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## The Limits of Negotiation in bringing Russo-Ukraine War to an End

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### Abstract

*The urgency of this research stems from the prolonged and unresolved nature of the ongoing Russo-Ukraine conflict, necessitating an investigation into why previous diplomatic efforts have failed. To address this inquiry, an inspection of the limits of negotiation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end was carried out. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as the Integrative Negotiation Theory, this study employs a qualitative approach and a case study design. Data analysis is conducted through thematic analysis. The findings reveal a myriad of factors impeding negotiation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end. These are; power dynamics, conflicting interests of actors, interest of actors, the contribution of NATO and USA, structural bias, inadequate leverage and polarized mediation format; historical, cultural and political differences. From these findings and conclusions, the study recommends that actors involved in this conflict should foster open communication, considering cultural and economic factors in other to facilitate negotiation for peace agreement to be signed. The study also recommends that negotiators, and all stakeholders involved in this conflict should ensure impartiality in every diplomatic engagement, and avoid isolation of actors at war in every engagement so as to draw a line in understanding their interest and encourage them reach an agreement for peace to thrive, cherished and sustained in this region.*

**Keywords:** *Limits of Negotiation, Diplomacy, Integrative Negotiation Theory, Power, Peace agreement, Russo-Ukraine War.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Russo-Ukraine war has reached a deadlock, negatively impacting the peaceful coexistence of both states. Despite multiple rounds of peace talks aimed at halting Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and achieving a peaceful resolution to the Russo-Ukrainian War, further escalations of this war have made these different conflict resolution mechanisms elusive (Tchantouridzé, 2022). As evidently stated by Hopkin (2022) the initial meeting in Belarus, held for four days after the invasion began on February 28, 2022, yielded no conclusive outcome, with both delegations returning to their capitals for consultations. The current state of this war has hindered the effective use of negotiation in the peaceful resolution of these disputes.

However, focusing solely on the failure of these peace talks as a social problem does not address the underlying conceptual problem. Resolving Russia's invasion of Ukraine goes beyond military means and necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the explanations that account for the inability of negotiation to bring the war to an end.

It was critical to understand and address this conceptual problem to fasten a responsive mechanism of negotiation in ending the Russo-Ukraine war, hence the rebirth of peace in these states. This drive the urgency for the current study to be carried out by examining the limits of negotiation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end, providing valuable insights that could inform future efforts to effectively negotiate and facilitate a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Negotiation is a way that people resolve disagreements. It is a method for coming to a compromise or agreement without getting into fights or disagreements (Rao & Lakshmi, 2021). It makes sense that when people disagree, they want to maximise what benefits their side (or maybe an organisation they represent). Still, the keys to a good outcome are the values of fairness, reciprocal benefit seeking, and relationship maintenance. Two categories of negotiations exist;

Distributive negotiation, sometimes known as "hard bargaining," occurs when both sides adopt extreme stances and one side perceives a win-lose outcome for the other. This works on the basis of the "fixed pie" theory, according to which there is only a certain quantity of value being negotiated and that the winner would be the one who gets the better bargain.

Integrative negotiators contend that by making trade-offs and rephrasing the issue so that everyone may leave with a win-win solution, they can create value or mutual advantages rather than adhering to the fixed pie theory. Looking at these two understanding of the categories of negotiation, in the Russia-Ukraine case, these two approach has not been silent yet there is no peace. This was the gap that this study strived to fill up by inspecting the limits of negotiation in the resolution of Russia-Ukraine War.

### Integrative Negotiation Theory

This study was underpinned on Integrative Negotiation Theory. It emphasizes the creation of value and joint problem-solving to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes in conflict resolution. According to this approach, which was put forth by Fisher and Ury (1981) in their book "Getting to Yes," it is critical to keep individuals apart from the issue, concentrate on interests rather

than viewpoints, create a wide range of possibilities, and use objective standards to get to a consensus. Using this idea, negotiators can work towards mutually beneficial agreements that take into account the demands and underlying interests of all parties (Fisher & Ury, 1981). The researcher opines that this theory in its richness would be a solution for Russia-Ukraine war but the reverse is the case. Understating the interest of both parties have seemed to be abortive since the on spark of this war but it still informs this study because should objectivity be deployed on both sides and each are ready to compromise on their interest then win-win would make sense in resolving these ongoing conflict.

### The limits of negotiation in bringing the Russo - Ukraine War to an end

Despite the challenges and setbacks faced in the Russia and Ukraine conflict, there have been notable instances where negotiation has played a crucial role in de-escalating tensions and fostering a path toward peace. However, this study explored the factors that limits effective negotiation from different scholars' perspective. One such example Albert (2023) investigated Rebel institutions and negotiated peace through systematic literature review. The results demonstrated that governments break off negotiations because of concern that public support for rebel development will result from service provision, which prevents negotiated settlements from being established. It is challenging to reach a negotiated settlement during a civil war. Negotiations are supposed to be more fruitful when there are rebel institutions. But he demonstrated that there is a negative correlation as well. Rather, there is a negative correlation between successful mediated settlements and the provision of rebel services. This study did not account for the limits of negotiation in bringing the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war to an end and that is what the current study was set out to cover.

A comparative study on negotiation forms and conflict-solving techniques for protracted conflicts in post-Soviet countries was conducted by Wolff and Takeaways (2021). The results demonstrated that not only have Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan evolved into new battlefields for the expression of geopolitical rivalry, but these developments have also had a negative impact on the negotiating forms involved in these lengthy conflicts. Simultaneously, the vast majority of participating States have expressed a preference for negotiated agreements; however, these have either not yet been implemented (as in the case of the Minsk Accords in Donbas) or have not yet materialised (as in the case of Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh). Its findings also demonstrated that the main obstacle to reaching sustainable negotiated settlements is not the fault of the negotiation formats currently in use, but rather the participants' own unwillingness to make compromises and concessions. The parties involved in the current conflict have frequently sought unrealistically high demands at the negotiating table over the years—gains that they were unable to secure on the battlefield—and their outside supporters have not had the power or desire to use that power to pressure them to lower their demands. These negotiations formats would not only address immediate concerns but also highlight the broader impact of diplomatic efforts in stabilizing these regions. In this current study, the limits of negotiation in bringing the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war specifically to an end was examined further through thematic analysis.

