


Understanding Ceasefires and the Security Transition

A short course for conflict parties,
mediators, and peacebuilders.



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For the full video course and more information, including comprehensive collections of guidance and capacity-building resources on the topic of ceasefires and security transitions, please visit:

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Full video course

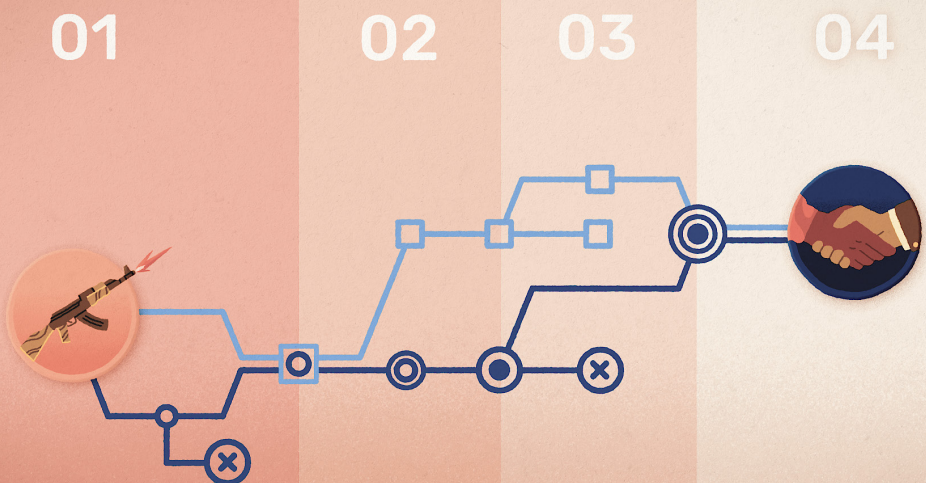
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1 Introduction to Ceasefires and the Security Transition Process

Transitioning from war to peace is a complex process consisting of a series of interconnected political and security steps and phases. Ceasefires are an indispensable part of this transition, and therefore a vital component of all peace processes.

This course offers conflict parties, mediators and third-party peace-makers a concise overview of how to design and implement ceasefires to perform different roles and functions throughout the security transition process.



Every conflict is unique. Designing ceasefires as part of an effective security transition therefore requires conflict parties and mediators to develop a context-specific approach to build the necessary capacity for, commitment to and confidence in the process.

The process rarely follows a straightforward or linear path, but, for planning purposes, it can still be thought of as sequential phases. For example, the process can be conceived in four phases.

The first phase: mitigating and limiting conflict violence.

The second phase: building upon the first phase and establishing a process to move towards a suspension of all violence.

The third phase: working on mechanisms for managing, monitoring and supervising the ceasefire and preparing for a final agreement.

The fourth and final phase: agreeing a comprehensive security agreement and a definitive suspension of violence, which can include principles on the necessary future disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process, integration of forces, new command structures and/or security sector reform (SSR).

Ideally, each phase of the process lays a foundation for the next phase, involving several activities and different types of ceasefires.

Owing to the political and security processes being intertwined, progress in the security transition always requires sufficient political will from the leadership of the conflict parties; equally, trust built or lost in the security transition can impact progress in political talks.

To be effective, the conflict parties and the mediation team also need to develop the necessary technical skills and knowledge to move through each phase of the process.



Essential Ceasefire Principles

Every ceasefire process is unique. Yet several principles can serve as useful guidelines to shape the design and integration of ceasefires within the security transition process.

The following list of eight principles outline key considerations for conflict parties and peace-makers attempting to stop violence and develop a sustainable and effective transition towards peace.



1. Integrated strategy

Ceasefires always need to be nested within an overarching negotiation or mediation strategy.

Security, political, socio-economic, environmental and humanitarian developments are all intertwined and collectively impact the ceasefire process. If these aren't adequately integrated, the entire process will be weakened.

That's why it is crucial that the political negotiation and mediation teams have a general understanding of security transition processes and ceasefire specific concepts, tools and logic, which they can factor into their strategic planning.

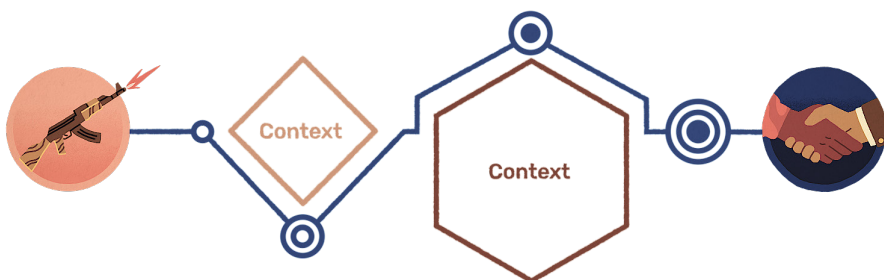
A strategic approach is goal-oriented and follows a logical path of progression. It works with the consent of the parties and is adaptive to context, in particular to progress in other negotiation tracks. An integrated approach needs to be carefully designed so that, further down the road, progress is not blocked or limited.

2. Context specificity

A ceasefire process should always be developed using a context-specific approach that recognises the unique needs and aspirations of the affected conflict parties and communities. This ensures that what is included within a ceasefire agreement is relevant, realistic, inclusive and responsive to local dynamics.

A context-specific approach can draw attention to unique dynamics and allows agreements to be tailored accordingly, which enhances the prospects of achieving a sustainable peace. One way to make processes more context specific is through ongoing, participatory conflict analysis, for example, using the ACCP framework.

Based on the context, the parties' goals and the phase of the political negotiations.



3. Incremental and phased progress

Negotiators and mediators should establish and consolidate progress through small achievable steps.

It is key to focus on what is attainable and build confidence in the process, enabling conflict parties to move towards more substantive commitments at a realistic pace.

