed in this thesis, refers to a situation characterized by an antagonistic relationship between two or more social entities that perceive their goals to be in contradiction and act upon this perception (Bar-Tal 2011, 1; Paluck, Shepherd, and Aronow 2016, 567). This thesis refers to such a conflict as *political* to exclude cases where actors are primarily interested in opportunities for organized crime or generally benefit from the instability caused by conflict violence (see Collier et al. 2003). This assumes that there are contested issues between the conflict parties. Such issues are sometimes called incompatibilities, i.e. the stated “generally incompatible positions” between conflict parties (Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2014, sec. I). These may include positions related to issues as varied as territory, governance, economy, justice or security.

The scope conditions refer to conflicts rather than wars, as the term *war* is often understood to imply that the conflict reaches a specified threshold of deadly violence in a given time period.<sup>13</sup> As the main research question relates to the use of ceasefires as bargaining instruments, it would be non-sensical to limit cases to those where a conflict meets a specific violence threshold in a given time period, as periods of ceasefire compliance are associated with a reduction or suspension of such violence. The term *war* is used to refer to specific literature (e.g. civil war literature) or to describe periods of conflict that are particularly violent, e.g. in reference to the transition from war to peace. *Peace* in this specific phrase refers to a ‘tipping point’ for the transition from negative to positive peace (Diehl 2016, 9), identified here as the moment when parties reach a peace agreement that addresses the main incompatibilities between them and dismantles the status of war (see Clayton, Mason, and Sticher 2020). This simplification allows for formalization in theory building and for an operationalization in the empirical assessment.

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<sup>13</sup> The most commonly used threshold to code war events is 1,000 battle-related deaths per calendar year (see Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2014, sec. W).

Further, in the context of this thesis, the term *state actor* refers to the incumbent government of a country and its constituents, while *armed non-state actor* refers to a group that is able to “mount organized armed opposition to the state” (Doyle and Sambanis 2000, 783). Others use the term *rebel* or *rebel group* (e.g. Toft 2010; Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008). State and armed non-state actors are jointly referred to as parties to a conflict or conflict parties, used synonymously with the term *belligerents*. It is not assumed that such actors are homogenous. Instead, the role of various actor sub-groups in influencing incentives and setting constraints to a conflict party leadership are part of the theory building.<sup>14</sup>

Limiting the scope conditions to conflicts with a single conflict dyad limits the applicability of the theoretical framework. In recent years, conflicts with a multiplicity of actors and strong aspects of internationalization (e.g. Yemen or Syria) experienced some of the deadliest conflict violence. The focus on a single conflict dyad is driven by the assumption that, without understanding the dynamics in the most basic setting, it will be difficult to understand them in more complex settings. Limiting the analysis to one conflict dyad keeps the formal model parsimonious and the formal analysis and deductive reasoning easier to follow. In chapter seven, the case selection is expanded to include all intrastate conflicts.<sup>15</sup>

The term *negotiations* is used to refer to a process of interdependent joint decision-making (Lax and Sebenius 1986, 119; Hopmann 1996, 27; Odell 2013, 2, 10–11; Young 1975). Such processes typically involve some form of exchange of concessions and may also involve the search for solutions that are mutually beneficial (see Bartos 1995; Fisher, Ury, and Patton 2011; Hopmann 1995; Meerts 2015). In other words, the thesis uses the term *negotiations* to describe interdependent joint decision-making processes that encompass distributive aspects, integrative aspects or a combination of both. *Bargaining* is used as an umbrella term to capture all approaches conflict parties use to address a conflict, including fighting, ceasefires and peace negotiations (see chapter one, *Theoretical approach*).

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<sup>14</sup> See chapter one, *Analytical framework*.

<sup>15</sup> See *Case selection strategy and data collection*.

It is important to note that the terms *negotiations* and *bargaining* have a different meaning in different bodies of literature (see Odell 2013). In particular, practitioners and negotiation analysis scholars sometimes use the term *bargaining* to describe a form of joint decision-making that evolves around distributive gains, to distinguish from *negotiations* that are aimed at achieving integrative gains.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the term *bargaining* is sometimes used to describe those elements of negotiations that evolve around distributive aspects (what is colloquially also called *horse trading*). In terms of terminology, the thesis leans on the bargaining theory of war rather than negotiation analysis, as it uses bargaining as an overarching term and refers to negotiations as one of several bargaining approaches.

The term *peace negotiations*, as employed in this thesis, refers to the process of negotiating the key underlying incompatibilities of a conflict. As is argued throughout this thesis, this process is tightly intertwined with the process of addressing conflict violence, most explicitly when parties negotiate a definite ceasefire.<sup>17</sup> Yet, while peace negotiations may take place during a ceasefire or while fighting continues, the process of negotiating itself does not involve the use of force. In the context of intrastate conflicts, peace negotiations may thus be seen as “war by peaceful means” (see Meerts 2015, 21). The broader term *peace talks* is used to describe a process that encompasses approaches to address the incompatibilities and conflict violence.

In their purest form, peace negotiations are a voluntary process. Both the process and potential outcomes (negotiated agreements) require the consent of conflict parties (see Fisher, Ury, and Patton 2011). In many conflicts, third parties play an important role in assisting negotiations or exerting pressure on the conflict parties. In this thesis, mediated processes, i.e. processes where third parties assist peace negotiations between conflict parties without imposing content (United Nations 2012, 4) are considered to fit the scope conditions. Cases of high powered diplomacy, where third parties exert pressure on content or impose an

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<sup>16</sup> The terms *integrative* versus *distributive negotiations* (e.g. Bartos 1995), *integrative* versus *distributive bargaining* (e.g. Coleman and Fraser 1979), or *bargaining* versus *problem solving* (e.g. Hopmann 1995) are also used to make a similar distinction.

<sup>17</sup> See chapter seven, *Logic three: dismantling the status of war*.

agreement (see Baumann and Clayton 2017, 3), fall outside the boundaries of the scope conditions.<sup>18</sup>

### **3.2. Case selection strategy and data collection**

Different strategies inform the selection of cases for the main case study, the comparative study in chapter six and the statistical analysis in chapter seven. This section describes the selection process and provides an overview of the data collection. Additional details on the data collection are provided in the respective thesis chapters.

#### **Case study selection**

The case study selection required identifying a conflict that could be used for the empirical assessment throughout this thesis. Three primary criteria served to identify such a case. First, the case study should fall clearly within the boundaries of the scope conditions, leaving little ambiguity in terms of meeting the criteria outlined above. Second, it must be a case where the bargaining dynamics that are studied exist, at least in theory (Beach and Pedersen 2016, 4). Chapter five theorizes a shift in narratives in the absence and presence of a ceasefire. This requires a case that encompassed the required variation in conflict behavior. Chapter six theorizes about three bargaining contexts through which a conflict party leadership needs to transition in order to reach conflict settlement. Finding evidence for these contexts requires a case where parties are expected to have transitioned through them. The theory suggests that this is the case when conflict parties reached a peace agreement, but not necessarily for conflicts where they (so far) failed to do so. For the case to be eligible throughout this thesis, it thus had to include periods with and without a ceasefire, and it required the successful conclusion of a peace agreement. Third, to increase the leverage of supporting evidence, a case should be selected where supporting evidence is only found if the theory is valid (Levy 2008, 12). As a secondary criterion, practical issues were considered, such as availability and accessibility of conflict data and statements from the state and non-state actor.