Another study was conducted by Dahiye and Mbataru (2023) on the Effectiveness of Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

on Peacekeeping and Security in Garissa County, Kenya. The long-standing tensions among the Kenyan government and Somalis on a state-society level have led to the current risks to peace and security in Garissa County. Therefore, Garissa County must develop and deploy viable traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to assist in managing and maintaining peace and security. Conflict Resolution Theory and Conflict Triangle Theory formed the basis for this research. For this study, a target population of 956 citizens from various management levels were selected, and a sample size of 282 citizens was selected using non-probabilistic method. Data from the respondents was gathered via semi-structured questionnaires and then analyzed using descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics. The study findings established that traditional conflict resolution mechanisms; negotiation and arbitration have a significant effect on peacekeeping and security in Garissa County, Kenya. Specifically, it was established that both negotiation and arbitration have a positive and significant effect on peacekeeping and security ( $r = 0.211; 0.755; P\text{-Value} < 0.05$ ) respectively. Based on the findings, it was recommended that both the county and national governments should extend the legal institutions and development initiatives to Garissa County, encouraging the adoption of both negotiation and arbitration in resource conflict resolution.

Jayarajendra and Daniel (2024) conducted a review on the Ethics in War and Negotiation. The current review explores the intertwined realms of ethics in war and negotiation, crucial components in addressing conflicts and fostering peace amid global turmoil. War, a manifestation of human violence fuelled by grievances and power struggles, necessitates ethical frameworks to mitigate its profound impacts on both combatants and civilians. Concepts like Just War Theory, Humanitarian Principles, and the treatment of prisoners of war provide ethical guidance amidst the chaos of armed conflict. In parallel, negotiation emerges as a vital tool for managing conflicts and seeking peace, even amidst warfare. Negotiating in war entails navigating complex challenges while upholding ethical principles such as mutual benefit, human rights, and peace-building efforts. Despite the difficulties, negotiation offers a pathway to transform hostility into cooperation and enmity into empathy, facilitating reconciliation and long-term stability. The ethical considerations in warfare and negotiation are complex and multifaceted, particularly when examined in the contexts of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Gaza conflict. This case study explores the ethical dimensions of these conflicts, highlighting the challenges and principles involved in conflict resolution. However, negotiating unwinnable wars presents unique challenges, demanding a delicate balance between acknowledging the realities of conflict and preserving the dignity and interests of all parties involved. Trust, transparency, and ethical considerations are paramount in fostering constructive dialogue and finding common ground in seemingly intractable conflicts. Ultimately, by upholding ethical principles in war and negotiation, societies can strive to transcend violence and build a more harmonious and equitable world for future generations.

Min (2020) examined a new daily-level data collection of talks in all interstate wars from 1816 to the present in order to conduct a desktop review of Talking while fighting: Understanding the function of wartime negotiation. The results demonstrated that modern conflict studies have embraced methods that downplay the significance of negotiation during hostilities or view it as a continuous, mechanical process. Research indicates that the inability of diplomacy to resolve disputes through discussion is due

to growing international demand for peace and stability following World War II, particularly from nuclear weapons and international alliances. It suggested that a dynamic research agenda be implemented that would allow a more policy-relevant study of conflict management, emphasise a historical perspective on conflict resolution, and emphasise the importance of considering diplomacy as a crucial component of understanding war. The present study focused on understanding and addressing these challenges in reaching a consensus as essential aspects of my study on the limits of negotiation in bringing the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war to an end through case study design and employed thematic analysis which was different from the previous study.

The role of moral and ideological differences between parties in international conflicts makes it challenging to find a mutually acceptable compromise and end the conflict through negotiation. Another study by Howard and Stark (2017) used a three-part methodological approach, quantitative analysis, case studies, and original content analysis to examine how civil wars end: the international system, norms, and the role of external actors. It clarified that a one-sided victory was the result of civil wars. However, the fundamental nature of how civil wars finish changed with the end of the Cold War: hostilities are now twice as likely to conclude in a negotiated settlement as in victory. It was discovered that three main categories of elements—domestic structural factors, bargaining dynamics, and forms of foreign intervention—may impede negotiations leading to dispute resolution. It also demonstrated that the international political environment is made up of both material and ideational elements, and that these elements change over time. Therefore, the normative strategies of external actors—believing that stabilisation, negotiation, or triumph are the best ways to end a civil war—are shaped by this context. Civil war outcomes are thus directly impacted by these norms. Therefore concludes that that civil wars tend to end the way external actors think they ought to end.

Disarmament, stability, and advantage are the three main goals of arms control discussions, and Maurer's (2018) study on the subject provides evidence in favour of this claim. He demonstrated that each of the three goals offers a convincing justification for lowering the likelihood of conflict by contrasting them with the literature on the causes of war. Policymakers have typically embraced arms control pluralism, pursuing accords that can advance many arms control objectives simultaneously, while experts argue about which approach to arms control is best. The analysis comes to the conclusion that the dynamics of an international war might result in a security dilemma, whereby steps done by one party to strengthen its security are viewed as menacing by the other, creating a vicious cycle of escalation that exacerbates the difficulty of negotiation.

