

Drawing a line:

A ‘Swiss army knife’ of options for achieving a sustainable ceasefire in Ukraine

FEBRUARY 2025





Geneva Centre for Security Policy

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ISBN: 978-2-88947-024-2

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Executive summary: Elements of a deal

- Conclusion of a **ceasefire agreement** between Ukraine and Russia, if necessary with the involvement of a mediator(s).
- Agree on a **ceasefire line** and codify it since it will be the basis from which the parties must withdraw.
- Create a **Joint Military Coordination Commission** (JMCC) to enable **mil-to-mil contacts** and coordination through which the parties can exchange information and hold each other accountable. Bilateral cooperation could be augmented by a third-party Multilateral Liaison Team.
- Agree on a **buffer zone** and **limitation zones** for heavy weapons.
- Deploy an **international monitoring and verification mission** to monitor the ceasefire and verify the withdrawal of heavy weapons.
- Engage **countries, particularly from Europe, to provide troops and leadership** to the international monitoring mission and to liaise with Ukraine and Russia through the JMCC to end the violence and reduce the risk of its recurrence.
- Carry out **humanitarian demining**, particularly in the buffer zone, to clear an area where international monitors can operate, and people displaced by the violence can return.
- With the consent of the parties, open **humanitarian corridors** across the ceasefire line to enable freedom of movement and access for recovery and reconstruction.
- Engage with **civil society** to address the needs of the affected populations and create opportunities for affected communities themselves to be agents of change.
- Agree on **security guarantees** to reduce the likelihood of a resumption of hostilities.
- Use the ceasefire as a first step towards a broader package of agreements including a **political settlement** as well as **arms control agreements** and confidence- and security-building measures between NATO and Russia and strategic stability between the United States and Russia as well as discussions on the future of European security.



Rationale and overview

The day will come when the fighting stops in Ukraine. To reach that goal, the warring parties will need to be ready to agree on a ceasefire and implement it.

This report outlines several options and ideas that could be relevant for preparing for, agreeing on, and implementing a ceasefire in Ukraine. It draws on relevant international experiences and lessons learned and takes into account the specificities of the conflict history and situation on the battlefield.

- Section 1** sets out the objectives of a ceasefire.
- Section 2** explores how to create the conditions for a ceasefire, including “costly signals” and building technical knowledge and capacity among the parties who would have to negotiate and implement such a deal.
- Section 3** outlines the importance of channels of communication.
- Section 4** looks at how to draw a ceasefire line including the need for a buffer zone and zones of limitation.
- Section 5** explains the possible functions and structure of a Joint Military Coordination Commission.
- Section 6** lays out possible options for an international monitoring and verification mission.
- Section 7** underlines the importance of linking a ceasefire to a political settlement and security guarantees.
- Section 8** highlights the importance of mine action and decontamination and lays out possible steps for how it could be carried out.
- Section 9** explains the importance of humanitarian corridors.
- Section 10** is about policing.
- Section 11** covers the important topic of the inclusion and safety of civilians as well as how to incorporate the women, peace and security agenda into ceasefire processes.
- Section 12** highlights the importance of strategic communication.
- Annex 1** outlines a possible sequencing of steps needed to create the conditions for a ceasefire, to agree on it, and to implement it.

This paper is not a blueprint for a political settlement to the conflict. Rather, it is a practitioner’s guide designed to help the parties as well as the international community to conceptualize a ceasefire: think of it as a toolbox, a set of ideas, or Swiss army knife of options.



This resource was developed by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) through consultations with internationally recognized ceasefire and mediation experts, including practitioners with extensive experience in UN and OSCE peace operations. It was drafted by **Dr Walter Kemp** under the direction of Ambassador Thomas Greminger.



1. Objectives of a ceasefire

Ceasefires are agreements in which conflict parties commit to stop fighting. There is no binding definition of what constitutes a ceasefire. Such instruments have different names and terminology, and they can be used in different ways. That is why every ceasefire must be negotiated and agreed upon in the specific context of the conflict it is designed to stop.

Ceasefires can be an important stepping stone towards a peace agreement, or they can be part of such an agreement, ending the status of war.

A ceasefire should be rooted in commonly agreed principles and include **clear and shared objectives** as well as **precise technical language** and be **timebound**. These objectives, as well as the technical content of a ceasefire, need to be understood by the sides in the same way. It is therefore good practice for the parties to produce a **glossary of agreed terms** that becomes an integral part of the written ceasefire agreement. It should also be made clear what constitutes a ceasefire violation.

Ceasefires seldom work in isolation. Without a **political settlement**, a ceasefire will merely be a temporary cessation of hostilities. As pointed out by the United Nations, “embedding a ceasefire in the broader political context ensures that it is linked to progress on addressing the root causes of the conflict”.¹ Even the prospect of such negotiations taking place can be an incentive to stop fighting (for more see section 7).

That said, as demonstrated by continued fighting in eastern Ukraine after the signing of the Minsk Agreements in 2014 and 2015, a political agreement does not necessarily guarantee compliance with a ceasefire, particularly if there is no accountability mechanism for ceasefire violations. Therefore, a monitoring and verification mechanism needs to be part of the compliance architecture (see sections 5 and 6).

Ceasefires can serve several functions:

Reducing and managing violence

Battlefield management can regulate, reduce or otherwise manage violence and develop conditions conducive to a cessation of hostilities.

Stopping violence

Cessation of hostilities (including an armistice or truce) can break the cycle of violence. Such an initial or preliminary ceasefire can create the space and possibility for negotiations to take place and ideally generate momentum for a more enduring end to violence. They are usually accompanied by a monitoring and verification mechanism.

¹ United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, *Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires*, September 2022, page 21.



Ending violence

The ultimate objective is a definitive or permanent ceasefire that enables a transition from war to peace. Such permanent or definitive ceasefires are usually part of a broader political settlement that will hopefully result in lasting peace.