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<sup>18</sup> Some of the mediation literature refers to these cases as ‘manipulative mediation’. The term high powered diplomacy is used in this thesis to clearly distinguish between third party engagement that focuses on the process (low or high powered mediation) from engagement that affects the content (high powered diplomacy) – a distinction that is preferred in the practitioner community (see Baumann and Clayton 2017, 3).

The conflict between the Colombian government and the FARC meets all primary criteria. At the time of research, this was the most recent case of a violent, political conflict between a state and an armed non-state actor where conflict parties had reached a comprehensive peace agreement. Compared to other cases, third parties played a relatively minor role (IFIT 2018, 8), allowing an analysis of incentives and constraints that are not confounded by third party pressure. While earlier dynamics are also studied, the focus lies on the 2012–2016 peace talks, starting with the exploratory talks between the actors and ending with the ratification of a final peace deal in Congress. This allows an investigation of the interaction between events at the battlefield and at the negotiation table in a case that eventually led to a peace agreement.

During the peace talks, there were periods where the conflict parties engaged in fighting and several unilateral FARC ceasefires (see discussion below). The government was adamant that it would maintain military pressure on the FARC, vowing to fight as if there was no peace process and negotiate as if there was no war (IFIT 2018, 8; Von Mittelstaedt and Zuber 2014; Herbolzheimer 2016, 2–3). This makes it a least likely case in terms of finding supporting evidence for a shift in conflict behavior, should the theoretical framework not be valid (George and Bennett 2005, 121). By extension, if the expected shifts can be found, this increases the leverage of such supporting evidence (Levy 2008, 12). The Colombian case also fulfils the secondary criterion of data availability and accessibility, as public statements of both conflict parties and data on battlefield related events, ceasefires and the negotiations are available and mostly accessible online.

#### *Data collection*

The data collection involved the consultation of primary and secondary sources and the use of databases. Primary sources included statements the FARC published on their international website,<sup>19</sup> official speeches and statements by President Santos,<sup>20</sup> joint communiques released during the talks in Havana, published interviews with President Santos, tweets by President Santos and his predecessor Uribe, and published articles written by members of the negotiating delegations. Secondary sources included academic journal articles, newspaper

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<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.farc-epeace.org/communiques/farc-ep.html>.

<sup>20</sup> See <http://es.presidencia.gov.co/discursos>.

articles in the FACTIVA global database referring to ceasefires and Colombia, and think tank reports. Datasets included survey data (Latin American Public Opinion Project 2016), the Uppsala Conflict Data Program Georeferenced Event Dataset (UCDP GED) (Högbladh 2019; Sundberg and Melander 2013) and a pre-release version of the ETH/PRIO Civil Conflict Ceasefire dataset (Clayton et al. 2020).

The focus of the data collection relied primarily on *observable* events.<sup>21</sup> An alternative methodological approach could have been aimed at identifying intentions and perceptions at various moments during the bargaining process. This would have required a different data collection approach, including interviews with the leaderships of both conflict parties. The decision to instead focus on observable implications was motivated by three reasons: first and foremost, the research approach should be replicable by others and in other cases, and not depend on access to the conflict party leadership. Second, given the research topic, there was a risk of selection bias: interviewees may have provided answers that are socially desirable (see Grimm 2010), misrepresenting objectives that may have been condemned as unethical (such as maximizing harm on the opponent). Third, an extended field visit to Colombia at the time of writing the case study was not possible, due to personal circumstances.

### **Selection for case comparison**

In addition to the case study, chapter six contains a case comparison analyzing ceasefire and violence patterns across contemporary intrastate conflicts. Again, this required selecting cases that meet the scope conditions and where the expected bargaining dynamics in theory exist (Beach and Pedersen 2016, 4). Specifically, for testing the theory of chapter six, this implied limiting cases to conflicts where parties successfully reached a comprehensive peace agreement. Only in these cases, supporting evidence for the full range of observable implications would be expected (see discussion above). The Peace Accord Matrix (PAM) served as a starting point for the selection of these cases. Its list of written peace agreements is limited to those that resulted from negotiations that included the main conflict parties and that address the key issues underlying the conflict (Joshi, Quinn, and Regan 2015), covering some key criteria of the scope conditions. In order not to miss out more recent cases, the

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<sup>21</sup> This includes statements and communiqués if they are public, as they arguably serve a specific purpose.

PAM associate director (Joshi 2017) was contacted to advise on additional cases. He suggested including Philippines (2014) and Colombia (2016).

Country	Conflict dyad	Name of peace accord	Date
Colombia	Government of Colombia – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace	24 November 2016
Indonesia	Government of Indonesia – Free Aceh Movement (GAM)	MoU between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement	15 August 2005
Nepal	Government of Nepal – Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)	Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Nov 21 2006	21 November 2006
Philippines	Government of Philippines – Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)	The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro	27 March 2014
Senegal	Government of Senegal – Movement of the Democratic forces of Casamance (MFDC)	General Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Senegal and MFDC	30 December 2004
Sudan	Government of Sudan – Sudan People's Liberation Movement / Army (SPLM/A)	Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement	9 January 2005

Table 5: list of selected cases. Source: author's own compilation, based on Joshi, Quinn, and Regan (2015) and Joshi (2017).

This list was reduced to those cases where a peace agreement was reached post-9/11. This cut-off date ensured that all cases are contemporary, i.e. that the international peacebuilding context has not experienced any clear major shift since (see De Soto and Del Castillo 2016). It allowed for some variance among the cases (e.g. geographical, length of conflict, level of deadly violence) while keeping the list short enough to conduct a systematic comparison.

From this reduced list, all cases were selected that meet the scope conditions, i.e. cases of state based intrastate conflict between two main parties, where the peace agreement was *negotiated* rather than imposed or reflected surrender. Two cases were excluded because they were multi-party (Liberia 2003) or because they effectively resulted from a military victory by one of the conflict parties (Angola 2002). Ivory Coast (2007) was a boundary case, as the agreement was between the government and an alliance of non-state groups. It was also excluded, as UCDP coded these conflict dyads separately and some of the ceasefire

agreements included only a sub-set of actors. Table 5 provides an overview of the selected cases.

