

ISRG Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISRGJAHSS)



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Arts Humanit Soc Sci

ISSN: 2583-7672 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjahss>

Volume – II Issue-VI (November-December) 2024

Frequency: Bimonthly



The Limits of Mediation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end

Ophoke Leonard Onyebuchi

Department of Social and Economic Science; International Relations and Diplomatic Studies Cavendish University
Uganda <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6645-8061>

| **Received:** 07.12.2024 | **Accepted:** 12.12.2024 | **Published:** 18.12.2024

***Corresponding author:** Ophoke Leonard Onyebuchi

Department of Social and Economic Science; International Relations and Diplomatic Studies Cavendish University
Uganda <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6645-8061>

Abstract

Peace between Russia and Ukraine is severely constrained, hindering any possibility of a peaceful resolution of the conflict as dictated by international law. The ongoing conflict has stagnated, creating a barrier to reconciliation between the involved parties, thus precluding peaceful coexistence. The purpose of this study was to scrutinize the limits of mediation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end. Drawing on theoretical framework such as Contingency Model of Third-Party Intervention, this study adopted a qualitative approach and a case study design. Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis. The findings uncovered that inconsistent international intervention, diplomatic bias, fragility of ceasefire, military superiority, and actors at play are the key factors that impede the effectiveness of mediation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

Despite these challenges, the study concludes that multilateral engagement remains crucial for fostering peaceful coexistence and addressing geopolitical challenges. The study recommends actors willingness and sincere commitment for durable peace by allowing mediation to take control as opposed to sabotage of peace tools by different stakeholders involved.

Keywords: *Limits of Mediation, Peacebuilding, International Law, Contingency Model of Third Party Intervention, Geopolitics, Russo-Ukraine war*

INTRODUCTION

The urgency of conducting this study at the present moment was as a result of the prolonged and unresolved nature of the Russia-Ukraine war, prompting the need to examine why mediation has failed to resolve the Russia – Ukraine war. That is why the researcher had proposed to examine the limits of these peace making attempts as an answer to the question: why the peace making attempts have failed. Throughout the Russia-Ukraine military conflict, numerous rounds of talks have been held in an attempt to negotiate a resolution to the crisis (Mbah & Wasum, 2022). However, mediating in this situation has stalled.

The genesis of Russo-Ukraine war can be traced back in 2014. "The crisis in Ukraine is the most serious test of European security in the 21st century so far," the then-UK Foreign Minister stated in an address to Parliament. The international leaders were confronted with the most urgent geopolitical crisis in 2014 when Russia invaded Ukraine. Hague (2014) referenced the annexation of Crimea by President Vladimir Putin, together with his acquisition of control over significant areas of the Donbas region, left world leaders puzzled about his motivations. On the other hand, different interpretations of Russian intentions has been offered by a number of international relations experts. However, even if they gave the invasion's background, they frequently ignored the underlying economic and resource-dependent issues. Barbashin and Thoburn (2014) and Snyder (2014) attribute Russia's activities to neo-colonial imperial goals.

Still, a lot was attributed to the genesis of this war. The imperialists saw its actions towards other nations and areas, especially vast ones like China or continental Europe, among others, as supportive of the creation of the Eurasian Union (Gardels, 2014). A different school of thought holds that the issue was Russian ethno-nationalist claims (Rutland 2014) that connected customary values and interests (Tsygankov 2015). According to Larson and Shevchenko (2014), several academics draw attention to Putin's emotions and personal grievances with the West. While McFaul, Sestanovich, and Maearsheimer (2014) talked about the influence of populist politics, Treisman (2014) and Mankoff (2014) highlight Russia's economic issues. With all of these, the cause is unknown, hence it's important to comprehend the underlying cause from an empirical point of view.

In a significant turn of events on February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the commencement of a "special military operation" in eastern Ukraine (Mudrov, 2022). Following this announcement, hundreds of Russian soldiers entered Ukraine and began attacking Ukrainian military institutions and civilian infrastructure with artillery (Morelli, 2017). Putin turned down a temporary peace agreement put out by Dmitry Kozak, the deputy chief of staff of the Kremlin, during the early phases of the invasion. The agreement called for an end to hostilities in exchange for assurances that Ukraine would not apply to join NATO (Mudrov, 2022).