In the context of the war in Ukraine, while battlefield management is important, mediators should aspire to stop the fighting and invest the political capital needed to end hostilities. Failure to reach a political settlement could result in a relapse of fighting.



2. Creating the conditions for a ceasefire

Based on the history of the conflict and prevailing conditions on the ground (as of February 2025) a number of conditions or prerequisites are needed to increase the chances of a ceasefire.

One is that both sides would need to reach the conclusion that continued military action is not the optimal strategy for achieving their war aims, in other words they would reach a **“mutually hurting stalemate”**. Or there would have to be **strong political pressure** or **incentives** (for example in relation to a broader deal on European security and/or strategic stability between the United States and Russia) that would make a ceasefire politically attractive to both parties.

Another is that both sides would need to feel assured that a future ceasefire will be implemented and that credible safeguards would be in place to **guarantee non-recurrence of armed conflict**. For Ukraine, this could require at least legally binding bilateral **security assurances** from allies and a political signal that Ukraine belongs to the geopolitical West while for Russia this would necessitate agreements on arms control, missile defence and strategic stability as well as a possible moratorium on NATO enlargement. The sides would also have to feel confident that the implementation of any agreement would be verified fairly and transparently and that breaches of the agreement would have consequences.

Both sides would have to feel comfortable that such **a deal could be “sold” to their publics without a high political cost**. This would require effective messaging, especially after maximalist and mutually exclusive narratives of “victory” on both sides.

For Ukraine, a key condition (prior to a ceasefire) would be that there are assurances for support to fund reconstruction, in other words that there would be a visible **“peace dividend”**. Russia would also have to see an economic self-interest in ending violence, for example in relation to de-escalation measures being linked to gradual easing of sanctions.

“Costly signals” or **confidence-building measures** can help create the conditions for a ceasefire. Costly signals are signals that entail risks for those taking the first move, but which would have a cost for those who fail to reciprocate.

Examples of such de-escalation measures include:

- No attacks on port infrastructure (in the Black Sea or on the Danube);
- No attacks on civilian ships in the Black Sea;
- No attacks on civilian nuclear power plants;
- No attacks on other critical infrastructure, for example energy installations;
- Re-opening of public airports in Kyiv and Lviv with a promise of restraint by Ukraine not to attack Russian airports.



International pressure and support can help nudge the parties closer to peace. In that respect, one option could be to form a **Contact Group** on Ukraine.² Such a group could:

- bring greater coherence to disjointed international efforts;
- create a greater sense of urgency, focus and common purpose among key stakeholders;
- make proposals, take common initiatives and exert political pressure to reduce tensions; and
- create conditions for dialogue.

Based on past precedents and if the conditions are ripe, a Contact Group could form a joint position and/or call a conference to outline a path to peace which would include steps that are politically palatable to both sides. Such a **conference** could also call for a ceasefire. Ideally, members of the Contact Group would be the lead nations of an international monitoring and verification mission (see section 7).

An alternative is for the parties to hold bilateral peace talks (as was the case between late February and early April 2022) or for a third party to facilitate peace talks.

To this end it would be helpful if key parties would appoint **Special Envoys** as President-elect Trump has done.

Track 2 initiatives and confidential discussions can explore possibilities for moving towards a ceasefire.

Discreetly **building technical knowledge about ceasefires** would enhance the capacity of both sides, identify and close knowledge gaps, and prepare the parties for the types of technical considerations needed for negotiating and implementing a ceasefire. Tailor-made trainings could be carried out drawing on the experience of specialists.

Creating conditions for a ceasefire would also require the opening of channels of communication (see section 3).

² Dr Walter Kemp, [A Contact Group for Ukraine](#)², GCSP Policy Brief No. 16, July 2024.



3. Channels of communication

While mil-to-mil contacts have been limited during the war, the parties have found ways to cooperate on issues of mutual interest such as exchanges of prisoners or war dead as well as the Black Sea Grain Initiative. There have also been back-channel discussions, proximity talks and Track 2 initiatives.

In order to facilitate battlefield management and to broker a ceasefire it will be vital to **open a channel of communications and dialogue** between Ukrainian and Russian officials, ideally at both the operational and political levels. As a result, there should be a re-legitimization of diplomacy and a return to dialogue. Third parties such as Special Envoys or a Contact Group (as described in section 2) can help to reduce the political costs of such dialogue.

Through back channels or a discreet understanding, direct lines of communication ("hotlines") between the respective capitals and/or operational headquarters could be established.

Short of a ceasefire, experiments could be made to reduce violence on the battlefield for example by opening hotlines either in hotspots (to manage and de-escalate violence) or in more quiet zones to enable humanitarian assistance. Using such channels the parties could also negotiate informal agreements not to launch attacks into each others' territory using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), cruise missiles, or short or intermediate range missiles. Representatives of the sides could also meet for confidential meetings in third-party countries.

An important step in regularizing such contacts would be the establishment of a Joint Military Coordination Commission (JMCC, see section 5) which could provide a platform for facilitated mil-to-mil contacts.

Ideally, the sides would take such steps bilaterally. But, if necessary, third parties could help to facilitate contacts. Third parties could also discreetly facilitate talks about the creation of a consultative mechanism such as a JMCC (described in section 5) and provide support for ceasefire mediation.



4. Ceasefire Line

A clear and mutually recognized ceasefire line is essential. Indeed, the failure to delineate a common ceasefire boundary hampered the implementation of the Minsk Accords, particularly the separation of forces.