A step-by-step approach ensures that the negotiation table isn't overloaded with issues and enables conflict parties to address matters in a systematic and phased manner.

Trying to impose terms, skipping steps or rushing a ceasefire agreement can undermine the peace process and often results in agreements that are overambitious or premature.

4. Technical capacity

The modalities of negotiating and implementing a ceasefire are highly technical. This can easily overwhelm the parties, exceeding their capacity to effectively engage.

Third parties can thus be critical to help conflict parties become more familiar with the subject through providing training and support on ceasefire-related issues.

This can be useful both for the political decision-makers who determine the purpose and scope of a ceasefire and for the military actors who negotiate and implement the agreement, as it will allow them to negotiate with greater confidence.

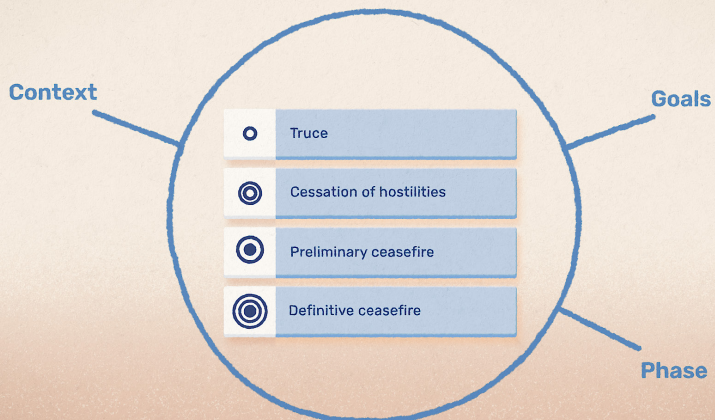
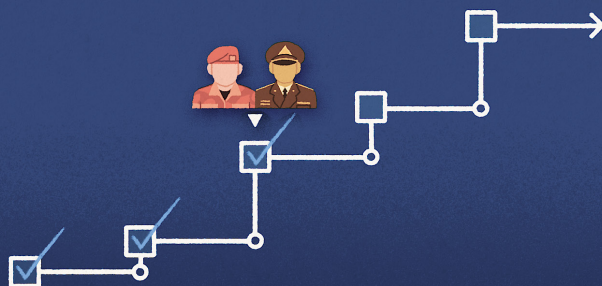
5. Different types of ceasefires

There are several different types of 'ceasefires' and related security agreements that parties can use to stop the violence. These agreements serve different functions, take on different scopes, and often go by different names, such as truce, cessation of hostilities and preliminary or definitive ceasefire.

Different agreements serve distinct purposes and should be implemented based on the context, the parties' goals and the phase of the political negotiations.

Ceasefire agreements often increase incrementally in terms of specificity and enforceability as the process develops, although they do not necessarily always lead from one to the other.

The term 'ceasefire' is not always useful, as it can refer both to a specific type of agreement and, more generally, to the broader category of agreements. As meanings can differ across contexts, it is crucial that the terminology used aligns with how the words are understood by everyone involved.



6. Stakeholder ownership and inclusivity

Sustainable ceasefires are built on a foundation of genuine national ownership. For conflict parties to assume ownership of their process, they often require time, technical support and capacity building, with external parties playing a supplementary and supportive role.

Mediators should aim to bring every relevant armed actor into the ceasefire negotiating process, or else risk those excluded turning into spoilers.

Ceasefires can also benefit from including and consulting with a wide array of actors beyond the negotiating parties. This could include traditional, community and religious leaders, women's and youth groups, and private sector and civil society organisations, all of which can contribute, in various ways, to conflict management, mitigation and peace-building. That said, special care has to be taken to ensure these parties' involvement does not put them in harm's way.

Mediators and conflict parties should carefully consider which actors need to be engaged and included at which step of the process and for what purpose.

7. Ceasefire management and monitoring

Ceasefire implementation is more effective when it involves the creation of a joint ceasefire management system, in which the conflict parties work to implement the agreement together – often supported by civil society or international actors.

In practice, this requires the creation of new institutional arrangements, typically the formation of a joint ceasefire commission, composed of military representatives from each conflict party who oversee the ceasefire implementation process and report to their respective political authorities, and a monitoring and verification body that reports to the joint ceasefire commission.

A key challenge for parties is managing the inevitable incidents that arise. Monitoring and verification can increase the flow of information, which is essential for the conflict parties to come to a joint decision on how best to address incidents and restore compliance.

8. Realistic expectations

Progress in a peace process is rarely a straightforward path; that's why it is important to keep expectations and objectives realistic.

Most ceasefire agreements in the early phases of a process have a limited duration, especially those that are less specific and lack management or monitoring provisions.

Violations of ceasefires are highly likely, but mechanisms can, and should, be put in place to address and rectify them.

Ultimately, with sufficient political will, an effective political negotiation process and attention to the security transition principles discussed here, parties can over time effectively transition from war to peace.



Conflict Mitigation and Battlefield Management

Steps to contain, mitigate and manage violence can be taken throughout a conflict. Even when parties are not willing to seriously pursue a path to peace, it is possible for them to agree to measures to create a less violent conflict environment.

Often these arrangements are short-term and informal, without a written agreement or a public announcement – in contrast to more formal types of ceasefires that are negotiated in the later phases of a peace process.

In many cases, these arrangements are intentionally kept separate from broader political negotiations, as they tend to be more successful when they are not politicised and mixed in with other contentious conflict issues.

They can help build confidence between the conflict parties, without undermining their military objectives, as well as improve the reputation of armed groups in the eyes of civilians and international actors.

Mediators and supporting third parties often look for opportunities to build upon these actions without undermining them, making sure not to disrupt any progress that has been achieved.

This makes them potentially important initial steps in the path towards peace that occur in some form in most conflicts.