Charap and Priebe (2023) conducted a study on avoiding a long war US policy and the course of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine as seen through the eyes of experts. It evaluated the potential course of this conflict, the implications of different paths for American interests, and the steps Washington may take to support the one that best advances American interests. How does this come to an end? In Washington and other Western capitals, this subject is increasingly taking centre stage when people discuss the Russia-Ukraine confrontation. While Kyiv's chances of winning the war were bolstered by successful counteroffensives in Kharkiv and Kherson in the autumn of 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin's announcement on September 21 of a partial

mobilisation and annexation of four Ukrainian provinces served as a sobering reminder that the conflict is far from over. Along the approximately 1,000 miles of front lines, fighting is still raging. Since May, talks to resolve the problem have been on hold. Naturally, the direction and final result of the conflict will be primarily influenced by Russia's and Ukraine's actions. Moscow and Kyiv are not the only states that will be affected by the outcome, though. The course of this war, which is the biggest interstate conflict in decades, will have a substantial impact on the US. The findings points to the challenge of ensuring that parties can credibly commit to the terms of a negotiated settlement. Even if an agreement is reached, there may be concerns about the other side's future behavior or intentions, leading to a breakdown in the negotiations or a return to conflict.

Rusten and Melamed (2023) on the vein investigated the Three-Competitor Future: US Arms Control with Russia and China. The United States faces unprecedented problems in its nuclear policy and arms control due to China's growing nuclear arsenal, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the impending expiration of the final strategic arms control pact between the United States and Russia in 2026. Policies intended to prevent nuclear war and ensure the security of the United States and its allies and partners must be reexamined in light of the changing security environment. The findings concludes that asymmetric information between parties and divergent preferences can undermine the prospects for successful negotiations. Parties may have incomplete or inaccurate information about each other's capabilities, resolve, and goals, making it difficult to reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

Overall, the literature suggests that while negotiation can be an important tool for ending international wars, there are significant challenges and limitations that can make it difficult to achieve a lasting peace through this means. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of the political, psychological, and strategic factors at play in each conflict. In context, addressing these challenges or limits sparked the researcher's interest to examine the limits of negotiation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was centred on the case study of Russo-Ukraine War. This design was adopted because it would bring out rich and revealing insights into the phenomenon under investigation. This was so advantageous to this study because single case study design provides opportunity to gain a detailed and comprehensive understanding of a specific phenomenon like the one of negotiation in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War. As a researcher, this was effective because I was able to examine complex real life situation in the context of Russia-Ukraine war. This study adopted a qualitative research approach only. This helped the researcher gather qualitative results in regards to the study research question and then come up with themes and concepts regarding the study objectives. This study employed thematic analysis. This is because it enabled the researcher to examine written texts, and oral communication in relation to Russia-Ukraine War. This was also a good fit for the study because it was suitable in analysing this war across social, political, and historical context making meaning from the large chunks of language, such as entire conversations,

texts, or collections of texts on the limits of negotiation in bringing Russo-Ukrainian war to an end.

### **Ethical considerations**

In this study which is focused on the limits of negotiation in bringing the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war to an end, several ethical considerations were taken into account.

**Impartiality and Objectivity:** The researcher maintained impartiality and objectivity throughout the study, avoiding any biases or conflicts of interest that could influence the data collection, analysis, or interpretation.

**Respect for Cultural Sensitivities:** Given the geopolitical nature of the study, the researcher respected cultural sensitivities and avoided any actions that may harm or offend individuals or communities involved.

**Professional Integrity:** Professional standards of integrity and honesty in conducting and reporting the study was upheld. The researcher adhered to ethical guidelines and principles of research integrity, ensuring transparency, accuracy, and reliability in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data. Acknowledgement of other scholarly work incorporated with citations and reference list were applied.

## RESULTS

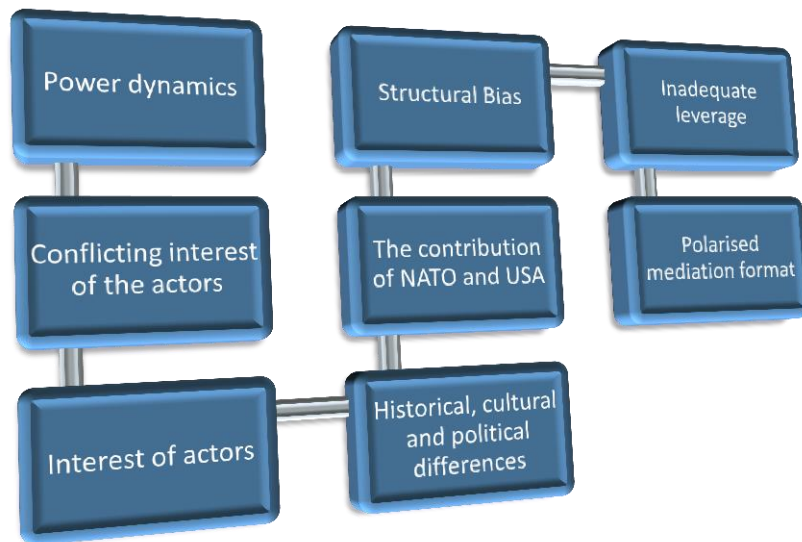
This study presents and interprets the findings concerning the limits of negotiation in bringing the Russo - Ukraine War to an end. The action situation of the case, which explains the important findings of the objective, was explored in detail. It offered a contextual analysis of the case by emphasising the specifics of the themes that constituted the discourse as the study's goals anticipated through the corpus for thematic analysis.

### **Contextual profile and characteristics of analysis**

This study only highlighted the corpus that looked into the Russia-Ukraine War from 2014-2024. I chose this corpus of materials because it highlighted the impeding factors directly to the discourse of the study. I was critical to avoid personal bias by explicating specific examples of each theme discussed in the context of Russia-Ukraine war. Among the data material assembled through journals, books, YouTube interviews, and commentaries, I was able to make meaning of the discourse from the distinctive sources appended on the list of references. Speaking from the stand point of single case study, thematic analysis was done and the findings were presented below in detail.

### **The limits of negotiation in bringing the Russo - Ukraine War to an end**

This theme was intended to inspect the limits of negotiation in bringing the Russo - Ukraine War to an end. In the chunks of corpus used for thematic analysis, the major sub-themes that run through the corpus used for analysis were power dynamics, conflicting interests of actors, interest of actors, the contribution of NATO and USA, structural bias, inadequate leverage and polarized mediation format; historical, cultural and political differences. The diagram below shows a diagrammatic representation of the drivers of the limits of negotiation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end.