#### *Data collection*

For the case comparison, data was collected from two main sources. Secondary sources, as listed in the case descriptions, helped to reconstruct the sequencing of events related to the negotiation process and battlefield dynamics. UCDP GED data and the ETH/PRIO Civil Conflict Ceasefire dataset was used to corroborate and complement the description of battlefield dynamics. The UCDP GED data was also used to compile density plots and histograms of the number of attacks and combined battlefield deaths in a conflict dyad.

#### **Cases for the statistical analysis**

The empirical assessment in chapter seven involves a survival analysis of ceasefire agreements in all intrastate conflicts. The purpose of the analysis is to test hypotheses that relate to differences in classes of ceasefire design, i.e. ceasefire agreements that contain specific provisions and are associated with specific bargaining situations. The cases in this analysis are ceasefires, with conflict months as the unit of analysis.<sup>22</sup> The independent variable is class of ceasefire design and the dependent variable is the length of violence suspension following an agreement until a violence threshold is reached or an agreement is superseded by a new agreement with a different effect date.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Data collection*

To capture as many ceasefire agreements as possible, the latest version of the PA-X Peace Agreement Database (Bell and Badanjak 2019; Bell et al. 2020), the most complete archive of peace process related agreements to date, was used. From this database, all agreements were selected that took place in an intrastate conflict and met the criteria of a ceasefire agreement as defined in this thesis, i.e. contained a declared intention to suspend hostilities from a specific point in time (Clayton et al. 2019, 2). Unilateral agreements and those limited to a specific geographic space (i.e. local ceasefires) were excluded, based on the assumption that different logics determine the adoption and observance of these agreements. In total, 231

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<sup>22</sup> Other units of analyses are used in robustness tests.

<sup>23</sup> See discussion in chapter seven, *Research Design*.

agreements between 1990 and 2019 were identified that match the selection criteria. The selected agreements were then systematically coded according to a schema developed to identify classes of ceasefire design. The selection procedure implied that only written (and thus relatively formalized) agreements were included in the analysis.

The coding of the dependent variable – violence suspension following an agreement – required data on battlefield violence. For this purpose, UCDP GED data was used. For the initial analysis, all observations associated with a single week (96% of events) were used. Events with a lower and higher degree of accuracy were included in robustness checks. Further details on the operationalization and the analysis are discussed in chapter seven.

## **4. Introduction to the Colombian case<sup>24</sup>**

This section provides an introduction to the case study used throughout this thesis, the 2012–2016 peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the guerrilla organization Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, commonly known by its Spanish acronym FARC.<sup>25</sup> This section provides a brief conflict background, including a discussion of sub-groups in the Colombian case. It discusses previous peace processes before focusing on battlefield and negotiation dynamics leading to the 2016 peace agreement.

### **4.1. Conflict background**

In the past half century, Colombia faced “a situation of multi-polar violence” (García-Durán 2004, 5) involving a multiplicity of actors. This sub-section focuses on the armed conflict between the government and the FARC, discussing other actors and relevant events in as far as they shaped the military or political approach to the conflict.

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<sup>24</sup> Parts of this single-authored section are included in a co-authored book chapter on the role of ceasefires in the Colombian peace negotiations (Millán Hernández, Sticher, and Nussio 2020).

<sup>25</sup> The official name of the group is Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), with Ejército del Pueblo (People’s Army) added during the group’s seventh conference in 1982 (Center for International Security and Cooperation 2019). This thesis uses the shorter, more commonly used abbreviation FARC to refer to the group.

## **Origins of the FARC**

The origins of the armed conflict between the government and the FARC are contested, but commonly dated back to the early 1960s (Millán Hernández 2019, 14). A small guerilla movement that was formed in rural Colombia in 1964 adopted the name FARC at its second conference in 1966. The group's origins trace back decades, to communist self-defense groups of the 1940s/50s and to individuals and groups who felt excluded from, or refused to participate in, a 1958 power sharing agreement ending a decade of political violence known as *la Violencia* (Chernick 1988, 59; Center for International Security and Cooperation 2019, 2).

In contrast to the National Liberation Army (ELN), a smaller guerilla organization with a largely intellectual base, the FARC was primarily made up of peasants and militant communists (Felter and Renwick 2017; Rabasa and Chalk 2001, 30). Its key demands included agrarian reform and improving the livelihood of the rural population (Center for International Security and Cooperation 2019, 2). FARC membership grew slowly in the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1970s, there were four major guerrilla groups – the FARC, the ELN, the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) and the 19<sup>th</sup> of April Movement (M-19) – and a number of smaller ones. All large cities and most departments were affected by guerrilla activities (Chernick 1988, 58). At this time, the FARC operated primarily in its rural bases (Rabasa and Chalk 2001, 23–24). Its main source of income was through extortion and kidnapping for ransom (Rabasa and Chalk 2001, 33), but the group also received money, weapons and training from Cuba (Center for International Security and Cooperation 2019, 8).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the FARC became involved in the lucrative drug business, charging primarily for protection but also processing, producing and trafficking cocaine (Center for International Security and Cooperation 2019, 2; Otis 2014; Rabasa and Chalk 2001). In the years that followed, the group grew geographically and in numbers, while the Colombian army had little capacity to fight them. During its seventh conference in 1982, the FARC adopted an expansion strategy with the aim of taking political power (see ICG 2012, 2; Rabasa and Chalk 2001, 24).

## **Early 1980s: the Betancur administration**

It was in this context that the first formal FARC peace talks took place under the Betancur administration. In 1982, the Betancur administration declared a widespread amnesty and

launched negotiations with multiple armed groups, including the FARC (see Chernick 1988; Posso 2004). A key outcome of the FARC talks were the 1984 *Uribe Accords*, which established a bilateral ceasefire and included vague initial agreements on key issues (Chernick 1988, 73; Posso 2004, 46–48). The FARC established the political party Patriotic Union (UP) which would serve as its political wing. However, the process – led by a weak administration facing governing crisis on multiple fronts – had insufficient support among social and political leaders and the armed forces (Chernick 1988, 64, 73; Posso 2004, 47). There was also a lack of clarity about what was negotiable and what not, leading to distrust and uncertainty about the process (Chernick 1988, 55, 70).

The parties had not managed to settle the conflict when Betancur's term expired. The incoming Barco administration had little interest in continuing the negotiations and the process eventually faltered (Posso 2004, 47–48). In the years that followed, an estimated 4,000 members of the UP were assassinated by paramilitaries, drug traffickers and members of the security forces (ICG 2014b, 6), leading to widespread skepticism within FARC about the possibility of a political solution to the conflict (Posso 2004, 48).