The respective functions of these arrangements will always be specific to each context, but there are three common forms, namely:

- 1. Conflict mitigation measures**
- 2. Restrictions on hostilities**
- 3. Truces and other battlefield management agreements**

1. Conflict mitigation measures

Conflict mitigation measures primarily aim to improve the situation of civilians living in conflict zones by reducing or adapting conflict violence to improve everyday life, such as allowing civilians to access basic infrastructure like markets, schools and hospitals.

These arrangements are concluded between local civil society or community leaders with one or more of the conflict parties and often focus on access to areas of particular social and economic importance. Building relationships between local actors and conflict parties can positively contribute to future negotiations, for example, by establishing communication channels and trust, even if the relations between belligerents aren't directly affected.

Even if these measures do not have an impact on the broader peace process, they are still vital to the safety and well-being of civilians in many violent conflicts.



2. Restrictions on hostilities

Restrictions on hostilities are arrangements between conflict parties to limit or restrain specific forms of violence while the broader conflict continues. These arrangements create a more humane conflict environment, benefiting all parties – including the local civilian population.

In some cases, agreements are tacit, whereby local commanders agree to not engage in certain areas while other cases involve informal unilateral or joint arrangements.

Related norms – like not attacking civilian infrastructure – have been codified in international law and, in principle, apply in any armed conflict. However, these general guidelines can be strengthened through an endorsement from the armed groups involved in the conflict.

On many occasions, these arrangements emerge informally during hostilities and prior to a peace process and are generally conceived of as mutually beneficial conflict management tools, rather than a means to move the parties towards an agreement. It is, nonetheless, also possible that these restrictions, if honoured, serve as confidence-building measures that provide an entry point for future negotiations.

International actors often lobby for these commitments behind the scenes when it is not possible to advance negotiations.

3. Truces and other battlefield management agreements.

Battlefield management agreements are time-bound and limited forms of collaboration between conflict parties to stop violence. These arrangements provide temporary reprieve from violence and allow conflict parties to meet immediate objectives without necessarily engaging in broader peace-making.

A battlefield truce is the most common form of a battlefield management arrangement. It is a short-term arrangement between combatants to pause violence on the battlefield. They can last anywhere from a few hours to weeks and occasionally months; alternatively, they can be linked to the completion of a specific task – like the administration of vaccinations.

They can cover the whole conflict zone or only parts of the battlefield, for example, to create a humanitarian corridor for aid convoys.

They are normally informal and typically arranged locally, such as an agreement between two commanders to allow the evacuation of civilians or the exchange of corpses or prisoners.

These arrangements can be stand-alone initiatives or part of a broader conflict resolution process. If these arrangements are broken or taken advantage of, they can become an impediment for future collaboration.

However if successful, they can help conflict parties establish communication channels, build confidence, and develop connections and entry points for future negotiations.



Types of Ceasefires

Transitioning from war to peace is a complex process consisting of a series of interconnected political and security steps and phases.

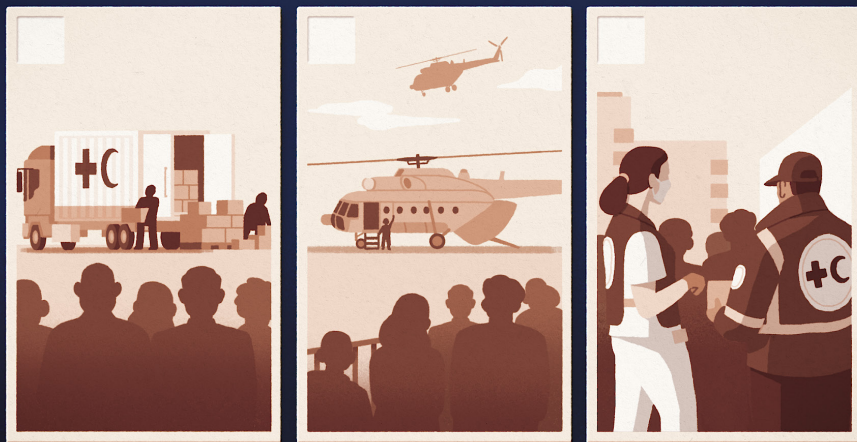
All ceasefire processes involve a combination and sequence of different types of ceasefire agreements. Unlike informal and private conflict mitigation arrangements, these agreements are formal, documented and publicly communicated.

While every ceasefire process is unique to its context, there should ideally be a consistent sequencing logic comprising incremental steps of specificity and enforceability that involve using different types of ceasefire agreements in the process of halting hostilities.

It's important to note that not all ceasefires are inherently tied to a broader strategy of transitioning from war to peace; some may serve more limited purposes. Moreover, parties agreeing to one type of ceasefire does not necessarily mean they will agree to others.

Yet across many cases, the logical phased approach involves advancing from a temporary suspension of violence, to the establishment of mechanisms to manage, monitor, and supervise the ceasefire, and finally to a comprehensive security agreement.

Commonly, this is achieved through a combination of five types of agreements:



1. Declarations of intent

Declarations of intent are the initial statement released by one or more conflict parties that communicates their desire to move towards a ceasefire as well as possibly the general principles for a future ceasefire agreement. They are an important but low-cost form of commitment, as they do not halt the fighting or guarantee subsequent progress in the peace process.

2. Humanitarian ceasefires

Humanitarian ceasefires are agreements between conflict parties to suspend violence in designated areas to improve the situation for civilians and those affected by the conflict.

They focus on specific activities such as the distribution of food items, the evacuation of civilians or injured armed personnel, or the provision of health services.

Humanitarian arrangements can be limited to a clearly defined geographic area, such as a town or city, or involve the creation of protected areas, humanitarian corridors or demilitarised zones and are usually temporary, ranging from a few hours to days.