Source: Designed by the researcher (2024)

Fig 1: Negotiation bottleneck in Russo-Ukraine War

These sub-themes were further sectioned, presented and interpreted in details. The first sub-theme was power dynamics. This is presented and interpreted below.

### Power dynamics

Through the search for the limits of negotiation in bring Russia-Ukraine war to an end, power dynamic has a direct relations to this limitations. In one of the articles, I found out:

*Only by addressing questions of values, security, and political, economic, and diplomatic connections between Russia, Ukraine, and Western nations can a stable peace be achieved (Tsygankov, 2023).*

It is important to understand the power dynamics in relations to values, security, economic and politics. In every relations once there is no mutual understanding, once one parties values, security, economic and political position are tampered, ability to negotiate for peace is stalled. This results to the state of escalation of conflict as we witness today in the case of Russia-Ukraine war and other powers involved in the fight. This lead to another finding still on power dynamic impact on effective negotiation.

*The effectiveness of the peace deal has been hampered by the complex political and military factors at play as well as by the broader geopolitical tensions between Russia and the West (Mahilaj, 2023).*

In addition, political and military dynamics, that is the nature of actors involved escalate tensions and halt peace agreement through negotiation. It is impossible to go to a negotiation table while the tensions between these actors are not resolved. Understanding the interest of these actors could be a step forward. That is the next sub-theme presented in search for the limits of negotiation to bring Russia and Ukraine conflict to an end.

### Conflicting interest of the actors

Conflicting interest of the actors emerged second in the list of corpus for the study. In the articles, it revealed that:

*Talks are not needed right now, but America needs to set the stage first the Biden administration has successfully upheld a realistic politik stance since the war began by arming and financing Ukraine. (Emma Ashford, Foreign Affairs, October 31, 2022).*

Actors interest in battlefield is crucial to making peace road map. What is the interest of Biden administration to maintain a balanced approach to arm and fund Ukraine and Why not Russia? Vital to this discourse, it fueled the escalation of conflict instead of de-escalation. It showed isolation of Putin. A biased decision that aggravates the sidelined actor to do whatever that is within its might to win. It is unfortunate that none of this interest was able to stop the conflict and negotiation reached deadlock. This can be further explored and the statement below gave a direction from Ukraine point of view.

*When asked by journalists about Ukraine's negotiations with the Kremlin "behind closed doors," Kuleba responded briefly: "No." He emphasized that the basis of the Ukrainian formula for peace is respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. "If we translate from diplomatic to ordinary language, it means that Russia must leave Ukraine. Until this happens, until it is ready to do so, there is no point in holding any negotiations," said Kuleba. (Daria Dmytriieva, 2022).*

Ukraine's interest is declared. "Russia must leave Ukraine!" Does this come with ease when the conflict has been fueled by different interest groups? Does negotiation happen in absence of agreement to negotiate by both sides? Why does it sound so easy to say Ukrainian formula for peace is respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine? The denial to acknowledge with respect instead a command showed no room or readiness for negotiation to end this war. Further, BBC report shows that Russia, represented by President Putin has also stated his interest as cited below:

He called for Russia to be forced to pay for "the destruction it has created", saying frozen Russian assets should be transferred to Ukraine to fund reconstruction work. The Kremlin said Mr Putin offered to look at options, to help address the risk of a global food crisis - but demanded that the West lift sanctions. Russia also warned France and Germany against increasing weapons supplies to Ukraine, saying that could increase instability still further (BBC News 29 May 2022).

Lifting sanctions placed on Russia was seen to be a time to negotiation to address global food crisis. On the other hand, France and Germany supplies of weapon to Ukraine contradict the need for negotiation. Russia saw that it is not only Ukraine in war with her instead other actors USA, mentioned earlier, coupled with these two supporting Ukraine, draws my analysis to state that it was a one sided game by the actors making it complex to understand the interests of actors and making negotiation effective. This was dissected further in the concept of "drive a rat into a corner" from an important interview that described one of the actor's behaviour when cornered.

...an example of what he said: "Don't drive Putin into a corner because he will become dangerous." This refers to the rat being driven into a corner. There's always a distinction between driving a rat into a corner and not doing so. Rats will consume your blood. Right now, the rat is cornered and realizes her only option is to get out of your dark hole and possibly hide there. It is time to release her at this point. However, wait for her to call for her products so that the rats can bite you to death while they are still trying to bargain with her and calculating the seconds that she wins. Thus, regrettably, I must concur with Mr. Barrel, the remarkable European bureaucrat, who stated that this matter will be resolved on the battlefield rather than at the negotiation table (YouTube interview with Mikhail Khodorkovsky, February 15, 2023).