It is vital that there is clarity on the **geography of the ceasefire line**, use of a **common “planning map”** and mutual agreement on the type, scale and source of the maps that may be referenced in the agreement text and implementation.³

It is worth underlining that in the case of Ukraine, a possible ceasefire line would traverse a diverse set of topography and geography, including populated settlements, some of which have been fought over at a heavy cost. There is also infrastructure (such as water, gas and electricity connections) that currently link communities on both sides of the front line. Therefore, drawing the line should take into account the **granular local conditions** as well as the **history of the conflict**.

When drawing a line, it is important to consider if this would be a Line of Contact or the basis for a demilitarized zone. A demilitarized zone (which would have to be defined) would imply a long-term *de facto* division of the country while a Line of Contact or ceasefire line suggests a lighter, more transitional arrangement whereby there could be future agreement on control over territory.

NB: It is worth noting that under current circumstances (as of February 2025) Russia does not control all of the territories of the five regions that it unilaterally declared as annexed to the Russian Federation. This is particularly the case in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. Therefore, the ceasefire line would not correspond to an already existing administrative boundary. This may necessitate the presence of peacekeepers or international monitors in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions of a different nature and number than along the rest of the ceasefire line.

Buffer zone and zones of limitation

Good practice dictates that it will be necessary to create a **buffer zone or zone of separation** between the parties. This buffer zone – approximately 10 to 15 km wide – would be absent of military forces, heavy and light weapons, as well as being a no-fly zone for UAVs except those used by internationals. It should be agreed that neither side will execute any hostile act within, from, or against the security/buffer zone. International observers could patrol and monitor this zone (see section 6).

If the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is in the buffer zone, a special arrangement – under international auspices – should be found to enable nuclear safety and security as well as energy security for affected populations. Such special zones or zones of exclusion should be considered in regards to critical infrastructure throughout the extent of the line of contact.

³ UN, Guidance on the Mediation of Ceasefires, p. 38.



In terms of **limitation zones**, both sides should agree to a separation of forces, for example:

- 7.5 km from the ceasefire line for all troops (resulting in a buffer zone 15km wide);
- 50 km from the line for artillery of 100mm calibre or more;
- 75 km for multiple rocket launchers (MLRS); and
- 150 kilometres (87 mi) for MRLS [Tornado-S](#), [Uragan](#), [Smerch](#), and [Tochka U](#) tactical missile systems.

A Protocol on Disengagement and Withdrawal should be annexed to the agreement which includes details about the separation of forces and verifiable provisions for the withdrawal, storage and cantonment of heavy weapons, including timelines and clearly defined limitation zones. There should also be agreement by the parties not to fly UAVs or helicopters in the buffer zone.

Since many aerial attacks are being carried out away from the front line, a **separate but accompanying agreement**, either between Russia and the United States or between NATO and Russia, should be made concerning the non-deployment of cruise missiles and intermediate-range missiles in certain areas. Separate agreements may also be necessary concerning maritime security.



5. Joint Military Coordination Commission

Most ceasefire agreements for either intra- or inter-state conflicts include some form of joint arrangement for **oversight, accountability and control of implementation**. Consultative security mechanisms (under a variety of names) can range from very loose bilateral arrangements for keeping open a channel of communication to bodies responsible for coordinating stabilization measures or even monitoring a ceasefire.

Experience from ceasefire monitoring processes shows the important role that such mechanisms can play in terms of **confidence-building** and **enhancing implementation of agreements**. Military-to-military contacts are essential for sustaining and monitoring a ceasefire, de-escalation, withdrawal of heavy weapons, demining, and border security. Furthermore, they can help to rebuild trust and create the space needed for political and diplomatic initiatives to gain momentum. They help to make an agreement “stick”. If there will be no international monitors, as suggested in section 6, a joint military commission takes on even more importance.

Examples in the context of **intra**-state conflicts include:

- a 5+5 Joint Military Commission in Libya;
- a Joint Commission for the Implementation of the Agreement on a Provisional Ceasefire and the Cessation of other Hostilities on the Tajik-Afghan Border and within the Country;
- a joint military commission to monitor the Nuba Mountains ceasefire agreement on Sudan;
- a Monitoring and Verification mechanism in Colombia.

A good example that found a creative formula despite the unresolved territorial conflict in Georgia is the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms for the Administrative Boundary Lines between South Ossetia and Abkhazia on the one hand and territory administered by Tbilisi on the other.

Examples in the context of **inter**-state conflicts include:

- Mixed Armistice Commissions in the Middle East (which became the UN Truce Supervision Organization); and
- UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan

It is worth noting that as part of the Black Sea Grain Deal a [Joint Coordination Centre](#) (JCC) was established to monitor the implementation of the Initiative. The JCC is hosted in Istanbul and includes representatives from Russia, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Nations. The UN acts as the Secretariat for the Centre.



A Joint Military Coordination Commission

It is suggested in the context of this conflict to create a Joint Military Coordination Commission (JMCC). Such a Commission could be established before or in the absence of a political agreement (for example by a Contact Group), or upon entry into force of the agreement.

Based on past experience and good practices, the JMCC should:

- be coherent with a broader political process;
- have a clearly defined mandate, terms of reference (including roles and responsibilities) and standard operating procedures – agreed by the parties;
- have clear and mutually agreed protocols on information gathering and reporting;
- hold the sides accountable for ceasefire violations;
- have a dispute investigation function;
- include a mechanism to receive appeals, information or complaints from the affected populations.
- be linked to a higher-level body with political clout and/or a “mother organization”;
- have modalities that enable transparency and effective communication 24/7;
- establish liaison and coordination across the ceasefire line;
- ensure and facilitate agreed access for commission members;
- have mutually agreed modalities for exchanging information and draw on commonly agreed data or records when reporting.