### **Early 1990s: the Gaviria administration**

In the early 1990s, the FARC and two other guerrilla groups (ELN and ELP) worked on a joint negotiating position (Posso 2004, 48). Under the umbrella *Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinating Body* (CGSB), these three groups engaged in negotiations with the Gaviria administration, following the administration's successful negotiations with several smaller guerrilla groups and the convention of a National Constituent Assembly (see Grabe 2004, 41). After exploratory talks in Colombia, the government agreed to talks abroad in the absence of a ceasefire (Posso 2004, 48). In 1991, several rounds of talks took place in Venezuela, but were suspended after a high level FARC attack (Rabasa and Chalk 2001, 72). The talks resumed in 1992 in Mexico, but violence and two high level assassinations led the parties to jointly suspend the talks. Attempts to restart the process were unsuccessful and war resumed (Posso 2004, 48).

The years that followed were some of the most violent in Colombia's history. Conflicts between the guerrilla groups, the paramilitaries and the drug cartels fueled much of this violence, with the central government increasingly losing authority (see Otis 2014; Rabasa and Chalk 2001). Guerrilla activity further expanded. The group had grown steadily from 350

members in 1966 to around 7,000 in 1995 (estimations by the RAND Cooperation, Rabasa and Chalk 2001, 26–27), and to an estimated 16,000 in 2001 (estimations U.S. Department of State 2012). The group no longer relied on small ambushes and attacks only, instead conducting increasingly complex operations (Rabasa and Chalk 2001, xv). During its military peak in the late 1990s, FARC operations were as close to conventional combat as they would get (Rabasa and Chalk 2001, xv; ICG 2012, 2).

### **Turn of the century: the Pastrana administration**

In this context, the Pastrana administration engaged in a renewed effort to settle the conflict with the FARC politically. Peace talks were held in a vast demilitarized zone in southern Colombia, while the war continued in other parts of the country. The talks started on a low note, with the FARC leader failing to appear for the official opening and FARC suspending the talks a few weeks later (Rabasa and Chalk 2001, 73). The talks resumed but were marked by a lack in progress. The balance of power had shifted since the Gaviria talks, with the FARC strengthened and exerting more influence in the country. The objectives, however, remained largely the same: the government continued to demand disarmament of the FARC, while the FARC asked for wide ranging social, economic and political reforms, rejecting talks of disarmament (Rabasa and Chalk 2001, 73). While the talks remained at an impasse, the FARC was widely suspected of using the demilitarized zone to re-arm and re-group (Beittel 2012, 9–20; Schirmer 2019, 207). Amidst escalating tensions, decreasing public support and strong opposition from senior military figures, the FARC hijacking of a civilian airplane in February 2002 triggered the breakdown of the talks (see Schirmer 2019, 204).

### **Weakening of the FARC under Plan Colombia**

In parallel to the talks, Pastrana had established an “economic blueprint for peace” called Plan Colombia, originally devised to offer alternatives to coca farmers but lacking funding (Schirmer 2019, 203). In 2000, US Congress approved aid to Plan Colombia, which had been rewritten with a strong focus on the war on drugs, in line with US priorities (Beittel 2012, 3; Schirmer 2019, 203).

In 2002, President Uribe was elected on the promise of a hardline security response to the armed conflict. A shift in the US policy towards Colombia in the aftermath of 9/11 allowed his administration to use US financial and military assistance in its combat efforts. The aggressive war that followed greatly diminished the fighting capability of the rebels and

led to thousands of desertions. Group membership halved within a decade, from its peak of 16,000 in 2001 to around 8,000 in 2011 (estimations U.S. Department of State 2012).

The 2008 appointment of Guillermo León Sáenz Vargas ‘Alfonso Cano’<sup>26</sup> – a chief ideologue – as new FARC leader raised hopes of a political solution (Bouvier 2008). However, encouraged by the military successes of his administration, President Uribe made clear that he would only consider negotiations under stringent conditions which essentially implied surrender by the guerilla organization. The military campaign against the FARC continued, showing important military successes, including the killing of key FARC leaders (see Segura and Mechoulan 2017; U.S. Department of State 2012 and discussions below). In the years leading up to the peace talks under President Santos, the FARC had been pushed back into the periphery. At the same time, the group proved apt at adapting to the new circumstances (ICG 2012, 2; Schirmer 2019, 212). A new strategic plan aimed at the group’s survival saw the effectiveness of the FARC military campaign under Alfonso Cano increase, despite the great power shift in favor of the government over the previous decade (see Segura and Mechoulan 2017, 9; Cortés and Millán Hernández 2019, 3).

## **4.2. Key actors during the peace talks**

In 2012, the Government of Colombia and the FARC launched a new and eventually successful attempt at negotiating a peace agreement. This sub-section introduces key actors involved in or affecting decision-making processes during the peace talks from the perspective of the Colombian government, following the structure introduced in the analytical framework in chapter one.

### **Government sub-groups**

At the head of the incumbent government was President Santos. He had previously served as defense minister under President Uribe, where he oversaw military operations that inflicted great losses to the FARC (Von Mittelstaedt and Zuber 2014). In 2009, he left his position to prepare his presidential campaign. Running on a promise to continue the hardline security

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<sup>26</sup> Throughout this thesis, names of FARC members are introduced with their birth names, followed by their nom de guerre in quotation marks. In the text that follows, only their nom de guerre is used.

approach of President Uribe, Santos secured a landslide win in the second round of presidential elections in 2010. He was re-elected in 2014.

Santos appointed a number of high-profile individuals to represent the government in the peace talks. For the exploratory phase of the talks, he appointed Sergio Jaramillo, his advisor for national security, as head of the government delegation. He also sent his brother as a personal representative, acting as a good faith facilitator (Segura and Mechoulan 2017, 10). For the public phase, he appointed former vice president Humberto de la Calle to lead the government delegation and named Jaramillo as High Commissioner for Peace.

### *Political competitors*

Opposition to the peace talks emerged quickly under the lead of former president Uribe. Uribe had taken a hard stance against the FARC.<sup>27</sup> His own father was killed and his brother gravely wounded by the FARC in 1983, a tragedy that may have influenced his hardline approach towards guerrilla groups (Dugas 2010, 1122). Uribe and Santos cooperated as leading figures of the Social Party of National Unity, or short ‘U Party’, and Santos was seen as an Uribe protégé. But while Uribe originally endorsed Santos as presidential candidate, a rupture between the two started soon after the latter’s inauguration in 2010, and deepened after plans of the peace talks became public (see Colombia Reports 2018; 2019 for details). Uribe broke from the U Party and founded a political movement that was formalized as a political party in January 2013. The party, Democratic Center, was largely defined in opposition to the policies of Santos and the U Party, with the rejection of the FARC peace talks as a core issue (Colombia Reports 2018). The presidential candidate of the Democratic Center won the first round in the 2014 elections but was defeated in the second round.

### *Citizens*

In 2012, when peace talks with the FARC started, Colombia had a population of around 46 million. Around four out of five Colombians live in urban areas (The World Bank 2020) and three quarters of the population are registered as voters (IFES 2019). Traditionally, the Liberal or the Conservative Party led the Colombian government. In 2002, Colombians broke with this tradition and voted for Uribe, who did not have the institutional support of either of

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<sup>27</sup> See *Conflict background*.

these parties (Colombia Reports 2019). In 2010, Santos secured 69% of votes in the second round of the elections. In 2014, he was re-elected more narrowly with 51% of votes in the second round.