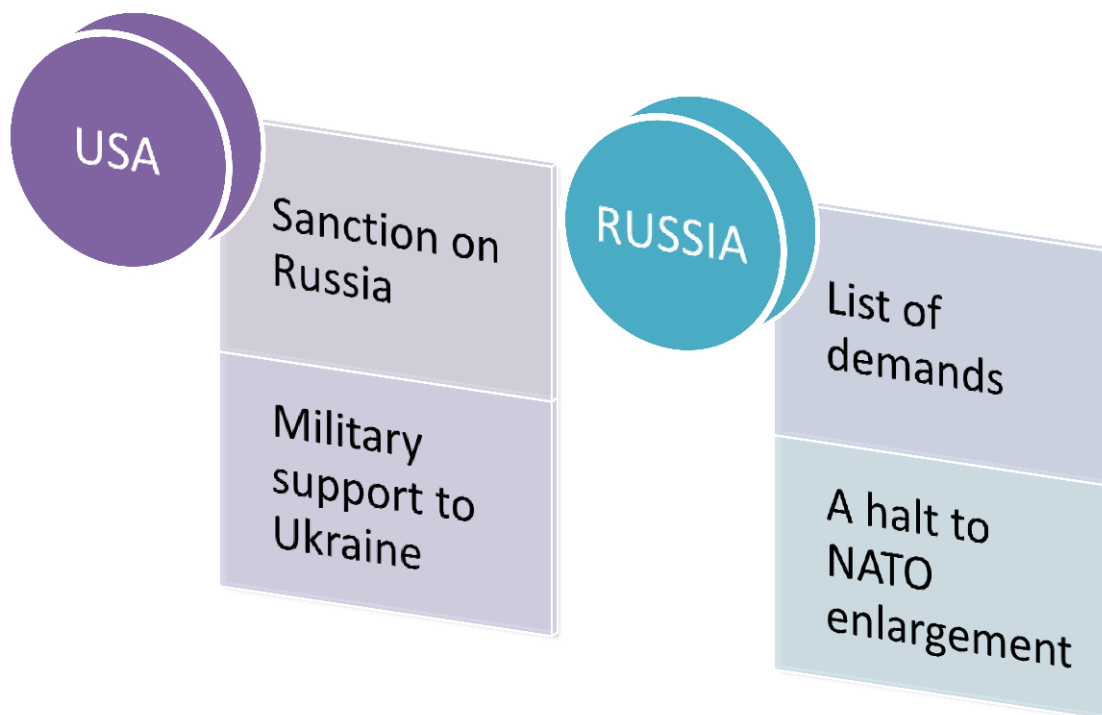
When Rat is cornered and negotiating with her means for her to call her groups so that they will bite you to death depicts the nature of actors at play in this war. Whose blood will be sucked at the end of the game posed a critical question for my analysis. The behaviour of a given actor and interest work in hand to predict the outcome of whose blood will be sucked. Going forward, it is understood that conflicting interest limits negotiation effectiveness to settle this dispute and it posed a policy implication to be noted by institutions going into initiation to negotiate the conflict that no one should corner Putin because he could be dangerous. Resolving this conflicting loyalties could give negotiation a chance to further inspect the stand of each actor at conflict and way forward

### Interest of Actors

Another sub-theme that emerged was interest of actors. After analysing conflicting interests of actors, further investigation showed that interest of actors can as well decide the willingness to negotiate or to continue the escalation of conflict. CNN news had the following to say:

It is likely that the two-pronged US strategy—imposing harsh sanctions and arming Ukraine's military with cutting-edge weaponry—will fail to help Ukraine defeat the Russian invasion. A peace agreement is required, and it might be possible to achieve. The US will still need to make concessions on NATO, which Washington has so far refused, in order to reach an agreement. Without shutting the door on the negotiations, Putin, who initiated the war in Ukraine, has stated that they have reached a standstill. However, Putin sent the West a list of demands prior to the commencement of the conflict, the most important of which was to stop NATO expansion. It was clear that the US was unwilling to discuss the issue. It might be wise to review that policy at this time. For negotiations to be successful, Putin would also need to demonstrate a readiness to make compromises (CNN Mr. Jeffrey Sachs, April 21, 2022).

The line of argument in this for me is further splitted into two as shown in this diagram;



Source: Field data (2024)

Figure 2: Interest of Actors as a hindrance to negotiation during conflicts

From this standpoint, sanction failed to bring about peace as imposed by USA on Russia. Supporting Ukraine militarily has also not contributed to ceasefire instead escalate the conflict. On the other hand, Russia made prior list of demand which was rejected by the USA and to some of them is the halt to NATO enlargement. The important concept to guide the path to peace as this war is not ending and Russia made it clear that negotiation has reached impasse, is to revisit those points and see how Russia and Ukraine is facilitated by negotiators to compromise on their demand's and allow diplomacy to take precedence.

Uncompromised stand would mean forever which is detrimental to both regional and global security. The willingness for both parties and everyone involved is the key to solving this dispute. It is very vital that parties to this conflict compromise their stands and agree on a common factor that both will commit to implement and promote peace in this region. Peace is seen to be beneficial to both actors. USA should stop funding Ukraine against Russia, lifting of Sanctions, halting of NATO enlargement would make a progress for both parties to come to table for peace deal.

### **The contribution of NATO and USA**

The forth sub-theme under the discourse of negotiation was the contribution of NATO and USA. It discussed the findings based on this corpus. One of the articles stated:

*President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said that Ukraine will negotiate with Russia when Ukrainian forces have pushed Russian army back to their positions of February 24, the day President Vladimir Putin initiated its latest war of aggression against Ukraine. The decision on when and how to negotiate rests entirely with Ukraine. But the United States and other allies can provide the support Ukrainians need in that process. Second, the United States must continue to lead and strengthen the broad coalition of democracies that has united to provide military equipment to Ukrainians and impose sanctions on Russia, notably to deny it high-technology components needed to equip its war machine. Together in an unprecedented show of unity, the NATO, EU, G-7, and East Asian countries have pledged to defend Ukraine and hold Russia responsible for its crimes of aggression and atrocities. Ukraine's progress to date has been greatly aided by this alliance. (Ambassador William B. Taylor, 13 July 2022).*

The contribution of NATO, G7, USA, European Union, and East Asian nations have committed to support Ukraine and hold Russia accountable for crime of aggression and atrocities and this alliance has been key to Ukraine's success. "Support," "accountability" and "success" stand important for this study. On the side of support, this was a one side game and where would one expect Russia to run to? This was a gap on the side of these agencies. To settle a dispute one should not take side. Taking sides mean beating a child and expect him not to cry. This was a double standard of these institutions and actors at play. Thus lack the credibility to hold Russia accountable because it fuel the war by supporting Ukraine with resource and military equipment.