A critical meeting between Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy took place on February 27, as efforts to forge a peace accord gathered strength. They decided that subject to no conditions, a Ukrainian delegation would meet with Russian officials on the Belarusian border close to the Pripyat River (Martz, 2022). Zelenskyy received guarantees from Lukashenko that all planes, helicopters,

and missiles operating within Belarusian airspace would stay grounded for the duration of the talks.

Remarkably, on March 16, Mykhailo Podoliak was named head negotiator for the peace delegation from Ukraine (Menon & Ruger, 2023). Podoliak made it clear that the Russian military would be pulling out of their forward positions in Ukraine as part of the 15-point plan-based peace negotiations. In exchange, Ukraine pledged not to pursue additional NATO membership in exchange for international assurances of military backing and alliance in the case of future Russian invasion.

A formal and lasting peace agreement has remained elusive. The failure to establish a peaceful resolution prompts the need for a comprehensive study that delves into the limits of mediation thus, this case study of Russia- Ukraine war was to shed light on these dynamics and contribute valuable insights to the field. The peaceful resolution of the Russo-Ukraine conflict is fundamental, as premised in international law. However, the ongoing conflict has reached a bottleneck, posing a barrier to any peaceful resolution of the conflict between the parties. With its state of war, it negates peaceful coexistence. Thus, we can say there is no peace between Russia and Ukraine. A good number of cases in an attempt to settle this conflict showed no way through, as evidenced by the ongoing war. If there was success in a peaceful settlement, there would be a ceasefire by now. To ensure that continued human rights abuses, war crimes, and other crimes against humanity are curtailed, effective measures are urgently required. Thus, it is not possible to address the issue of conflict without a room for mediation. It is against this backdrop that this research was carried out to examine the limits of mediation, with a multiple perspective in identifying the best measures for ending the Russo-Ukraine War.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mediation is the use of skilled communication and negotiation tactics, and unbiased third party neutral to help disputing parties resolve conflict through an organised and interactive process of mediation (Muazzamoy, 2021). The process of mediation is used to settle conflicts. Instead of having a settlement forced upon them by a formal authority such as a court, parties meet together with the assistance of a mediator to isolate concerns, explore possibilities, examine alternatives, and reach an agreement everyone can live with. In an attempt to resolve the problem, the mediator's job is to help the parties communicate with one another, help them concentrate on the important issues at hand, and provide solutions that satisfy the requirements or interests of all parties involved. Without the assistance of a third party to diffuse tensions and offer recommendations for next steps, most disputes cannot be settled. In addition to providing the parties with objectivity and empathy, mediators can assist the parties in establishing the facts and in coming up with new ideas. Persuasion is another tool that can be used to soften hard positions. With this, the researcher opined that the rightfully application of mediation processes in the context of the Russia-Ukraine case, this ongoing conflict would be resolved thus the need for the exploration of the limits of mediation in bringing the Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

The theoretical review was underpinned by contingency model of third-party intervention which was shaped by Fiedler (1964). According to the contingency model; the decision of a third party to intervene in a conflict is influenced by various contextual factors. These factors include the severity of the conflict, the

potential for escalation, and the availability of alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms.

The introduction of the concepts of macro-level and micro-level within the context of peacekeeping missions is important (Curran & Hunt, 2020). At the macro-level, peacekeeping is employed to bring physical destruction under control, followed by peacemaking to initiate a settlement process, and peace building to address inequities through development aid. On the other hand, at the micro-level within a peacekeeping mission area, peacekeeping exists as an interface between local-level mediation to resolve local problems and resolution strategies that encompass socio-economic consultancy.

To enhance the contingency model, two refinements can be considered. Firstly, extending the analysis to include the strategic, operational, and tactical levels at which military operations and national strategies are conceived. The strategic level involves identifying objectives and setting priorities for governments and international organizations, while the operational level involves translating these objectives and priorities into resources, policies, and strategies (Curran & Hunt, 2020).