Survey data shows that public support for the peace talks fluctuated over time. At the announcement of the talks, around 65% believed that dialogue would be a better solution to the guerrilla problem than a military approach. At its low point, support for dialogue was only around 45%. Around the time of the plebiscite, around 77% expressed support for dialogue over a military approach (GALLUP 2016, 103), yet the peace agreement was rejected by voters in the plebiscite by a margin of 0.43% (IFES 2019).<sup>28</sup> Perceptions of military strength were more stable. The proportion of those who believed that the Armed Forces could defeat the guerrillas militarily wavered between 64% and 77% throughout the public phase of the talks (GALLUP 2016, 101).

### *Armed Forces*

The Armed Forces of Colombia are made up of the army, navy and air force. In contrast to earlier peace processes, President Santos involved members of the armed forces directly in the negotiation process (Cortés and Millán Hernández 2019; Millán Hernández, Sticher, and Nussio 2020). A retired army general was appointed as member of the government's negotiating delegation. Another retired general was appointed from the National Police, ensuring that the security services had a voice in the negotiations. The president also appointed high-ranking members of the security forces, including the deputy commander of the Armed Forces, to the technical sub-committee tasked with negotiating the bilateral ceasefire (Foget 2014).

### **The FARC**

The guerrilla group FARC was already briefly introduced in the section on conflict background above. At the time of the peace talks, the group was led by Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri 'Timoleón Jiménez', commonly known as Timochenko. He had taken over the command of the FARC after the killing of Alfonso Cano in November 2011, shortly before the start of the exploratory talks (see Segura and Mechoulam 2017, 13). The FARC had a

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<sup>28</sup> See discussion in chapter four, *Battlefield dynamics and public support*.

clear hierarchical structure. Its highest political body was the Central High Command, consisting of around 25 FARC commanders. Seven of its members served in the FARC Secretariat, the military command of the FARC. The guerrilla group was further organized into seven blocks, with multiple fronts and lower units (see Alsema 2014; Center for International Security and Cooperation 2019).

The head of the FARC delegation was Jaime Alberto Parra ‘Mauricio Jaramillo’ during the exploratory talks, and Luciano Marín Arango ‘Iván Márquez’ during the public phase of the talks. Both were members of the FARC secretariat.

### **4.3. Phases of the 2012–2016 peace talks**

This sub-section provides a short and descriptive overview of the events leading up to and during the 2012–2016 peace talks. Three distinct phases can be identified: a secret phase in which the two parties reached out to each other and discussed the possibility of talks; a second secret phase of exploratory talks, in which the parties negotiated the rules of talks and agenda items; and a public phase, in which the parties negotiated the contested issues. Table 8 provides an overview of key events during the exploratory phase, distinguishing between the peace negotiations and events in the battlefield.

#### **Preliminary contacts**

When President Santos was elected to office in 2010, he was widely expected to continue the aggressive security approach of the Uribe administration. However, already in his inauguration speech, Santos alluded to the possibility of peace talks (Beittel 2015, 15). Shortly after his inauguration, President Santos was contacted by a Colombian economist who had been exchanging letters with a member of the FARC secretariat. Santos responded by inviting FARC representatives to meet with government representatives for confidential discussions (Segura and Mechoulan 2017, 10). In preliminary meetings, the parties decided, among other topics, on the delegations representing the parties in the exploratory talks, Cuba as the venue, and on the logistics and security of the transfer of FARC delegation members to Cuba (Millán Hernández, Sticher, and Nussio 2020; Segura and Mechoulan 2017, 11–12).

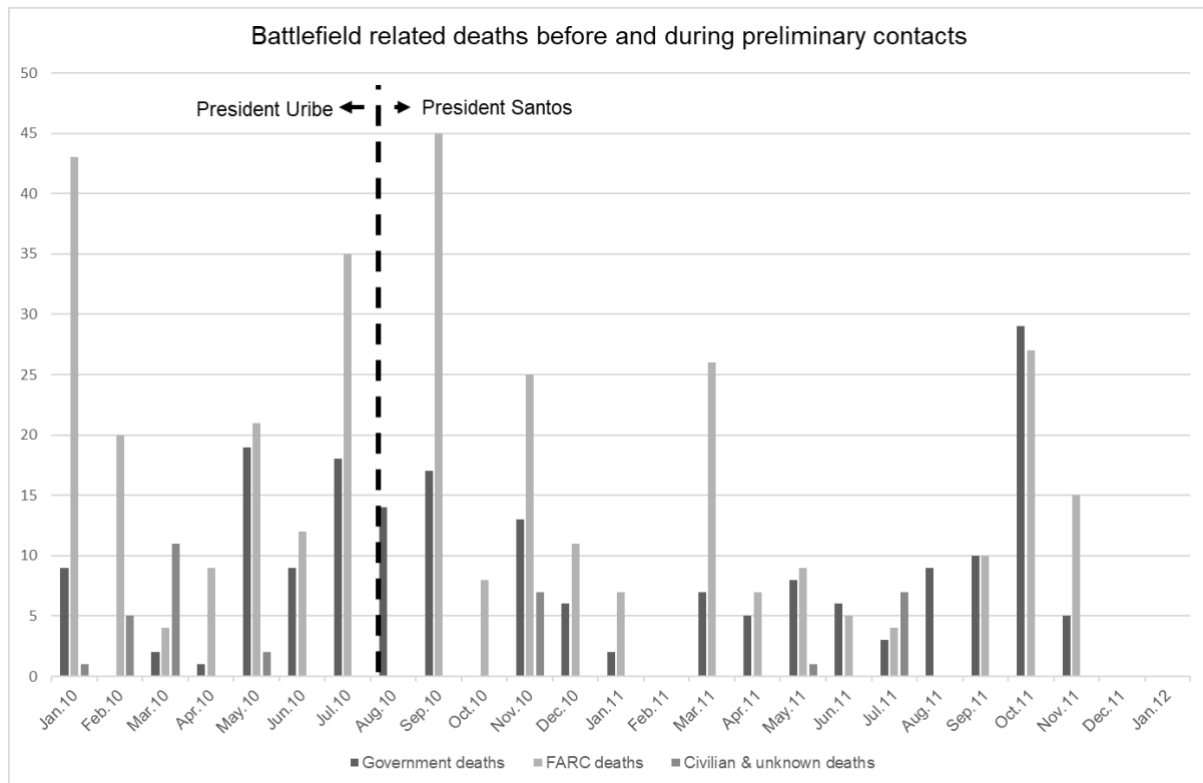


Figure 2: battle-related deaths during the phase of preliminary contacts. Source: author's own visualization, based on UCDP GED data.