So, the accountability is a loss on both side for deciding to continue the war despite knowing the outcome would be aggressive, violation of human rights, loss of lives and properties which reparation would be acknowledgment of all the parties to war in Ukraine to come to terms and end this conflict. To this day, the war in Ukraine has not ended, so success appears to have been overemphasized. Success to this conflict would result to peace deal, to Ukraine and Russia been able to seat down and negotiate peace deals. As it stands this negotiation outcome has been vetoed and would only be revived by collaborative efforts, humility to acknowledge that all have erred and willingness to move forward by allowing this peace tool to function effectively. That's its purpose and until it serves that purpose peace is at stake for all the parties.

This hypocrisy did not end with the state and none state actors, it further extended. I have analysed in the next sub-theme showing that negotiation is fruitless as a result of structural bias, inadequate leverage and polarized mediator.

### **Structural bias, inadequate leverage and polarized mediator**

Structural bias, inadequate leverage and polarized mediator was a concern that came up on the search for why the limits of negotiation in bringing to an end Russo-Ukraine war. As pointed out in one of the articles;

*When mediators enter the war as parties, support the rebels, influence the parent states' domestic politics, and push resolution proposals that serve their security interests, long-lasting peace agreements are unlikely. By using an organised, concentrated comparison of the conflict resolution techniques utilised in Transnistria (Moldova) and Donbas (Ukraine), the notions of structural bias and polarized mediation are further investigated. A comparative analysis showed that Russia, as a broker of power, was structurally biased in favour of the rebel side, but that it lacked the authority to force a resolution on the other side. By becoming involved in the Donbas conflict, endorsing the secessionist areas, and waging a conventional war against Kyiv, it sought to strengthen its hold over Ukraine (Marandici, 2023).*

It is one thing to crave for war and another to mitigate the outcome. Self-interest ruins intentions in international relations. Difficulties encountered in ensuring compliance with agreed-upon terms, maintaining trust between the conflicting parties, and addressing the underlying causes of the conflict makes negotiation unsuccessful. To end this war, Russia being the chief mediator is expected to be unbiased in its plans and also leverage the position it has to make peace deal possible. Otherwise, what difference does it show when you become also what you have condemned. Once the fabric of war is broken, de-escalation should be paramount with an intentional act for alternative to peaceful means of settlement of dispute made realistic and achievable. When intent and reality is in shadow, the fate of negotiator is thrown to oblivion.

### **Historical, cultural and political difference**

The last sub-themes discussed under this theme was the historical, cultural and political difference between Russia and Ukraine. The concepts of discussion was pick from the statement made below in the article cited:

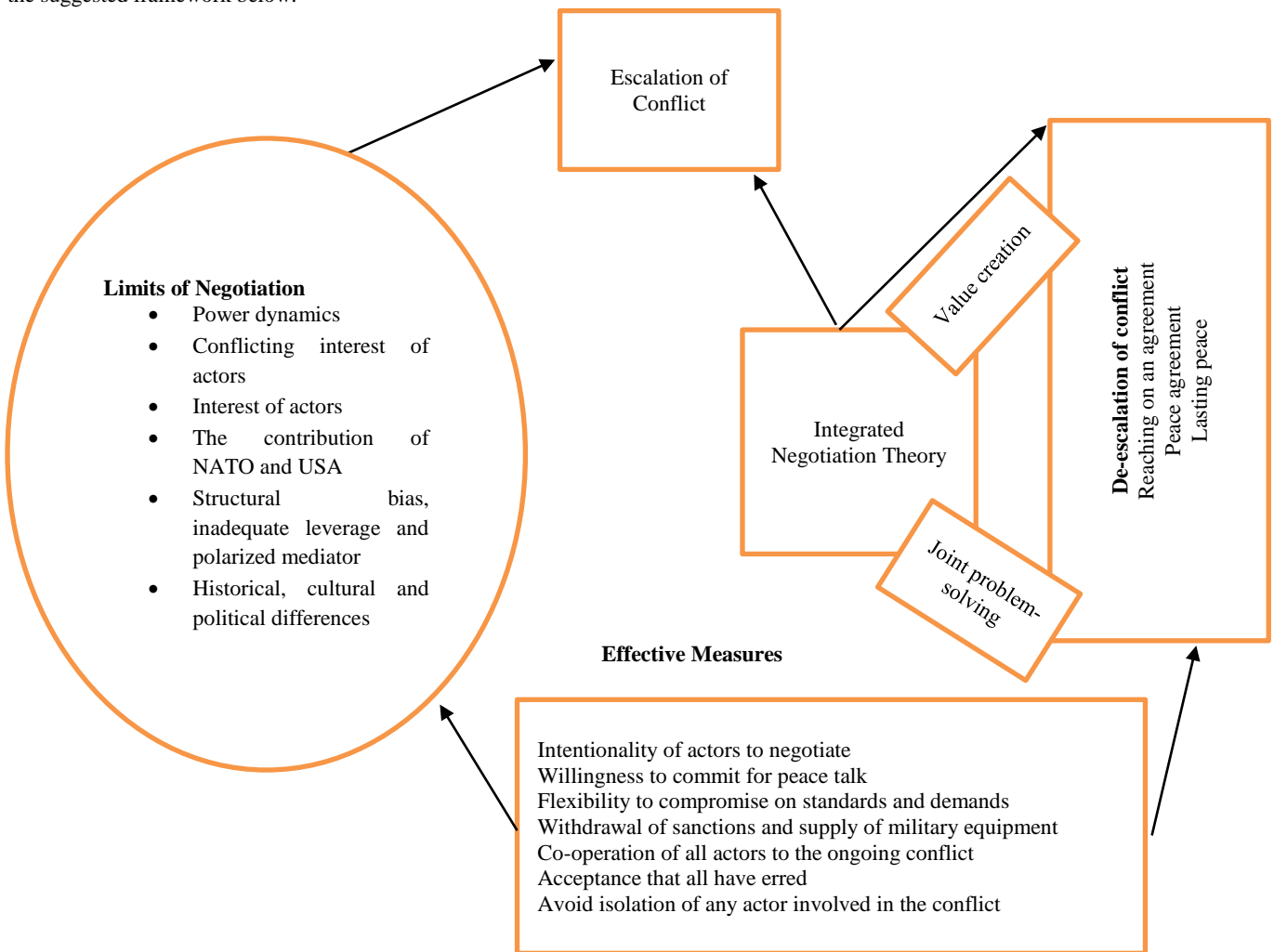
*The challenges faced in negotiations during the Russia and Ukraine Wars are significant, particularly due to deep-rooted historical, cultural, and political differences between Russia and Ukraine. These differences create a deep divide that hampers the negotiation process (Shekhovtsov, 2019).*

