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

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PART FOUR: THE ROLE OF CEASEFIRES IN THE TRANSITION FROM WAR TO PEACE

In the Sudan North-South process, a ceasefire provided important momentum to revive peace talks (ICG 2003), while in Sri Lanka, dynamics around a ceasefire distracted from the renewal of talks (Chounet-Cambas 2011, 10). In the Philippines, a longstanding ceasefire transformed relations between the conflict parties, but led to a long, drawn out negotiation process (Akebo 2019). How can these different trajectories associated with ceasefires in intrastate conflicts be explained? Why and when do ceasefires facilitate, and why and when do they hinder progress towards a peace agreement?

The preceding chapters generated insights into the strategic use of ceasefires as bargaining instruments. Depending on their assessment of the overall bargaining situation, conflict party leaders may use ceasefires to set out a military advantage, to press for concessions, or to enable progress towards a settlement. They design ceasefires with a specific logic in mind, making them more resilient to violations once they realize the benefits of a negotiated settlement and are confident about the opponent's good faith. But even when leaders are committed to a political solution, ceasefires are challenging to comply with, as they create opportunities for spoiling behavior. Violations may be misinterpreted and can affect conflict dynamics in unintended ways. In short, the underlying ceasefire objectives do not necessarily translate into the desired effect.

Part four provides an overview of these dynamics and addresses the remaining puzzle: what are the effects of ceasefires on the transition from war to peace? Chapter eight, the concluding chapter, summarizes the main theoretical, conceptual and empirical findings of this thesis and recounts the Colombian case to illustrate key dynamics. It then ties back the findings to extant literature, to discuss how the strategic use of ceasefires affects progress in peace negotiations, before highlighting the implications of the findings for third parties seeking to promote the settlement of armed conflicts.