There was no discernible shift in conflict violence involving battle-related deaths before and after the inauguration of President Santos (see Figure 2). In the period of preliminary contacts, attacks and military operations on both sides continued. Two key FARC leaders died in military operations during this period. Jorge Briceño ‘Mono Jojoy’, the FARC top military chief (Schirmer 2019, 211), was killed shortly after President Santos came to office, leading to a surge in the president’s approval rate (Gunson 2010). In November 2011, armed forces killed FARC commander Guillermo León Sáenz Vargas ‘Alfonso Cano’. Cano was involved in the exchange of letters with the government in 2010 and 2011, but President Santos reportedly gave the order to kill when the military reported that Cano was surrounded (Schirmer 2019, 211–12). Following Cano’s death, the FARC informed President Santos that “everything they had agreed upon in the preparatory meetings stood” (Segura and Mechoulan 2017, 13). In December 2011 and January 2012, the two months leading up to the exploratory talks, no battle-related deaths were reported (see Figure 2).

## Exploratory talks

From February to August 2012, the two parties engaged in confidential exploratory talks in Havana, Cuba. Representatives from Cuba and Norway, designated as guarantors for the process, were present throughout the discussions that otherwise took place in complete secrecy (see Segura and Mechoulan 2017, 13–14 for an account of how the parties ensured secrecy throughout this phase). The FARC delegation was headed by Mauricio Jaramillo, a member of the FARC secretariat. The government delegation was led by Sergio Jaramillo, then presidential advisor for national security, later named High Commissioner for Peace.

The exploratory talks culminated in a framework agreement that clarified the aim of the peace talks, the operating rules and a negotiation agenda. The stated aim was to reach “a Final Agreement for the termination of the conflict that will contribute to the construction of stable and lasting peace” (“General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace” 2012, 1). The talks would be opened in Oslo, Norway, and have the main seat in Havana, Cuba. The operational rules included issues related to procedure, confidentiality and dissemination. Perhaps most consequentially, it established the principle that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” (“General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace” 2012, 2). This meant that agreement reached on any of the agenda items would only become effective once a final peace deal was signed.

In terms of the negotiating agenda, the parties agreed on the following items: 1) integrated agricultural development policy (or short, land reform), 2) political participation, 3) the end of the conflict, 4) solution to the problem of illicit drugs (or short, illicit drugs), 5) victims, and 6) implementation, verification and ratification.<sup>29</sup> The first five agenda items were of substantive nature while the last was primarily procedural. Item three, the end of the conflict, included a point on the handover (or ‘laying down’) of weapons and reintegration of FARC members into civilian life. This proved to be a key sticky point during the exploratory talks. The FARC identity was closely linked to being an armed actor (Segura and Mechoulan 2017, 13). In no previous peace effort had the FARC agreed to negotiate its de facto

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<sup>29</sup> Unofficial translation of the agenda items by the International Crisis Group (“General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace” 2012).

disarmament. The government insistence on this point led to the only real breakdown of the negotiations during the exploratory talks (Jaramillo 2017, 7).

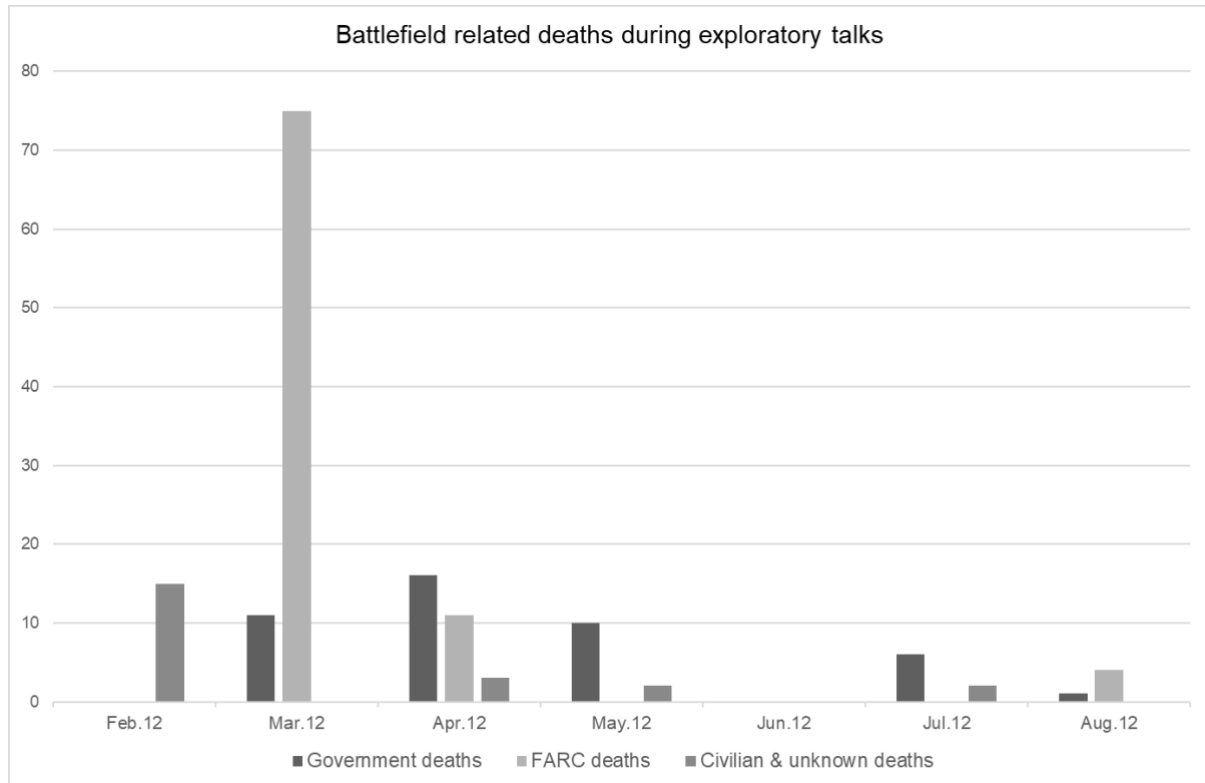


Figure 3: battle-related deaths during the period of exploratory talks. Source: author's own visualization, based on UCDP GED data.

Shortly after the start of the exploratory talks in February 2012, the FARC announced that it would stop kidnapping for ransom and promised to release ten abducted members of the security forces (Forero 2012). In March, the FARC launched a deadly attack on government forces and two largescale military operations killed dozens of FARC members, including five high level members (Daugherty 2012; Jaramillo 2019). Yet, despite these attacks, the talks continued and in early April, the FARC delivered on its promise to release the ten security service members (Neuman and Gonzales 2012). In the months that followed, fighting continued, albeit with slightly lower battle-related deaths in the months leading up to reaching the framework agreement (see Figure 3).