The tasks of the JMCC should include:

- enabling members to liaise on technical military issues and other technical issues arising from the implementation of agreed measures;
- overseeing the marking of the agreed Cease-Fire Line and its Zone of Separation;
- sharing the positions and descriptions of all known unexploded ordnance, explosive devices, demolitions, minefields, booby traps, and wire entanglements;
- cooperating in the collection and removal of destroyed or abandoned materiel, including in particular those items that might pose a threat to public health, such as unexploded ordnance;
- rapidly exchanging information on prisoners of war and other detainees and repatriate them quickly;
- opening controlled humanitarian corridors;
- collaborating in relation to resolving the fate of missing persons and arranging the transfer or dignified burial of the remains of the fallen;
- facilitating the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons;



- acting as the central body for all Parties to bring any military complaints, questions, or problems that require resolution by the commission;
- assisting in determining and implementing a series of local transparency measures between the Parties;
- monitoring and inspecting/verifying cantonment storage areas of heavy weapons;
- organizing local or sectoral reduction of violence/"windows of silence";
- promoting measures of constraint;
- following up on ceasefire violations.

If necessary, the JMCC could establish sub-committees, for example on repatriation of prisoners of war, mine action, de-escalation measures, local reconstruction, as well as assisting the return of displaced civilians.

Third Party role

In theory, the parties would carry out these roles themselves through bilateral arrangements. However, taking into consideration the **low level of trust** between Ukraine and Russia, it is recommended to include third parties to assist monitoring of compliance and contribute to the effective implementation of agreed measures. Furthermore, lead nations that contribute significant resources to an international monitoring and verification mission will need a mechanism to liaise with the parties on both sides of the ceasefire line and will want control over how their forces are used and coordination with each other and the parties. Furthermore, credible third parties can act as a bridge between the conflict parties (for example by facilitating indirect contacts), increase the chances of transparency and accountability, and act as a deterrent against ceasefire violations and impunity.

As pointed out in *Guidance on Mediation of Ceasefires*, a third party is defined as "an individual, organization, one or more UN Member States, or any combination of these entities, so long as they are not party to the conflict, are mutually acceptable and, at the request of the conflict parties, can play a specific role in the monitoring and verification of a ceasefire".⁴

As described in section 6, it is recommended that countries that are the lead nations of the International Monitoring and Verification Mission to Ukraine should be part of a multinational command structure. This structure should include a bilateral arrangement between Ukraine and Russia and a Multilateral Liaison Team (MLT) under the direction of the force commander. In other words, a JMCC could either be solely a bilateral mechanism or a bilateral plus multilateral (third-party) component under a Force Commander (see figure 1).

Another option is that one country plays the role of third party.

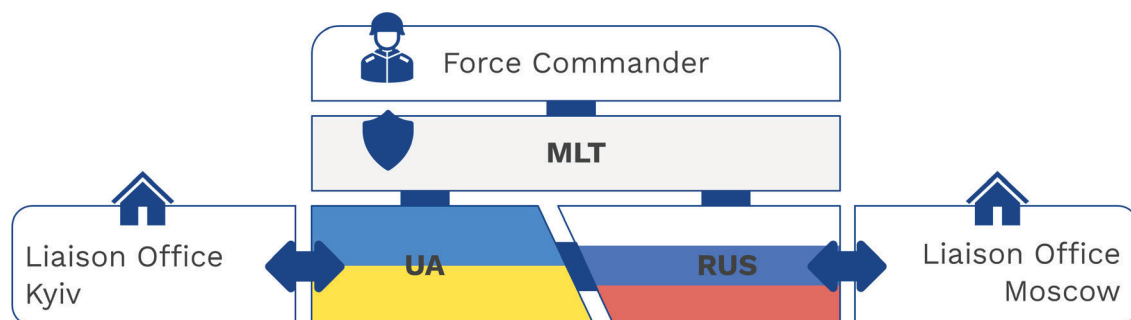
⁴ See UN, *Guidance on Mediation of Ceasefires*, page 55.



The **multilateral/third-party component** should:

- provide a valuable liaison function between the conflict parties;
- assist with facilitation of information exchange and evaluation of data provided by the parties;
- facilitate the resolution of technical military issues;
- work with the parties to ensure effective implementation of a CF agreement;
- coordinate verification and inspection visits.

Figure 1: Joint Military Coordination Commission.



Possible Modalities

The headquarters of the JMCC should be located in a place approved by both parties – perhaps in a “house of peace” in the buffer zone. Ideally, the core team from the two sides and the MLT would be co-located. Members should be of senior rank.

Liaison offices of the JMCC should be established in both Kyiv and Moscow linked to their respective military headquarters. On both sides **a general** should be designated as the main point of contact, and these senior officers should be accountable to the MLT. It should be made clear to the parties that they (and not the international community) have primary responsibility to honour their commitments and to make the ceasefire hold.

The respective governments would have to be responsible for the protection and security arrangements of all MLT personnel residing and operating in the respective countries and would also have to provide emergency medical aid and assist in providing emergency medical evacuation of MLT personnel. All Members of the commission should be accorded the same immunities and privileges as are accorded to diplomatic agents under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 18 April 1961. Ideally, the status, privileges and immunities of members of the MLT should be outlined in a Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA). The international staff would have a small support team including information officers and interpreters. It would make sense for the UN and the OSCE to have liaison officers in the MLT.



Lessons learned from the JCCC in Ukraine

Lessons should be learned from the Joint Control and Coordination Commission (JCCC). The JCCC was an attempt by the Ukrainian and Russian General Staffs in the autumn of 2014 to create a mechanism to facilitate information exchange and military-to-military contacts during the conflict. In its prime (between 2015 and 2017) the headquarters, in Soledar, housed approximately 75 officers from Ukraine and Russia as well as 10 OSCE liaison officers. The Russian officers rotated every 90 days; they were granted access to Ukraine on the basis of a tourist visa.

The JCCC was one of the few channels of mil-to-mil contacts between the Russian and Ukrainian forces. That said, the military personnel had limited direct interaction. They did not usually share information directly, but each provided information independently to the OSCE.