Humanitarian ceasefires are normally formal, signed documents that set out the specific terms of the agreement and often involve the support of a third-party actor. This distinguishes these agreements from less formal conflict mitigation and battlefield management arrangements. Their more formal nature means that it is often possible to hold conflict parties publicly accountable for reaching, or failing to reach, certain benchmarks.

Ensuring sufficient technical specificity and informing all rank-and-file troops affected are pivotal to whether or not a humanitarian ceasefire works effectively.

These agreements are usually separate from the broader political negotiations, as they tend to be more successful when they are not politicised and mixed in with other more contested conflict issues.

Conflict parties will often only agree to a humanitarian arrangement if there is something to be gained from doing so, such as increased legitimacy or civilian support or reduced domestic or international pressure.

In addition, humanitarian ceasefires have a lower threshold for cooperation and might only require a very brief adjustment to fighting behaviour. As such, they can have an important indirect effect on the political negotiation process.

3. Cessation of hostilities

A cessation of hostilities is an agreement between the conflict parties to stop fighting for an extended period. It tends to be broader and more detailed than a humanitarian ceasefire, a truce and other conflict mitigation arrangements.

Cessation of hostility agreements serve an important conflict management function: to control or limit violence without resolving the underlying issues over which the conflict is being fought. They can also help to build connections between the conflict parties and are the first opportunity for parties to build lines of communication and develop and test security provisions, which might later be part of a peace agreement. These interactions tend to focus more on technical rather than political issues, making collaboration and pragmatic solutions more probable.

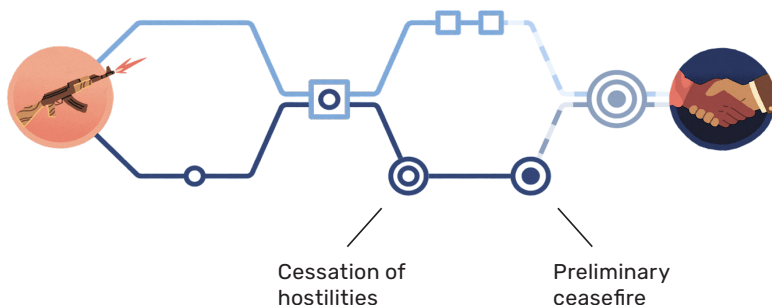
A cessation of hostilities is usually part of a larger peace process and often provides an effective signal of the intentions of a conflict party, allowing parties to assess whether an opponent wishes to explore and possibly move towards an agreement, while also providing an opportunity for them to demonstrate their command-and-control capacity.

It is not uncommon for conflict parties to use a cessation of hostilities, as a period of reduced military hostilities, to rearm, regroup and recover from a period of costly violence or to consolidate their territorial control.

As the parties cannot be certain of each other's intentions, these processes are best developed incrementally, at a pace allowing trust to slowly develop, so that no party is placed at greater risk.

Even when all the conflict parties enter into a cessation of hostilities with the intention to genuinely explore peaceful solutions, violations are still commonplace. These agreements are not designed to produce a sustainable end to violence because they do not involve agreements to monitor and verify compliance and often do not contain provisions to de-escalate incidents that arise on the battlefield.

A cessation of hostilities agreement can still be a significant and important step towards a more formal ceasefire and is an important part of the process towards ending violence.



4. Preliminary ceasefire

A preliminary ceasefire is a detailed agreement in which conflict parties commit to a verifiable halt in hostilities with the intention to significantly transform their interactions. It is preliminary in the sense that it is preparing the parties for a final settlement of the military conflict but does not yet involve any significant disarmament.

It normally occurs immediately prior to, or during, substantive political negotiations and is often part of broader agreements that set out a timetable and benchmarks for future negotiations.

Preliminary ceasefires need clear details along with an organised and sequenced plan for implementing the terms of the agreement.

They should include details on prohibited and permitted acts, parties' respective roles and commitments, and agreed-upon systems to monitor, verify and rectify actions that constitute a violation of the agreement, and can include provisions to de-escalate tensions, such as:

- The movement and withdrawal of forces
- Detailed limitations on the usage and deployment of weapons
- Agreements to pull back heavy weapons
- The development and designation of demilitarised zones
- The establishment of specific ceasefire management organisations and capabilities.

As the first opportunity for the conflict parties to gain experience working together on security issues in a consistent manner, preliminary ceasefires are often a necessary step to build the trust and capacity needed to move towards a final settlement process.

On rare occasions, conflict parties can proceed to advanced stages of negotiation in the absence of a preliminary ceasefire. This is normally because one or more parties are unwilling to relinquish their military leverage, which they consider to be crucial in keeping the pressure on their opponent. This situation complicates negotiations, though it is still possible to proceed if parties develop other confidence-building measures (CBMs) that are capable of sufficiently limiting violence.

Nevertheless, in most cases, a preliminary ceasefire is a crucial step in the path from war to peace.

5. Definitive ceasefire

A definitive ceasefire is a permanent agreement that sets out security arrangements that aim to end, rather than suspend, the fighting. It is intended to be the final step in the formal negotiation process.

Prior to a peace agreement, parties must agree on some of the elements of how to restructure their security institutions and capabilities and make the necessary adjustments to align state legislation. Definitive ceasefires are a key outcome of peace talks and complement any peace agreement covering the political resolution of underlying issues. As definitive ceasefires accompany political agreements that are fundamentally forward-looking and affect society at large, it is therefore essential that the local population – including women, youth and civil society – is meaningfully included at appropriate points throughout this process to ensure their needs are taken into account.

The central component of a definitive ceasefire is the final status of forces agreement. This sets out the terms under which the state security structures will be adapted and which forces will be demobilised or integrated into the state military or security forces. Often this includes some details of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and some basic principles on the future process regarding security sector reform (SSR).

Though each definitive ceasefire is different, it often includes agreements on:

- The mission, revised size and composition of the army
- The nature of new command structures
- Methods of integrating or demobilising non-state forces
- The rank and compensation for former insurgents joining the new force
- The role of third parties in supporting the implementation of the agreement.