### Public phase of the talks

The official launch of the peace talks took place in Oslo, Norway, in mid-October 2012. Negotiations started in Havana, Cuba, in November 2012 with the rural reform item. The conflict parties engaged in direct negotiations, with a limited role for third parties. Cuba

hosted the meetings and, together with Norway, served as ‘guarantor’ of the process. Representatives were present throughout the discussions. In addition, Venezuela and Chile were designated the (less specified) status of accompanying countries (see IFIT 2018, 8).

Opposition to the talks mobilized quickly under former president Uribe, who formed an organization and later a political party to mobilize against the peace talks. Uribe and his followers criticized, among other aspects, that the government had agreed to negotiate amid continued FARC hostilities. They also claimed that the government was being too lenient towards the FARC.

<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Start of negotiations</b>	<b>Date of draft agreement</b>
Land reform	November 2012	May 2013
Political participation	June 2013	November 2013
Illicit drugs	November 2013	May 2014
Victims	June 2014	December 2015
End of the conflict	August 2014 <sup>30</sup>	June 2016
Implementation, verification and ratification	April 2016	August 2016

*Table 6: negotiation of agenda items and date of draft agreements. Source: author’s own compilation, based on IFIT (2018), Colombia Reports (2016) and government-FARC joint communiques.*

The government and the FARC reached an agreement on the first agenda item, land reform, in May 2013 (IFIT 2018, 6). Negotiations continued with discussions on political participation (agreement reached in November 2013) and the item on illicit drugs (agreement reached in May 2014). The pace of the negotiations shifted with the negotiation of the victims item. As the overview in Table 6 shows, agreement on this point took much longer than for the previous items. This was mostly due to the complexity of the issue and the sensitivity of negotiating justice for crimes committed during half a century of armed conflict (IFIT 2018, 7, 17–19; Jaramillo 2017).

Until the end of 2014, the talks were marked by continued fighting, with the exception of four temporary unilateral ceasefires declared by the FARC (see overview in Table 7).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Start of technical sub-committee working on the end of conflict item (see “Joint Communiqué # 42” 2014).

<sup>31</sup> This thesis uses the term *temporary ceasefire* to indicate that a ceasefire was from its outset limited to a specified time period.

The first ceasefire coincided with the start of the peace talks and lasted for two months; the second started a year into the negotiations; and two shorter ones took place during the two rounds of presidential elections in 2014. The FARC by and large adhered to these ceasefires (Santos 2013; ICG 2013; Cardona 2013; ICG 2014a; Hurst 2014).

None of these unilateral measures were replicated by the government. From the onset of the talks, President Santos rejected any suggestion of a bilateral ceasefire. In an interview in 2014, he justified his decision as follows:

I made the decision not to accept a cease-fire before signing a peace contract. If we agreed to a cease-fire there would be a reason for FARC to prolong negotiations eternally. And if by any chance those talks fail, I don't want to be seen by history as another president who was naive and stupid and gave the guerrillas all the opportunity to gain strength and keep fighting. (Von Mittelstaedt and Zuber 2014, 1)

This was a reference to the negotiations under the Pastrana administration, in which the FARC was widely seen as using the demilitarized zone to gain a military advantage. The refusal to cease the pressure on the FARC was also a nod to the military leadership, which continued to be suspicious about the true intentions of the guerilla organization (*BBC* 2014a; Goodman 2014; Schirmer 2019).

Discussions on a definitive, bilateral ceasefire as part of the final agreement started in August 2014, while the discussions on the victims item were ongoing. The parties established a technical sub-committee tasked with studying possible ceasefire models and preparing options for the Colombian case (“Joint Communique # 42” 2014).

In November 2014, the FARC captured a serving Colombian general, leading Santos to quickly suspend the talks. The FARC acknowledged that the capture was accidental, and the two sides swiftly agreed on the conditions for release (Dhont 2014). The talks resumed ten days after the FARC handed over the general. A week later, the FARC declared a unilateral ceasefire for an indefinite period of time (FARC-EP 2014a).

Declared	Effective	Declared time period	Comment
19 November 2012	20 November 2012	Two months	Peace process related
8 December 2013	15 December 2013	One month	Peace process related
16 May 2014	20 May 2014	Until 28 May 2014	Electoral ceasefire, announced jointly with ELN
7 June 2014	9 June 2014	Until 30 June 2014	Electoral ceasefire
17 December 2014	20 December	Indefinitely	Suspended on 22 May 2014
8 July 2015	20 July 2015	One month, later extended indefinitely	Superseded by a bilateral ceasefire on 29 August 2016

*Table 7: overview of unilateral ceasefires declared by the FARC. Source: author's own compilation, based on Clayton et al. (2020) and FARC communiqués.*

In March 2015, the government suspended its air strikes, but operations on the ground intensified (ICG 2015b, 5). On 15 April 2015,<sup>32</sup> a FARC in south-western Colombia killed eleven soldiers during the unilateral ceasefire. President Santos immediately announced the resumption of air strikes. The FARC officially suspended its unilateral ceasefire after government forces killed dozens of FARC in a largescale military operation, leading to a return of open hostilities (ICG 2015b, 3–4). Support for the talks dropped to an all-time low (GALLUP 2016, 103).

In July 2015, the FARC announced a one-month unilateral ceasefire (FARC-EP 2015d). Shortly after, the parties agreed on measures to de-escalate the conflict and speed up the talks (“Joint Communiqué #55: Expedite in Havana and De-Escalate in Colombia” 2015). The government resumed its suspension of air strikes and the FARC announced that it would maintain the unilateral ceasefire beyond the initially announced time period. These measures led to a de facto halt in conflict violence (see shift in violence after July 2015 in Figure 4).

The conflict parties reached agreement on the victims item in December 2015, and on the remaining two items – the end of conflict and implementation, verification and ratification – in June and August 2016. They announced a full peace agreement on 24 August

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<sup>32</sup> Some reports state the date of the attack as 14 April, while others use 15 April as a reference. Initial reports, based on accounts from surviving soldiers, stated that the attack happened on 14 April shortly before midnight. However, according to details that later emerged, the fighting started shortly before midnight and lasted long into the early hours of 15 April (see discussion in chapter seven, Counterfactual analysis). This thesis uses 15 April 2015 as the date of the attack.