One of the JCCC's benefits was to help negotiate local ceasefires or 'windows of silence' that enabled the repair of critical infrastructure. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission monitored these local ceasefires through 'mirror patrols' on both sides of the line of contact.

In December 2017, Russia withdrew its officers from the JCCC, citing impediments to the work of the Russian personnel. This left a vacuum which the SMM often had to fill on its own.



6. International monitoring and verification mission

To build confidence in a ceasefire among the parties and the affected communities, it will be necessary to deploy an inclusive international monitoring and verification mission in Ukraine. Such a mission would require a clear mandate, ideally under the UN Charter. Its safety would have to be assured. It would need to be **supported by sufficient political will and resources**. As pointed out in relation to lessons learned from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine “human monitors and the use of technology cannot compensate for the shortcomings of imperfect agreements or the lack of political will”.⁵

While mandated by the UN, the mission could also include a **pillar of OSCE civilian and police personnel**. Therefore, it could be referred to as an **international mission** rather than a UN one (which could also be more palatable to some countries including the US). Or it could be a UN mission of which the OSCE comprises one pillar. Whatever the constellation, the mission would have to report and be accountable to a “mother organization”.

The core tasks of the mission would be to monitor the ceasefire and to verify the withdrawal of troops and heavy weapons. If necessary and subject to sufficient resources the mission could also be present along uncontested parts of Ukraine’s internationally recognized borders with Russia and Belarus, but this would have significant additional resource requirements.

Considering the scale of the conflict and the power of the armies involved, an international mission would have to be of an adequate size and composed of forces that would garner the respect of the sides. That said, the assumption is that there is a ceasefire to keep. An interposition force along a blue line separating two powerful armies would require hundreds of thousands of troops with a peace enforcement mandate; this is unlikely and dangerous.

In general, the size and composition of such a force would depend on its mandate, the willingness of the parties to accept such a force, and the availability of troop, police and civilian contributing countries to support such an endeavour. The troop, police and civilian contributing countries would have to be agreed by both Ukraine and Russia.

Because of the size of the area to be covered, it would make sense to divide the region to be monitored into **sectors**, perhaps five or six on each side of the ceasefire line.

A **heavy option** would be to deploy a brigade in each sector, but that would require at least 50,000 armed monitors which does not seem realistic. It should be reiterated that the deployment of an interposition force is neither politically nor operationally wise.

⁵ Alexander Hug, *Ceasefire Monitoring and Verification and the Use of Technology: Insights from Ukraine 2014-2022*, Zurich: CSS, 2024, page 11.



A **lighter option**, which would be more feasible and realistic, is to deploy an international monitoring and verification mission of approximately 15,000 members.

The mission could include company-sized **reconnaissance units** in each sector (made up of approximately 150 lightly armed monitors each). These units, which would predominantly carry out monitoring of the ceasefire line, should be equipped with armoured vehicles, helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and equipment necessary for monitoring including UAVs, infra-red and night vision cameras and radar. Each unit would have a sector commander from a lead nation who reports to the force commander. If there are 12 sectors (6 on each side of the CF line) this would require approximately 2000 monitors.

Six battalion-sized **rapid-reaction units** (three on each side of the CF line) should be deployed in the rear, with each battalion supporting two sectors. These battalions should be airborne and have sufficient helicopters. The commanders of each battalion would report to the force commander. This component would comprise roughly 5000 monitors. But again, it should be clear that these units would carry out a support function rather than an enforcement one.

Monitors (perhaps an additional 200 in each sector) could also be deployed around fixed observation posts along the CF line as well as at humanitarian corridors. Their presence could be supplemented by police and civilian monitors – approximately 200 in each sector.

There should also be 200-300 **verifiers** on each side of the CF line who would specialize in verification (i.e. inspections) of the withdrawal of troops and heavy weapons. They could be embedded in mobile reserve/rapid-reaction battalions and would report to the force commander. This would add 600 personnel.

Monitoring/reconnaissance units	2000
Mobile reserve/rapid-reaction units	5000
Fixed-place monitors	2400
Verifiers	600
Police	2400-2500
Civilian monitors	2400-2500

Total of up to 10,000 military, 2400 police and 2400 civilians (approximately 15,000 in total).

Other options could be contemplated. For example, another option is to deploy monitors only along the cease-fire line. However, a key lesson learned from the failed Minsk process is the need for credible verification, hence the recommendation to deploy verifiers with access to both sides of the line. If there are sufficient guarantees from the parties for force protection in the territories under their control another option would be to do without the mobile reserve



units. This would significantly cut the size of the force, but security risks would have to be considered seriously.

An even lighter option would be to focus almost exclusively on **civilian monitoring** (and verification if possible). In this constellation, a mission of approximately 5,000 monitors plus a police component and logistical support would be necessary. This option would require close cooperation with the joint military commission since the parties themselves would have the main responsibility for force protection.

At the beginning of any mission the deployment of an **engineer battalion**, or a number of engineer companies, would be required to clear the patrol routes and to assist with the opening of humanitarian corridors. Engineers may be needed on a more permanent basis as well.

The military component of the international verification and monitoring mission should be led by a **Force Commander**. The mandate should be approved by the UN Security Council. The Force Commander would report to the UN Security Council on a regular basis. Every six months there would be a comprehensive report to the Security Council. It should be clear that any countries that take part in such a mission – especially those that are part any military alliances – do so in a national capacity under a UN mandate rather than as members of an alliance. If the mandate for the international mission comes from a different inter-state body of a *sui generis* arrangement, then reporting and accountability would be to that “mother organization” or body.

Lead nations for each sector plus the mobile reserve battalions would be represented in a Multilateral Liaison Team (MLT) under the force commander. The MLT could also provide a third-party coordination role to the Joint Military Coordination Commission (see section 5).