The terms of a definitive ceasefire can be highly technical and, therefore, difficult to implement if they are not well-designed. Parties need to be adequately prepared for the process, as it can be undermined if the negotiators neglect or rush through important stages or details.

It is crucial that the parties develop sufficient trust and build working relations with the other side in an incremental manner, which takes time. It is also important that the parties maintain ownership over the agreement, which is vital for the sustainability of a definitive ceasefire.

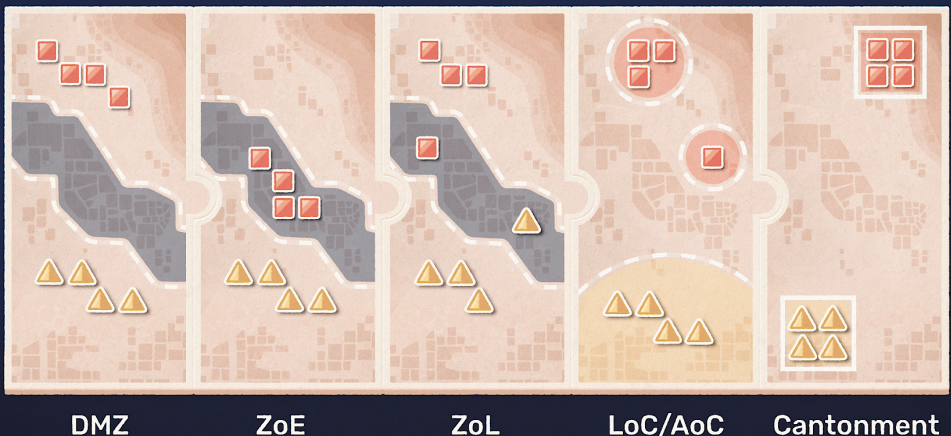


Ceasefire Design

A vital step in any security transition process is agreeing on the underlying logic and framework around which a ceasefire will be designed and on the specific content to be included within the agreement.

A ceasefire framework links together different mechanisms into a coherent and context-specific design and ensures that the form of ceasefire matches the intended function.

Conflict parties and mediation teams must develop this framework to address the conflict's unique challenges and take advantage of its unique opportunities to move towards peace, as well as decide which mechanisms to adopt and how to fit them together. Ceasefires can include a combination of:



Disengagement mechanisms

Disengagement mechanisms, which the conflict parties use to stop direct/physical fighting. These are the mechanisms through which conflict parties separate their military forces and/or redeploy to other areas. Examples include:

- Demilitarised zones (DMZ): areas that cannot be occupied or used for military purposes.
- Zones of Exclusions (ZOE): areas where troops from one or more conflict parties are excluded.
- Zones of Limitations (ZOL): areas in which restrictions on the numbers of troops or armament apply.
- Lines or Areas of Control (AOC/LOC): territorial divisions based on de facto territorial control.
- Assembly/Cantonment areas: the most substantive form of disengagement, where disarmament and demobilisation may take place.

Mutual threat reduction mechanisms

Mutual threat reduction mechanisms, which seek to consolidate the disengagement of armed forces by further limiting certain military activities, including:

- Creating no-fly zones or locking down airbases.
- Restricting troop movement.
- Limiting movement of heavy weapons.
- Regulating the resupply of arms for troops.

Implementation mechanisms

Implementation mechanisms, which specify how to manage the transitional period between war and peace. These will be covered in-depth in the next video and include:

- Ceasefire management systems.
- Monitoring and verification provisions.
- Interim security management.

To illustrate how the ceasefire framework shapes the design process, let's consider a few scenarios on the next pages.

Scenario 01

In a first scenario, where two states are engaged in conflict, the ceasefire framework might involve both parties withdrawing to their original territory. The mechanisms to implement this framework would then require agreement on a line of control, a demilitarised zone and a joint monitoring mission within the demilitarised zone.

Scenario 02

In a second scenario, a non-state armed group is fighting against government forces throughout a country. The non-state group has strongholds in the hills, and the government controls urban centres. Withdrawal beyond a demarcation line might not be possible. Instead, the ceasefire framework might focus on assembly of forces to contain the troops. Here, both forces would concentrate at pre-specified, geographically bound assembly points, creating zones of exclusion. Third-party security guarantees might be necessary to ensure that the government does not attack areas where the non-state group is concentrated and vulnerable.

Scenario 03

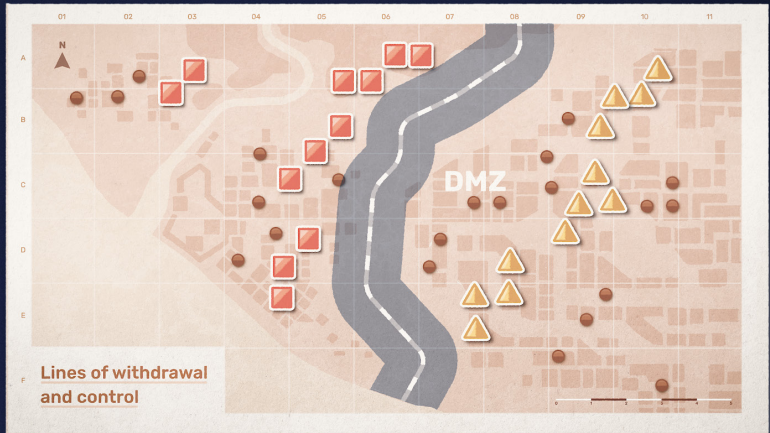
In a third scenario, the non-state armed group de facto controls parts of the state territory. A framework might then focus on agreeing to a temporary territorial division to reflect the actual military situation. Here, mechanisms would include areas of control and zones of exclusion and potentially a joint commission for the interim security management of any demilitarised areas.