Debates among scholars also made critical diagnosis to this theory. I have considered a discussion from Bercovitch's (1996) book, "Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation." It was directly related to the concept that was chosen for the research. One of the most significant ways to resolve disputes in the post-Cold War era is through mediation. The procedures and methods of international mediation as they are now being used are represented in this text. In third-party consultation, a team of consultants works with the parties to enhance communication, identify underlying relationship problems, and support the search for an original dispute resolution. These interventions frequently take the shape of problem-solving workshops.

The contingency model of third-party intervention, was important for understanding multilateral diplomatic concepts as mediation in the discourse of Russia-Ukraine war. It also helped in investigating the drivers of failure and success of third party intervention in conflict resolution in the case study chosen. The contingency model and its refinements aligned well with the variables examined in this study and their relevance to peacekeeping and conflict resolution. The model helped in understanding the motivation and capacity of the conflicting parties to resolve the dispute themselves thus plays a crucial role in determining the need for third-party intervention. The contingency model suggests that the perceived legitimacy and trustworthiness of the third party influence its effectiveness in facilitating conflict resolution. The model emphasized the importance of the third party's expertise and available resources in resolving the conflict. The contingency model also considers the timing of third-party intervention and its impact on conflict resolution.

While the contingency model of third-party intervention provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors that influence third-party intervention in conflicts, there is a literature gap in applying this model specifically to mediation in the context of the discourse on Russia-Ukraine war. By applying the contingency model to the Russia-Ukraine war, I was able to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of the limits of third-party intervention and its role in facilitating mediation, and

the development of sustainable peace agreements in this specific conflict.

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

Scholars have highlighted the factors that impeded mediation to bring peace in conflict context. For example, Russia's military engagement in the Syrian civil war and the role of regional and international actors in the conflict are examined in the 2019 research Why Did Russia's Mediation in the Syrian Conflict Fail in Making Peace. They contend that Moscow's national and geostrategic interests were protected, regime change was avoided, and the Syrian conflict was arbitrated. Additionally, it makes the case that taking into account the interests of several other parties, including the US, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and others, is necessary in order to resolve the crisis without resorting solely to military force. Determining the conflict's regional and geostrategic elements is crucial. Furthermore, it clarified that systemic and regional power balances are important barriers to conflict resolution. Although the crisis was not resolved, the Geneva and Astana peace initiatives were successful in defusing the situation. The study comes to the conclusion that a multilateral approach to peace may be a better strategy for resolving conflicts because leverage alone is insufficient for successful mediation.

A study by Blažević (2023) on "The Failure of The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Resolution: Shortcomings of Facilitative Mediation or an Unsuitable Mediator?" showed that when the region's Supreme Council announced in 1988 that it would be transferred from the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict got underway. Following the collapse of the USSR in 1992, a full-scale conflict erupted, which came to an end with the armistice in May 1994. The OSCE's Minsk Group used a technique known as facilitative mediation to mediate a peaceful settlement of the conflict for the ensuing 25 years. The conflicting parties were unable to come to a definitive agreement, and in the autumn of 2020, a new conflict broke out. This study concludes that the failure of the conflict resolution in Nagorno-Karabakh was caused by the co-chairs' disparate and incongruous interests in the Caucasus combined with the inadequate mandate. The current study concurs with the above findings, however, it does not account for on the limits of mediation in bringing the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war to an end. Thus, the need for this study.

Nte (2023) study, on the other hand, took a different tack when examining battlefield might and penalties as mediators in the Tigray conflict. The study's specific goal was to assess the Tigray Conflict's (TC) mediation in light of the fierce diplomatic efforts that, when compared to military force and sanctions, did not result in a ceasefire as of yet but instead cleared the path for one on March 22, 2022. Accordingly, the following research questions served as a guide for the study. In what ways could the battlefield help bring about a truce in TC? What international pressures and sanctions improved TC mediation? Why did the TC mediation process take so long? The investigation was directed by the Thucydides-popularized theoretical framework of Classical Realism. For this study, the qualitative research methodology was used. The study comes to the conclusion that international pressures and sanctions made the TC mediation process easier. According to the report, both State and non-State actors should avoid taking any acts that could obstruct peace and instead look for peaceful dispute resolution techniques like mediation.