For effective negotiation to take place, negotiators must understand the historical, cultural and political dynamism between Russia and Ukraine. This hints the efficacy of grass root approach to problem solving. To make an impact in this war, the future negotiators should pay attention to these three drivers, history, culture and politics. Peoples origin traces who they are, it depicts the strength of their lasting traits, it also shows the various scares that has been covered and uncovered. On the culture, way of life, belief system, norms, values, language, rites and rituals pays a sounding attribute to making effective coexistence. Politics bends down to the leadership trend, acquisition of power, who is on power, what type of system operate in such state and their foreign policy.

Polarization of power could be vital meanwhile respecting the existing historic and cultural factors that tie these parties. Therefore, the complexities could be resolute on motivational mechanism as opposed to mechanistic mechanism on the road to peace talk. In order to heal, most times facing the hard reality heals not sugar coated and hypocritical touch. Going back to the root and making a revised formula pertinent to these factors would facilitate effective negotiation that may lead to ceasefire and durable peace between Russia and Ukraine.

**Reflections on the limits of negotiation in bringing the Russo - Ukraine War to an end**

It is essential to acknowledge the complexities and challenges inherent in negotiation, and continued commitment from all parties involved is crucial to achieving lasting peace. However, the question of why the continuous escalation of the conflict and way forward has been justified in the suggested framework below.



Source: Field data (2024)

Figure 3: Suggested effective negotiation model to bring Russia-Ukraine war to an end

The discourse on the limits of negotiation to bring Russo-Ukraine war to an end had six major sub-themes that run through the corpus used for analysis. These were power dynamics, conflicting interests of actors, interest of actors, the contribution of NATO and USA, structural bias, inadequate leverage and polarized mediation format; historical, cultural and political differences.

From the above theme and sub-themes, I have been able to draw a road map of the hindrances and now linking the theory into practice, this findings has practical implications. First to the

negotiators, it is clearly written that understanding of this conflict from historical, cultural and political point of view is very crucial for effective negotiation to occur.

More so, the actors at war, Ukraine and Russia, there is a tie that links both actors and they have the ability to come to round table and talk while committing to a realistic, unbiased and compromised stand to make things work. Peaceful co-existence is required, both should bend their shoulders and lay down their guards for discussion and way forward. It would be fruitful once they are intentional.



The study findings was important for USA, NATO, European Union, G7, Asian nations, France, Germany and all the allies supporting this war directly or indirectly to be intentional, avoid sideline and isolation of any actor for negotiation to occur. It is time to commit to peace talk instead of funding and supplying sophisticated military ammunitions and on the other side preach peace. Stand for what you truly believe for durable peace to occur. At this juncture, the study findings established that every party to this conflict has erred and forgiven each other is crucial to restore peace with no actor sidelined or being isolated to decide its fate.

Lastly the study finding has a theoretical implications as well. This study was supported by Integrative Negotiation Theory. It emphasizes the creation of value and joint problem-solving to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes in conflict resolution. According to this approach, which was put forth by Fisher and Ury (1981) in their book "Getting to Yes," it's critical to keep individuals separate from the issue, concentrate on interests rather than viewpoints, create a range of possibilities, and use objective standards to get to a consensus. By applying this theory, negotiators can strive for win-win solutions that address the underlying interests and needs of all parties involved (Fisher & Ury, 1981). The researcher opined that this theory in its richness would be a solution for Russia-Ukraine war to be bring the parties to a negotiation table not on battle field through sanctions and supply of military equipment. The collaboration to find solutions from NATO, USA, Russia, Ukraine and other allies must be a joint effort to solve this problem and reach an agreement. The study findings has stipulated that flexibility for both sides to compromise on their conflicting interest is vital. To get to a yes, actors must stop operating in the shadow but willingness to follow this suggested framework to make sense in resolving these ongoing conflict.

## DISCUSSION

This study was intended to inspect the limits of negotiation in bringing the Russo-Ukraine war to an end. The study findings confirmed that power dynamics, conflicting interests of actors, interest of actors, the contribution of NATO and USA, structural bias, inadequate leverage and polarized mediation format; historical, cultural and political differences are the drivers of the limits of negotiation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

Talking about power dynamics to this study was about many actors involved in this war and their contributions to making negotiation ineffective. On a different stand pole, Albert (2023) findings showed that negotiated settlements are not reached because governments end negotiations amidst fears of rebel growth from civilian support derived from service provision. In this context, service provision and rebels were not point of interest but the power relations leading to ineffective application of negotiation to end Russo Ukraine war.

This to Wolff and Takeaways (2021) is attributed to "unwillingness" not "*the fault of the existing negotiation formats per se.*" Placing it side by side, this made a similar contribution that unwillingness of actors can lead Russo-Ukraine war to a deadlock. So it not the issue of the negotiation format.

This study continued to emerge on "*actors' interest in battlefield*" as constrain to effective negotiation. Of which Dahiye and Mbataru (2023) established that traditional conflict resolution mechanisms; negotiation and arbitration have a significant effect on peacekeeping and security. Significant relationship here would

mean that when appropriately applied can end this war which was the main reason this study was carried out to inspect the limits of negotiation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

Again the study showed that "*Rat is cornered*" made negotiation impossible because it re-bounces back in a dangerous manner. To Rusten and Melamed (2023) it was about "*asymmetric information.*" When there is unequal information sharing among parties Russo-Ukraine war is stall. In context, the rat should be allowed freely in order to express their interest (Russia, Ukraine, USA, NATO, European Union, and other allies) and hence set a goal to reach a mutual acceptable agreement that brings this war to an end.