Once the core framework and mechanisms are agreed upon, the more detailed content of the ceasefire can be specified. This means that the ceasefire provisions most appropriate for the context are selected and that these provisions are coherently integrated into one framework. There are several core elements that ceasefire agreements should incorporate, including:

- Principles and aspirations
- Objectives (including how the ceasefire connects to the broader political process)
- The geographic scope
- Start date, agreed duration and process of renewal
- Third-party roles or functions
- Prohibited behaviours (including definitions of key terms and exempted activities)
- Agreed-upon procedure for information disclosure
- Implementation modalities (including specifying systems for ceasefire management, monitoring and verification)

The specific details will always depend on the context, and where possible it can be helpful to consult the local population and communities to ensure that the design of the ceasefire reflects the realities and needs of those who will be affected by its implementation.

01



02



03



Ceasefire Implementation

Ceasefires are more sustainable when they have mechanisms to manage, monitor and verify the implementation of the agreement. Negotiating and agreeing to these provisions is an important step in the process that produces a noticeable change on the ground.

There is never only one “right” way to implement a ceasefire. Parties need to agree on the most appropriate measures for their context and ensure that any measures taken factor in the needs and capacities of the local population.

Building capacity, confidence and commitment within and between the parties is paramount to the successful implementation and sustainability of an agreement. Third parties and local communities may support this.

There are three key implementation modalities to be agreed upon:



1. Ceasefire management

Ceasefire management is the process through which the conflict parties coordinate and supervise the implementation of the agreement and handle the incidents that inevitably arise.

The most common and effective approach involves the creation of a joint ceasefire management system, in which the conflict parties work to implement the agreement together – often supported by civil society or international actors.

In practice, this requires the creation of new institutional arrangements, typically the formation of a Joint Ceasefire Commission composed of military representatives from each conflict party who oversee the ceasefire implementation process and report to their respective political authorities.

A Joint Ceasefire Commission requires planning, investment, capacity building and technical support to build the necessary institutional capabilities.

The form of ceasefire management bodies as well as the key steps of implementation are usually specified in the ceasefire agreement, though it is often the task of the Joint Ceasefire Commission to sort out key implementation modalities and resolve any ambiguities. The trust and relationships developed through this process can be helpful when later negotiating the definitive ceasefire.

2. Monitoring and verification

Ceasefire monitoring and verification are two closely related but clearly distinct tasks that seek to provide accurate, reliable and timely information about ceasefire implementation compliance. The overall objective is to keep or restore compliance. Some ceasefires have both monitoring and verification, while some only monitoring or only verification.

Ceasefire monitoring is a broader process that involves the general observation of parties' behaviour in order to monitor compliance. This entails putting eyes and ears on the ground to observe and report back on any incidents during a ceasefire.

Ceasefire verification refers to the technical assessment of the conflict parties' compliance with specific terms in the ceasefire agreement, such as the redeployment of heavy weapons or troops. It is conducted by a small number of technical specialists.

The challenge for ceasefire implementers is to keep the process from collapsing by appropriately responding to the incidents that inevitably arise.

The most effective institutional arrangement is to have a separate verification and monitoring organisation that manages the process and reports directly to the Joint Ceasefire Commission. This helps the conflict parties come to a joint decision on how best to rectify violations and restore compliance.

Monitoring and verification processes are most effective when conflict parties take joint responsibility for the implementation of the ceasefire. A jointly managed verification and monitoring process can encourage conflict parties to improve communication channels, address security issues and build trust and confidence in the process and in each other.

Ceasefire monitoring is also an opportunity to enhance civilian engagement, particularly that of women, in the transition from war to peace. Civilians often play a vital role in supporting the monitoring and verification mission, be it by sharing local expertise and knowledge, enabling access to contested areas or increasing the legitimacy of reporting. Including civilians in the process does, however, create significant security risks for those involved, and institutionally embedding them in formal structures poses a challenge.

Notably, monitoring is not always possible, for example, if the ceasefire duration is short, if the conflict parties have no genuine interest in maintaining the agreement or if necessary resources are lacking. Similarly, parties are often resistant to verification, as it can be seen as too intrusive.

It is crucial that monitoring and/or verification has a clear mandate from the conflict parties and is designed based on a careful assessment of the context. Rushed, imposed or technically deficient monitoring can harden the relationships between conflict parties, undermine trust and create a system of blame.

3. Interim security management

Interim security management is the process through which the conflict parties coordinate on delivering security for the local population while the ceasefire is being implemented.

A ceasefire typically requires the withdrawal and repositioning of troops, which has the potential to increase instability by creating a power vacuum.

In such cases, parties often need to agree on principles to guide how normal security operations like policing and border control and de-proscribing or pardoning groups will function during the ceasefire. This is particularly crucial in disputed regions where the party responsibility for security is unclear or contested.

This interim period is best described as a bridge that links the security governance during war to the new system of security in the post-conflict period.



The Definitive Ceasefire and DDR Processes

The definitive ceasefire, sometimes also referred to as the final status of forces agreement, is the principal security-related component of a comprehensive peace agreement.

Conflict parties need to be thoroughly prepared to negotiate a definitive ceasefire. This often requires support from technical experts, who can assist in identifying the specific issues to be negotiated and provide technical solutions and comparative examples to help the parties strengthen their agreement.



The definitive ceasefire sets out the terms through which the parties agree to address broader, long-term security-related issues. It commonly contains several key details:

1. How to restructure or reform the institutions responsible for the command and governance of the security sector. This includes how to address a range of issues concerning the security sector's organisation and management.
2. The legislative framework according to which a peace agreement will be implemented, including its security component.
3. How the security components of the agreement will shape, and be shaped by, the political, social and economic components of the agreement. This is necessary to ensure coherence, especially between the political and security tracks.
4. A process to manage combatants. This might involve the disbandment of certain forces; integration of forces and establishment of new security structures, including those involved in security and intelligence; or Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR).