Likewise, Duursma's (2020) research on African responses to African problems. Scholarly research on the international mediation of civil conflicts primarily adopts a rationalist-materialist viewpoint when examining the role of legitimacy in mediating civil wars in Africa. According to this viewpoint, materially manipulating the bargaining environment by third parties with significant financial and military resources is the key to successful mediation. It was stated that the legitimacy of a mediator influences the mediation process as well since a legitimate mediator might persist in seeking a resolution that satisfies both parties and attempt to influence the disputing parties to comply. It demonstrated the importance of legitimacy by methodically contrasting the performance of non-African and African third parties. Third parties from Africa are usually regarded as ineffectual due to their limited economic and military capabilities. Nonetheless, their high level of legitimacy stems from a deep-seated belief in African statehood that African mediation is the best kind of conflict resolution in Africa, which enables them to mediate civil wars there with effectiveness. Quantitative evidence supports the efficacy of African third parties, drawing on data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme augmented with unique data that collectively cover all mediation initiatives in Africa between 1960 and 2017. African third parties are significantly more likely to reach negotiated solutions that are more likely to be long-lasting than non-African ones. African third parties are especially effective if the conflict parties are highly committed to the African solutions norm. Theoretically, this study deviates from much of the literature that puts forward solely rationalist-materialist explanations of mediation success. By bringing legitimacy to the forefront, this article supplements the current mediation literature that emphasizes material sources of power and ignores social structures.

According to Hellmüller's (2023) analysis of articles published in highly regarded academic journals, knowledge production on mediation is practice-oriented but not practice-relevant. The study sheds light on the types of knowledge produced, who produces it, and how. It reveals that the majority of scholarly research on mediation is produced by male scholars from the West; positivist approaches predominate in these analyses, and the majority of publications theories about reasons for mediation success. Through this analysis, the article demonstrates that while high-impact mediation research is practice-oriented in that most contributions examine how to make it more effective, its practice-relevance could be strengthened in three ways: by increasing the diversity of perspectives, by adding more interpretive and qualitative approaches and by producing more critical research. The article demonstrates that broader mediation research published in more specialized journals, books and the policy literature contributes to filling these gaps. It therefore nuances the presumed disconnect between mediation research and practice. Overall, the article provides a thorough review of knowledge production on mediation and adds to discussions on diversity and the critical potential of the broader field of peace studies. The study findings have shown that mediators often lack the necessary leverage or influence to compel parties to reach an agreement, particularly when the parties are deeply entrenched in their positions. Additionally, concerns about the mediator's impartiality can undermine the credibility of the mediation process.

The study conducted by Malik, Shankar, and Bindlish (2023) on United Nations Peacekeeping: Enabling Conflict Resolution and the Role of Mediation revealed that, despite the passage of nearly a decade of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African

continent is still lagging behind in several areas, most notably SDG 16 "Peace, Justice, and Strong System." The continent nevertheless hosts a large number of the contemporary global problems involving armed conflict and territorial disputes. Although there have been a lot of new variables contributing to armed conflict in Africa during the past ten years, ethnic strife continues to be a major obstacle to peace. International efforts at peacekeeping have emerged as one of the most popular tactics for resolving ethnic disputes. As of 2023, 6 out of the 12 ongoing global United Nations peacekeeping operations still reside in Africa. However, the issue of ethnic conflict remains prevalent and peacekeeping seems to be ineffective in de-escalating it. Using peacekeeping as third-party mediation theory by Fetherston, this article identifies that whilst UN Peacekeeping is relatively successful in conflict control, it still struggles with resolution processes which prevents long-term peace and resolution to take place. This article also identified the lack of UN Peacekeeping capability in addressing local conflicts and the complexities of ethnic based-conflict, as well biases in peacekeeping operations contribute to effectiveness. In addition, this essay highlights the necessity of improved communication between UN Peacekeeping and regional and local actors, as well as more thorough training for peacekeepers managing ethnic conflict. The study results showed that the timing and sequencing of mediation efforts can be critical to their success. Mediators may struggle to engage parties at the right moment, when they are receptive to compromise, or to coordinate their efforts with other conflict resolution initiatives.