The civilian and police components of the international monitoring mission should be led by a civilian referred to as **Chief Monitor** or Head of Mission. This pillar of the mission could be led by the OSCE in which case the Chief Monitor or Head of Mission would report to the OSCE Permanent Council (see figure 2).

The length of the ceasefire line (at over 1200km) and the need to patrol 24/7 would require the **effective use of technology** such as UAVs, fixed cameras and satellite imagery. This could reduce the costs of monitoring and verification, and the number of monitors and verifiers required. Nevertheless, technology should be regarded as a compliment to, rather than a replacement for, human patrols. Lessons can be learned from the use of technology by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.⁶

The main area of operations of the monitors and verifiers would be in the buffer zone. They would be based in **fixed observation points** but also rely on **mobile patrols**. Units from adjacent sectors from both sides of the ceasefire line could carry out joint patrols. Pre-deployment would require considerable demining and guarantees by the parties to respect a UAV- and helicopter-free zone.

6 See Hug 2024.



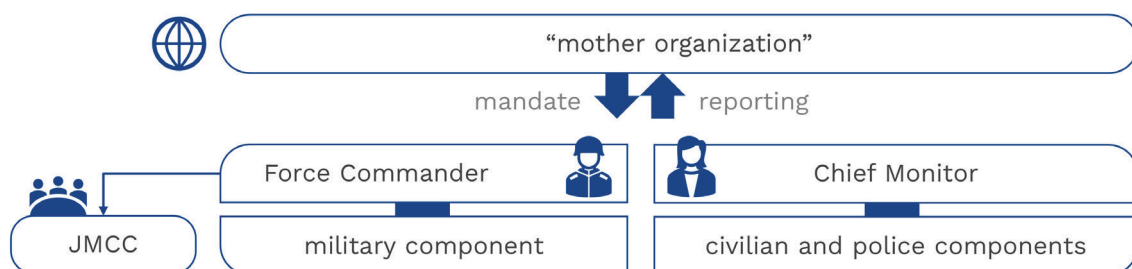
Among the potential roles of the **military component** of the mission could be:

- Monitor implementation of the ceasefire and report on violations;
- Verify withdrawal of heavy weapons;
- Assist Ukraine in the monitoring of controlled sections of its internationally recognized borders;
- Enable effective operation of humanitarian corridors across the ceasefire line;
- Support humanitarian de-mining.

The **civilian pillar** of the mission’s work should address humanitarian and human dimension issues such as:

- monitoring and reporting on human rights violations and working with security actors and civil society to reduce such violence;
- promoting implementation of fundamental OSCE and UN principles and commitments;
- identifying and responding to needs for humanitarian assistance in a conflict sensitive way with a differentiated focus on the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups including the elderly, women, youth and children, and persons belonging to minorities;
- assisting the affected populations deal with post-traumatic stress disorder;
- facilitating intra-community dialogue;
- facilitating local stabilization measures, including identifying local risks to law enforcement and justice including intra-community tensions;
- monitoring and reporting on the presence and impact of illicit economies;
- assisting in the effective functioning of humanitarian corridors.

Figure 2: International monitoring and verification mission.





7. Link to political settlement and guarantees

To be sustainable, a ceasefire should be linked to a political settlement (and vice versa). That said, a political settlement does not have to be a precondition for a cessation of violence. Indeed, a preliminary ceasefire can stop the fighting, allow for disengagement, trigger the deployment of an international monitoring and verification mission and help to create the conditions for a political settlement. Another alternative (which was attempted in the Minsk Agreement) is that all forms of violence must stop at a zero hour upon entry into force of the political agreement. A ceasefire agreement could, for example, be an annex to a political agreement.

Breaches of the ceasefire could block the implementation of steps designed to reward compliance.

The presence of an international monitoring and verification mission could reduce the risk of ceasefire violations. However, it would require a strong accountability mechanism within a Joint Military Coordination Commission (see section 5).

A permanent ceasefire agreement should be part of a larger settlement otherwise there is a danger in agreeing on a hasty deal that freezes the conflict, undermines international law, or will be broken without consequences.

Therefore, a legally binding agreement should include:

- a reaffirmation of general principles such as those in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, and the Astana Commemorative Declaration (2010);
- prohibition of the threat or use of force as established in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, including the prohibition of changing borders by force;
- the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the UN, as enshrined in article 51 of the Charter;
- the principle of sovereign equality of states, and non-intervention in their sovereign rights, including the right freely to determine their political, economic, social and political system and their foreign policy;
- the obligation not to recognize the result of the acquisition of territory by force;
- a reminder of the commitments agreed in the Budapest Memorandum (1994);
- a clear recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine affects European and even international peace and security. Therefore, a political settlement should make reference to the need for reaffirmation of OSCE principles and commitments and the need for a more cooperative security order in Europe. It could be linked to launching a **dialogue on the future of European security**.

The path to peace will also require talks on strategic stability between the United States and Russia, building on suggestions made by the United States



in its non-paper in response to Russia's proposals and demands to NATO in December 2021. **Reciprocal beneficial outcomes** that could address the security concerns of both sides could include: risk reduction measures; a mechanism to avoid incidents and accidents in the air and at sea; agreements of limitations on intermediate- and shorter-range ground-launched missiles; as well as arms control and disarmament agreements and arrangements that encompass all US and Russian nuclear weapons.

There will also have to be dialogue and negotiations between NATO and Russia that limit the stationing of troops and deployment of missiles as well as confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs), particularly along the NATO-Russia contact zones.

Security guarantees

In order to be durable, a ceasefire would require guarantees. Such guarantees should make the parties feel more secure and raise the cost of breaking a ceasefire.

In the first instance, the parties themselves should guarantee the ceasefire quite simply by honouring the ceasefire and exercising restraint.