Most armed conflicts lead to an increase in military forces and a proliferation of arms, including in the civilian population. DDR programmes seek to reverse this trend, downsizing excess state military forces, disarming and demobilising civilians and non-state armed actors and supporting their re-integration.

DDR is a process. The principles of the process are commonly agreed upon in the definitive ceasefire, but several crucial details need to be negotiated and agreed upon in subsequent steps. While these programmes play a crucial role in the security transition process, they have often failed to meet expectations.

There are many factors that make DDR challenging.

1. Ambiguity of purpose

In some cases, DDR is thought of as a tactical intervention to address short-term security threats posed by ex-combatants, while in others, it is instead considered a long-term strategic intervention to promote security sector transformation and community recovery. These differing visions can undermine the design, resourcing and implementation of programmes.

2. Financing

It has often proved difficult to mobilise adequate financing for DDR, which is incredibly expensive and often one of the costliest forms of peacemaking. This can critically undermine implementation.

3. Ill-suited conditions

DDR has often been undertaken in conditions that were ill-suited for this type of initiative. The UN identified four conditions that should be met before DDR is implemented:

- A peace agreement negotiated and signed by all key parties;
- Trust in the peace process;
- Parties' willingness to engage in DDR;
- A sufficiently secure environment.

Yet the UN has often been mandated to support the implementation of DDR programmes in contexts that fail to meet these conditions. For example, DDR clauses have in the past been inserted into a peace agreement without sufficient negotiation and buy-in from all key parties. In other cases, DDR has been attempted in areas that were insufficiently secure, for example, in areas formerly controlled by armed groups where governance and security remained lacking.

In response to some of the limitations of DDR, new approaches have been developed. These include tools such as Traditional Weapons and Ammunition Management, or Community Violence Reduction (CVR) programmes. These are distinct from, but can be complementary to, efforts to prepare for DDR.

For example, in CVR, communities identify projects related to security challenges, such as building a road or water-well; they then acquire funding from an external third party and provide employment opportunities to combatants and non-combatants to work on these projects. In exchange, combatants agree to not use or to surrender their weapons; for example, by handing them in to be controlled by community leaders for a specific period.

CVR is a short-term approach to manage conflict and deal with insecurity in specific local areas. It mainly deals with armed individuals that are not part of organised, political armed groups. A major challenge with CVR is that it only addresses security problems at the local level. It can only be effective as long as it does not interfere with the interests of armed group leaders. Indeed, if it is not done carefully, CVR may be seen by armed group leaders as 'buy-off' programmes to encourage individual defection.

The definitive ceasefire, or final status of forces agreement, is a technical arrangement, but it deals with content that is extremely sensitive and political, and it can have far-reaching implications for the future status and security of the conflict parties. It is often not possible to conclusively resolve all the security-related reform issues in the final status of forces agreement. This is why it is important to anticipate a longer-term reform process in which the basic elements are agreed in principle and will be implemented within a future Security Sector Reform process.

Mediators and third parties must, therefore, exercise considerable effort to ensure that the parties address these issues as comprehensively as possible, while factoring in what is feasible at any given point in time.



Security Sector Reform (SSR) Processes

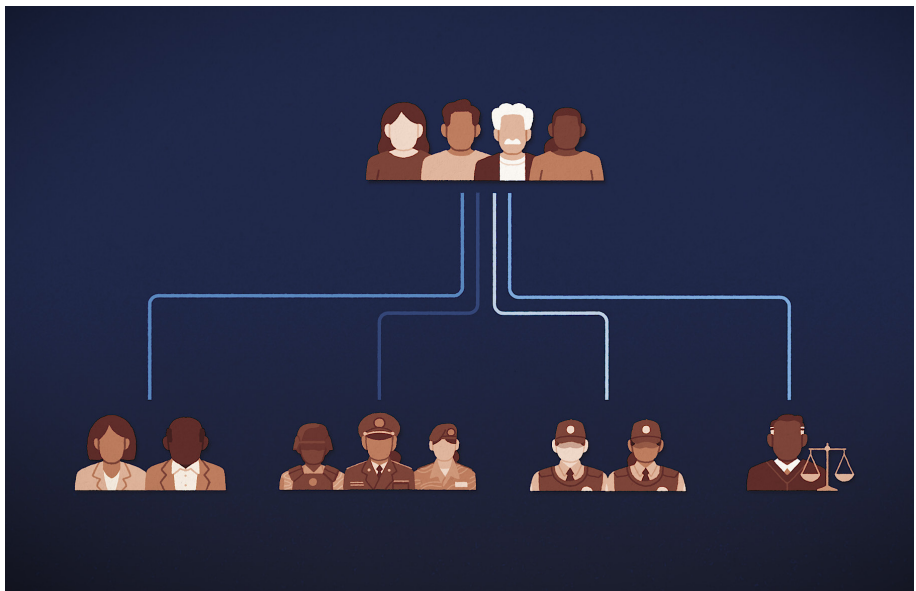
Peace agreements and definitive ceasefires are not the last step in the transition from war to sustainable peace. Security Sector Reform (SSR) processes are often essential to minimise the risk of a future relapse into violence.

SSR has been defined by the United Nations as the 'enhancement of effective and accountable security for the state and its peoples'. According to this approach, it is rooted in human security and focuses on moving towards a security sector that advances the security and justice needs of all people, where the public holds the security apparatus of the state accountable and security services are provided in an effective manner. This process goes beyond the traditional approach to security governance, which was previously limited to a largely state-centric perspective, focusing mainly on the protection of borders and state institutions.

Within a peace process, substantive SSR generally only occurs months or years, if not decades, after the signing of a peace agreement. Adapting the security sector to the peacetime needs of the state institutions and people in a post-conflict period is challenging, as SSR must be contextualised and requires relatively strong and legitimate state institutions to implement effectively.