2016. In the days that followed, a bilateral ceasefire came into force, effectively superseding the unilateral measures.

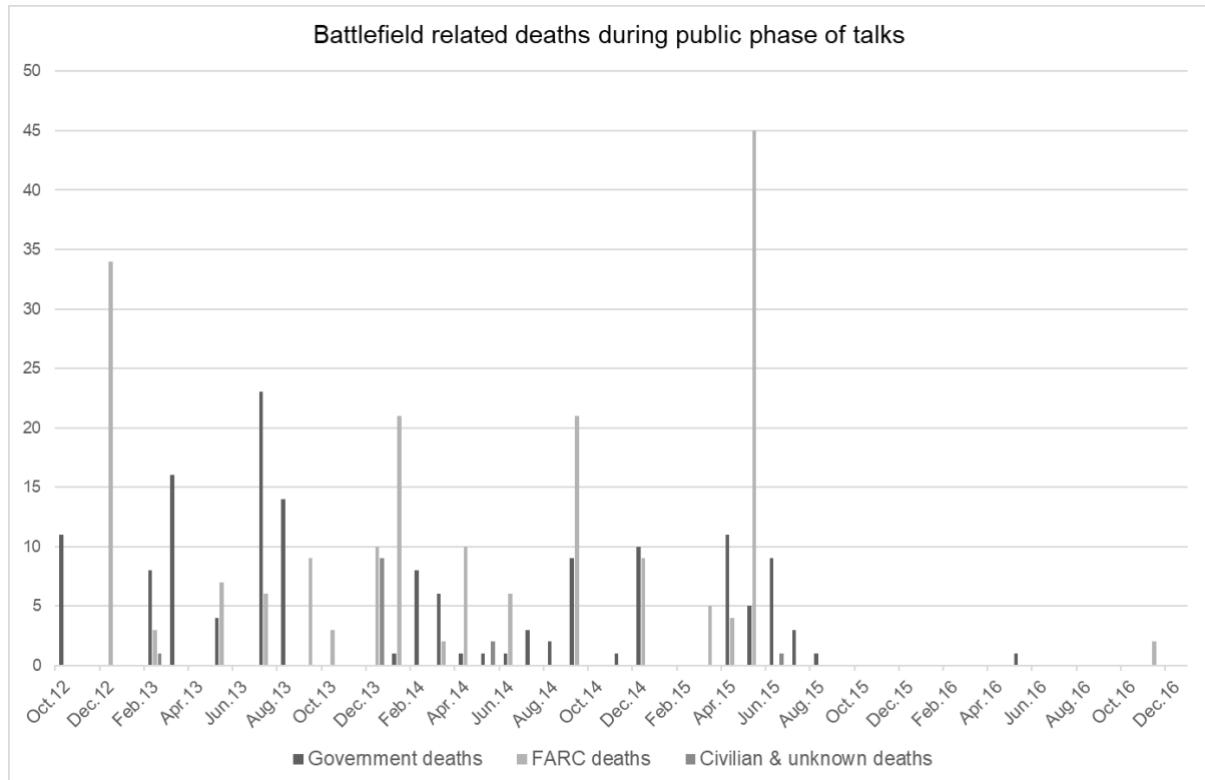


Figure 4: battle-related deaths during the public phase of the talks. Source: author's own visualization, based on UCDP GED data.

In line with earlier promises, the government quickly initiated steps for a popular vote on the peace agreement. The campaign leading up to the plebiscite was highly polarized, with former president Uribe leading the No campaign. On 2 October 2016, Colombian voters rejected the agreement by a narrow margin. In the period that followed, the government and the FARC re-negotiated parts of the agreement, leading to over fifty amendments but leaving some key issues unchanged (ICG 2017; IFIT 2018, 25). The revised agreement was ratified in Congress but faced continued opposition under Uribe's leadership.

Date	Key events at peace negotiations	Key events in the battlefield
<b>2012</b>		
February	Start of secret exploratory talks	FARC announces suspension of kidnapping and release of ten captured members of government security services
March		One largescale FARC attack and two large military operations lead to dozens of fatalities, including five high ranking FARC members <sup>33</sup>
April		FARC delivers on promise to release ten members of government security services
August	Conclusion of exploratory talks Signing of framework agreement	
September	Both sides publicly announce framework agreement and process	
October	Formal launch of peace talks in Oslo, Norway	
November	Public phase of negotiations starts in Havana, Cuba	FARC announces a two-month unilateral ceasefire
<b>2013</b>		
February		A high level leader close to Iván Márquez, the leader of the FARC negotiating delegation, is killed in a government attack <sup>34</sup>
May	Announcement of agreement on land reform item	
June	Announcement of agreement on political participation item	
December		FARC announces a one-month unilateral ceasefire
<b>2014</b>		
May	Announcement of agreement on illicit drug item	FARC jointly with ELN announces a unilateral ceasefire during the first round of presidential elections
June		FARC announces a unilateral ceasefire during the second round of presidential elections
September	The parties agree to make the content of the first three draft agreements public	

November	The government suspends talks in response to FARC kidnapping of a serving general	FARC kidnaps and later releases a serving general
December	Peace talks resume	FARC announces indefinite unilateral ceasefire Two high level FARC members are killed in a government attack <sup>35</sup>
<b>2015</b>		
March		Government suspends air strikes for one month
April	Peace talks continue despite crisis over killed government forces	Santos announces extension of suspension of air strikes FARC attack kills eleven soldiers in southwestern Colombia Santos orders resumption of air strikes FARC maintains commitment to unilateral ceasefire
May		Military operations kill dozens of FARC members, including two members of the FARC negotiating team <sup>36</sup> FARC announces suspension of unilateral ceasefire
June	Announcement of agreement on truth commission (as part of victims item)	
July	Parties agree on a change in negotiation methodology to expedite talks	FARC announces a one-month unilateral ceasefire Parties agree on de-escalation measures Government suspends air strikes
September	Announcement of agreement on transitional justice (victims item)	FARC announces that it will maintain its unilateral ceasefire
December	Announcement of agreement of victims item	

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<sup>33</sup> Arsecio Niño (leader of 10th front), Javier Jota (leader of 42nd front), Willinton (mobile company leader), Camilo (leader 25th front), Alfonso Rivas (Abelardo Roman Front).

<sup>34</sup> Jacobo Arango (front commander).

<sup>35</sup> Malicia and Galeno (leaders of the 57th front).

<sup>36</sup> Jairo Martinez was killed in a largescale military operation on 22 May 2015. Adán de Jesús Jimenez García “Chaqueto” was killed three days later in a smaller military operation.

<b>2016</b>		
June	Announcement of agreement on end of conflict item	Agreement on end of conflict includes agreement on bilateral ceasefire
August	Formal announcement of peace agreement, ceremony	Bilateral ceasefire enters into force
September	FARC National Guerilla Conference unanimously ratifies the peace agreement Signing ceremony	
October	Voters narrowly reject peace agreement in plebiscite Renegotiation between the parties start	Both sides maintain the bilateral ceasefire after the failed plebiscite and later sign a ceasefire protocol to formalize a transitional arrangement
November	Parties sign final peace agreement Congress ratifies the agreement	

*Table 8: timeline of key negotiation and battlefield related events. Source: author's own compilation, based on Colombia Reports (2016); Clayton et al. (2020); FACTIVE search results; FARC communiqués; government-FARC joint communiqués; ICG (2015); IFIT (2018); Millán Hernández, Sticher, and Nussio (2020); and Segura and Mechoulam (2017).*