Bilateral security assurances, for example, between Ukraine and different allied countries could increase respect for a ceasefire and bolster the sovereignty of Ukraine. Another option is multilateral security guarantees.



8. Mine action

A key element of stabilization and recovery in Ukraine will be **humanitarian demining** and **decontamination** in agreed sectors. Ukraine is currently one of the **most heavily mined countries in the world**. Landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive ordnance can kill and maim victims, impede agriculture, create barriers for the rapid and effective delivery of humanitarian aid as well as recovery and reconstruction.

The Ukrainian Government estimates that one quarter of Ukrainian territory (currently ca. 140,000 sq. km) could be potentially contaminated by mines.⁷ Impressively, since the beginning of the full-scale war, Ukraine has already declared 35,000 km sq. of that territory as being free of contamination.⁸ However, that still leaves an area of around three times the size of Switzerland potentially contaminated by landmines. The costs for mine action in Ukraine in the next decade are estimated by the World Bank at around \$34.6 billion.⁹

A potential ceasefire line might be along some of the most heavily mined parts of Ukraine. Indeed, at the moment both Ukraine and Russia are hardly able to move in an area of around 20 kilometres on both sides of the current front line because of the density of contamination. Therefore, a ceasefire and certainly the deployment of any international monitors or peacekeepers along the ceasefire line would require humanitarian demining, ideally 20 km wide along the full length of the 1200km LoC. This is a massive undertaking.

Necessary steps would include:¹⁰

- **Planning:** collection, assessment and processing of information, in order to determine appropriate ways to proceed (General Mine Action Assessment), subsequent formulation of the detailed methods to be applied to address contamination.
- **Preparation:** collection and analysis and mapping of data, about the presence, type, distribution and surrounding environment of explosive ordnance (EO) contamination and to support prioritisation and decision-making processes through the provision of evidence.
 - Non-Technical Survey: collection and analysis of data, without the use of technical interventions,
 - Technical Survey: Collection and analysis of data, using appropriate technical intervention
- **Clearance:** location, removal or destruction of mines and ERW, and for EOD operations may also involve access, diagnosis, render safe, final disposal and (where appropriate) protective works.

⁷ Statement by Denys Shmyhal, Prime Minister of Ukraine at Ukraine Mine Action Conference UMAC24 Lausanne 17.10.2024.

⁸ Presentation by Yulia Svyrydenko, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy of Ukraine at Ukraine Mine Action Conference UMAC24 Lausanne 17.10.2024.

⁹ World Bank. [Ukraine - Third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment \(RDNA3\) : February 2022 - December 2023 \(English\)](#). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group.

¹⁰ These steps will be significantly affected by the parameters of any ceasefire, including (for example), differing IHL obligations of respective sides, potential peaceful handover of military minefield maps, human, financial and technical resources assigned, and permissions granted to civil society operators. For a complete overview of the process please see [IMAS 07.10 Guidelines and requirements for the management of land release and residual contamination operations](#).



Each party would be responsible for mine action on each side of the ceasefire line. Security would have to be provided by the forces in control of the territory. In such circumstances due consideration would need to be given to respective obligations under international humanitarian law. Ukraine is a state party to the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* while the Russian Federation is not. The legal and practical implications of this would need to be considered, up to the question whether a commitment to mine clearance would need to be included as part of any agreement.

According to the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining, when conditions are ripe, the planning and preparation steps could be carried out relatively quickly along the length of the Ukrainian side of the ceasefire line thanks to the work that has been done with international support since 2022 to establish and expand the relevant institutions, systems and capacities. Technical demining teams from reputable service providers could potentially be deployed in pre-determined sectors (assigned by the Mine Action Centre of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence) to complete required non-technical and technical surveys and then prioritize demining tasks within the contaminated zone along the Ukrainian side of the ceasefire line. A similar process could potentially take place on the Russian-controlled side.

Both sides should adhere to **International Mine Action Standards** (IMAS) which are designed to promote and advance the safe and effective clearance of landmines and other explosive ordnance.

Mine action will be vital for creating humanitarian corridors across the ceasefire line. This would necessitate a degree of cooperation between the sides. More generally, mine action should be a priority task for a JMC (see section 5).

As the ceasefire line would largely cut through populated areas (particularly villages), it would be important for a ceasefire to be accompanied by **explosive ordnance risk education** for affected communities, including internally displaced persons who might return to the region around the ceasefire line.



9. Humanitarian corridors

While the goal of a ceasefire should be the separation of the parties, it should not result in a separation of the affected communities.

It is possible that a ceasefire line will create artificial boundaries that will divide communities that have lived side by side for decades and which share similar linguistic and regional identities.

Therefore, it will be important to open humanitarian corridors along the ceasefire line. This would enable family reunification, return of refugees and IDPs, facilitate reconstruction, and enable people-to-people contacts and freedom of movement.

Because the region is heavily mined, opening of humanitarian corridors will require humanitarian demining (see section 8). Giving the local population a sense of security will be important. International observers working with humanitarian agencies should monitor the corridors and provide support as necessary.

Steps should be taken to ensure that humanitarian corridors are not abused for smuggling, particularly small arms and light weapons. More generally, it would be important to have an **international presence at entry and exit/crossing points**.

Any peace operation should consider including an engineering component to assist with the rebuilding of bridges and roads and repair of gas, electricity, and water supply, especially in the buffer zone. This would assist the affected communities as well as making it easier for the international monitors to operate.



10. Policing

After a ceasefire is declared there should be more scope for civilians to move more freely in what used to be the war zone. However, there may be challenges to law and order in the affected regions which local police may lack the resources, access or will to confront. Therefore, policing should be considered as part of ceasefire implementation, at least in the demilitarized areas and buffer zone.