Nevertheless, SSR principles can often already be anchored in a peace agreement, normally through provisions embedded in the definitive ceasefire. This enables parties to kick-start longer-term security sector reform processes to address issues that could not be resolved in the peace agreement. It is vital for negotiators and mediators to be aware that the content of their peace agreement and definitive ceasefire may have an impact on future SSR.

Vision, knowledge, dialogue and political will are all needed to pave the way for effective and accountable SSR processes. A vision of society for the aspired security sector set-up and its governance provides orientation to a SSR process. Knowledge of security sector challenges and possible approaches needs to be developed in order for non-state and state actors to be able to engage in visioning exercises and national dialogues in a meaningful way. This helps to create broad-based political will. Clarifying and developing such a commitment across all sectors of society takes time. Workshops, education programmes and developing the necessary research and professionalisation expertise in universities in the country are necessary. In certain regions, there are advanced policy frameworks that help provide guidance to SSR processes, such as the African Union Policy Framework on SSR.



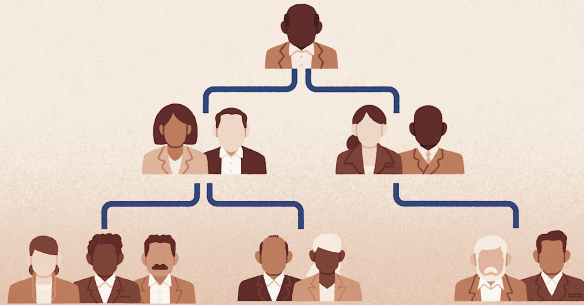
A key part of any SSR process is an assessment of the current security and justice needs and threats as seen by different actors in a country. Once the difference between the current situation and the future vision is clear, strategies can be developed to move toward the envisioned security sector setup and its governance. Such a strategy often involves a financial feasibility plan, the development of the necessary governance and oversight structures and a plan for how to deal with risks. Structures to manage and coordinate SSR also need to be established. The implementation of the strategy and the monitoring of its progress are often seen as a final step in an SSR process.

External support in the form of expertise and funding can be beneficial and support such processes; but conflict parties and mediators also need to be wary of outside interests, including those of external donors, who can instrumentalise SSR processes to serve their own agendas – such as geopolitical interests, counter-terrorism or a specific brand of state building. It is, therefore, key to make sure that donors are there to support long-term home-grown processes, where people and state actors are provided with enough space to develop the capacity and will to create the SSR process that they envision.

Ongoing consensus-building tools are an integral part of SSR processes. The process should be inclusive and incremental, building trust and buy-in over time. This includes national or sectoral dialogues, negotiations and mediation. Insider mediators, such as community leaders, faith-based organisations, and women and youth groups as well as further impartial parties and respected citizens play a pivotal role in facilitating such processes to enhance national ownership.

Even if substantive SSR processes generally occur long after a peace agreement, it can be useful for conflict parties to know some of the basic SSR concepts early on, even before negotiating or signing a peace agreement. Seeing what may lie in the future may help conflict actors engage in more realistic steps as to what can be done in a given moment in time, and pave the way for more effective future steps on the long trajectory from war to peace. This is why, in some cases, a post-conflict phase is needed to apply some of these programmes gradually and over a longer term than the period required to implement a peace agreement.

SSR



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The examples in the course are fictional. Any similarity to places and persons is purely coincidental and unintentional. This course is meant as a first introduction to these topics, not a comprehensive guide that equips participants to safely and effectively engage in ceasefire mediation.



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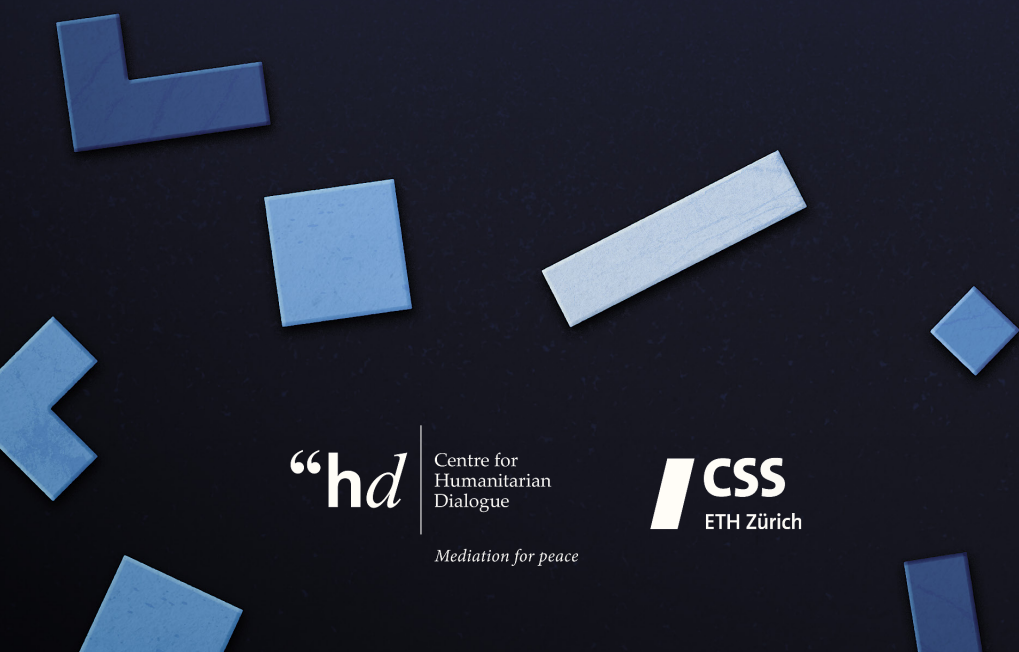
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