The study found that inability of actors to compromise their interests is a dilemma to effective negotiation. On the other hand, Maurer (2018) gave a reason for this uncompromised nature of actors towards their interest. The "*dynamics of an international conflict*" can result in a security dilemma, when steps done by one party to strengthen its security are viewed as threatening by the other, creating a vicious cycle of conflict escalation that exacerbates the difficulty of settlement. In Russo-Ukraine war this is why negotiation reached deadlock due to actors perception and fear of what other actors interest may turn out if allowed to go by such agenda. This creates ideological divides that makes negotiation ineffective.

Despite the above findings, Jayarajendra and Daniel (2024) made a vivid contribution by showing that in spite of the difficulties, negotiation offers a pathway to transform hostility into cooperation and enmity into empathy, facilitating reconciliation and long-term stability. Furthermore, trust, transparency, and ethical considerations are paramount in fostering constructive dialogue and finding common ground in seemingly intractable conflicts. Placing this in the context of the study, the researcher found out that these attributes have been lagging to make negotiation effective in Russo-Ukraine war. Thus, application of this quality and efficacious approach would mean no more war but peace in this region. It therefore recommends that upholding ethical principles in war and negotiation, Russia and Ukraine can strive to transcend violence and build a more harmonious and equitable world for future generations.

Furthermore, "hypocrisy" was a vice to negotiation as found out in this study. Different actors playing different game while fueling the conflict as oppose to ending it. On the words of Min (2020) "*increased international pressures*", especially emanating from nuclear weapons and international alliances, account for the failure of negotiation in ending conflicts. These continues to elucidate that alliances and international pressure makes things worse in Russo-Ukraine war. Double standard approach makes reaching a negotiation table impossible. Thus, international pressure for peace on Russia and Ukraine could mean nothing when the actors are not able to leave hypocritical action instead draw a lesson from Jayarajendra and Daniel (2024) as mentioned above.

For effective negotiation to take place, negotiators must understand the "*historical*", "*cultural*" and "*political dynamism*" between Russia and Ukraine. For Howard and Stark (2017) three basic types of causes may hamper negotiation to dispute settlement: domestic structural factors, bargaining dynamics, and types of international intervention. Conceptualizing these concepts, it further revealed that material and ideational factors constitute the international political environment, which varies in different time

periods. “Era” shapes geopolitics “environment, space, time and place.” That is why history, culture, and politics was crucial to this study. Once it is understood by the negotiators and actors at war, ending this war of Russia and Ukraine becomes easy. Thus, this environment drives “outside actors” normative strategies of viewing victory, negotiation, or stabilization as the appropriate solution to Russo-Ukraine war.

Lastly, this study found out that “complexities” in resolving this war or bringing it to an end is detrimental to “motivational mechanism” as opposed to “mechanistic mechanism” on the road to peace talk. Charap and Priebe (2023) pointed out as well to the challenge of ensuring that parties can credibly commit to the terms of a negotiated settlement is viewed through the lens of “future behavior” or “intention”. In comparison, this concepts points toward the unknown as the result of the aftermath of the war and intention of the actors, the likelihood of history repeating itself leads to a breakdown in the negotiations or a return to conflict in Russo-Ukraine war. Therefore, this study affirmed that commitment is crucial and the motivation should be to have a sustainable peace not equipping each other with weapons for destruction.

## CONCLUSION

The literature was crucial in identifying the role governments play in negotiations and identifying key actors and their interest facilitates effective negotiation that can lead to the end of Russo-Ukraine war. More so, unwillingness of actors to comply and commit to peace talk means a deadlock for negotiation. It also showed that it is not the negotiation format that is at fault but actors involvement made this impossible.

Lastly the various literature contribution stressed that negotiation offers a pathway to transform hostility into cooperation and enmity into empathy, facilitating reconciliation and long-term stability. Furthermore, trust, transparency, and ethical considerations are paramount in fostering constructive dialogue and finding common ground in seemingly intractable conflicts. However, this could be achieved only when actors change their hypocritical behaviours towards the approaches, mechanisms and agendas set in the path for negotiation.

Generally, the study concludes that multilateral engagement remains critical for fostering peaceful co-existence and addressing geopolitical challenges. Therefore, effective multilateral diplomacy is essential to bring to an end the Russia-Ukraine war and promoting regional and global stability. As per the study objective and corresponding study findings, the study concludes that power dynamics, conflicting interests of actors, interest of actors, the contribution of NATO and USA, structural bias, inadequate leverage and polarized mediation format; historical, cultural and political differences are the drivers that limits negotiation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

From these findings and conclusions, the study recommends that actors involved in this conflict should foster open communication, considering cultural and economic factors in other to facilitate negotiation for peace agreement to be signed. Noteworthy, as long as the limits of multilateral diplomacy are not recognized, the deployment of multilateral diplomacy in some context may not bear any fruits. This realization recommends the peace strategists to go back to the drawing board and think outside the box.

The study also recommends that negotiators and mediators consider both negotiation as bargaining and resistance. While bargaining is considered as positive negotiation, resistance is negative negotiation. The diplomats are recommended to develop the skills for engaging both the positive and negative notions of negotiation. Lastly, the study recommends that negotiators, and all stakeholders involved in this conflict should ensure impartiality in every diplomatic engagement, and avoid isolation of actors at war in every engagement so as to draw a line in understanding their interest and encourage them reach an agreement for peace to thrive, cherished and sustained in this region.

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## DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The author has no conflict of interest to declare regarding this work, and I have no interest in anything aside from knowledge sharing and improvement of international, state and individual level of analysis in state-state relations and giving diplomacy a room to end this conflict.

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