Possible tasks of an international police contingent could include:

- advising and supporting local law enforcement personnel and forces (including joint patrols and investigation of crimes);
- assessing threats to public order and advising on the capability of law enforcement agencies to deal with such threats;
- providing law enforcement support at humanitarian corridors;
- supporting the safe return of refugees and IDPs;
- assisting local police to calm local disturbances;
- ensuring respect for human rights in the carrying out of police functions by local police;
- assessing and monitoring the possible threat posed by organized crime and working with local police to disrupt illicit activities in areas of operation.

The police component should be under the authority of a Police Commissioner who reports to the Multilateral Liaison Team or the head of the OSCE component of the international monitoring and verification mission.

International police could either play a support function, such as the International Police Task Force (established pursuant to Annex 11 of the Dayton Peace Accords) or carry out executive policing functions as in Kosovo or Timor Leste.

Such a police presence could provide a useful link between international military and civilian components of a peace operation, reassure local populations and support local police.



11. Inclusion and safety of civilians

The ceasefire line may cut through communities that used to be connected, as a result dividing friends and families as well as business communities. Furthermore, **a ceasefire may be viewed with both relief and distrust by the affected populations**. While there will be relief at the end of hostilities, there may be feelings of betrayal, anger, hatred, grief, and loss as well as trauma. Many people living in eastern Ukraine have witnessed **more than a decade of violence**, including several ceasefires. There may be considerable scepticism directed towards a new one. It will be important for militaries, police and civilians engaged in implementing the ceasefire to reach out to the affected communities, listen to their needs and concerns and address them to the extent possible. Special efforts should be made to engage with youth, women and older persons as well as persons belonging to minorities.

Furthermore, the **communities themselves should be agents of change** rather than subjects of support. Ukraine has a vibrant, capable and community-oriented civil society. Working in partnership with international NGOs and humanitarian actors, these groups can be key actors in strengthening local resilience and work closely with the civilian component of the international mission.

Ceasefires have a better chance of being durable if they are seen as **addressing the needs of the affected populations**. To this end, civilian observers should monitor and identify humanitarian needs and partner with local NGOs to address them. The local populations should also be informed of what is going on (see section 12) to have a greater sense of ownership. Humanitarian assistance should be fast-tracked to affected communities, not least so that local population see a “peace dividend”. Furthermore, there should be mechanisms for people in affected communities to address the international community and local authorities with their concerns.

Return of IDPs and refugees could be a major issue. The international community and the local authorities need to plan accordingly.

Women, peace and security

Research shows that many ceasefires fail to include gender provisions or references to women and girls.¹¹ Therefore, it is important to **involve or consult women** and members of affected communities in the process of negotiating and implementing ceasefires.

Ceasefire negotiation processes are often considered a male domain, not least in countries of the former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, women are significantly affected by conflict and its aftermath, not least in terms of mining and UXO, dealing with the trauma of conflict, and holding families together including with the challenge of coping with a wounded or deceased victim of war as a husband or sibling. Therefore, it is vital to engage women, especially in the affected communities.

¹¹ Obermeier, Anna Marie & Siri Aas Rustad (2023) Gender Provisions in Ceasefires, *Conflict Trends*, 3. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).



The **international community should lead by example**. Senior female military personnel should be seconded to the JMCC and at least one quarter of the military, police and civilian monitors should be female. Furthermore, the mandates of both the international monitoring and verification mission and the JMCC should include references to UNSC resolution 1325 on **women, peace and security** which mandates an increased focus on women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. There should be a policy of **zero tolerance towards sexual misconduct** among monitors and verifiers.



12. Strategic Communication

While both sides are weary of war, a ceasefire falls short of the maximalist narratives put forward by both Presidents. Therefore, the idea of a ceasefire would have to be well explained to the respective publics beforehand. It is important to **bring the public along** in any peace process, especially after the high human and material costs of this war.

Concerning the role of the international community, it should be made clear what the respective bodies would do (and not do). For example, the presence of international monitors and verifiers and senior military in a joint military commission should not **create false expectations of what the international community can do** nor diminish the responsibilities of the parties.

It would be prudent for international monitoring patrols to include interpreters with relevant language skills to engage with the affected populations. Furthermore, the international members of a JMCC should be careful not to be instrumentalized or blamed by the parties for the failings of the parties themselves.

Facts and perceptions are important in a highly contested information space. Monitoring can help to clear the fog of war and misinformation. However, **the credibility of information provided by the international community must be high**. This can be achieved through regular reporting, increasing transparency through publishing data gathered from cameras, drones and satellites and using verified imagery to prevent fake news.¹²

Strategic communications should also explain the dangers of mines and UXO, publicize the humanitarian corridors, and draw attention to the humanitarian and human dimension work of the relevant international interlocutors so that people know where they can turn to if they need help or have a complaint.

¹² See Hug 2024, page 151.



Annex 1

Sequencing

- Appointment of envoys, creation of a Contact Group or opening of diplomatic channels to coordinate positions and encourage the parties towards a ceasefire and a political settlement.
- Confidence-building measures and discreet dialogue between the parties (if necessary facilitated by a third party) to open channels of communication, (re)establish mil-to-mil contacts and create greater trust.
- Discreet building of technical knowledge about ceasefires as well as capacity-building of the parties for ceasefire negotiations and implementation.
- Arrangements to regulate, reduce or manage the violence and develop conditions conducive for a ceasefire, such as local ceasefires and prisoner exchanges.
- Creation of a Joint Military Coordination Commission (JMCC) to regularize contacts and negotiate a temporary cessation of hostilities.
- Agreement by the parties to an immediate ceasefire.
- “Mother organization” takes decision authorizing deployment of an international monitoring and verification mission to Ukraine.
- Demining of the security zone.
- Deployment of international monitoring and verification mission.
- Deployment of the mission creates the space, conditions and momentum for a broader political settlement.

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ISBN: 978-2-88947-024-2