In addition, a study on Civil War Mediation in the Shadow of IGOs: The Path to Comprehensive Peace Agreements was conducted by Karreth, Tir, Quinn, and Joshi (2024). Comprehensive peace agreements (CPAs) are useful in putting an end to civil wars and enhancing post-conflict circumstances, according to recent research, albeit they only occur in a small percentage of civil conflicts. This research offers methodical proof regarding the formation of CPAs and the part played by foreign parties in enabling their signature. We contend that in civil war countries that are members of more IGOs with significant economic clout, mediation has a higher chance of success and that CPAs are more likely to develop. Using their financial and institutional leverage, these IGOs can help the combatants overcome the credible commitment problems associated with entering into mediation, and with making sufficient concessions and compromises to reach and sign a CPA. Analyzing all intrastate armed conflicts from 1989 to 2011, it found that a conflict country's memberships in IGOs with high economic leverage increase the odds of (1) mediation occurring and (2) mediation subsequently leading to the signing of CPAs. This finding is robust to common sources of spurious relationships between international institutions and the behavior of conflict parties. Through the use of their institutional and financial resources, these intermediaries can help the parties involved in mediation come to an agreement and sign a CPA by helping them resolve difficulties connected to credible commitment. Membership in IGOs with substantial economic clout improves the likelihood that (1) mediation will occur and (2) mediation will result in the signing of CPAs, according to an analysis of all intrastate armed conflicts between 1989 and 2011. The aforementioned conclusion is robust against frequently encountered sources of false associations between the conduct of armed groups and international institutions.

In summary, the analysis of this literature suggests that while mediation can be a valuable tool for ending international wars,

there are significant structural, political, and practical barriers that can limit its effectiveness. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive grasp of the specific dynamics at play in each conflict, as well as a willingness to explore alternative approaches to conflict resolution, such as more robust enforcement mechanisms or the involvement of a broader range of stakeholders. Ongoing research and analysis in this field underscore the continued importance of mediation efforts in addressing the complexities of the conflict and fostering a sustainable and just resolution. This was the driving force of this study to scrutinize the limits of mediation in bringing the Russo-Ukraine war to an end then proffer the alternative to reach an agreement between the parties at war.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was centred on the case study of Russia-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 mediation 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 questions 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 mediation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

Ethical considerations

In this study several ethical considerations were taken into account in regards to the limits of mediation in the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war,

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.

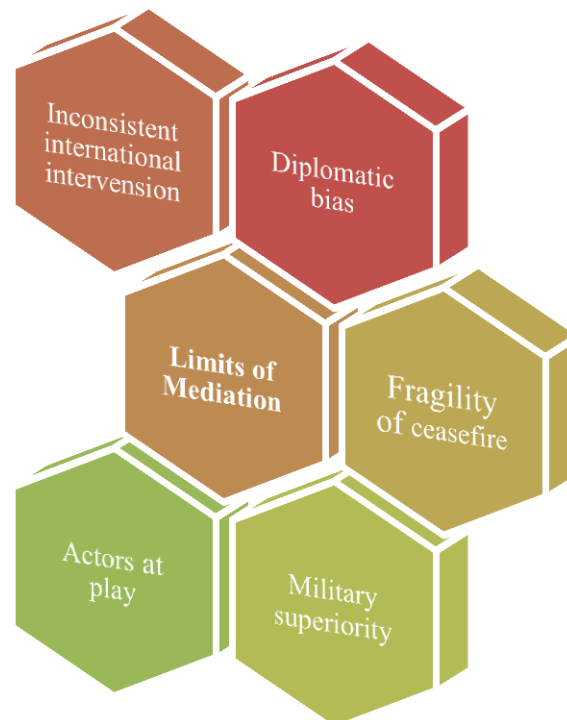
Professional Integrity: Professional standards of integrity and honesty in conducting and reporting the study was upheld. The researcher adhered to ethical guidelines and principles of research integrity, ensuring transparency, accuracy, and reliability in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data.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

RESULTS

The key findings regarding the limits of mediation in bringing the Russo-Ukraine war to an end was done bearing in mind context specific action of a single case study chosen for thematic analysis.

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

This theme was intended to scrutinize the limits of mediation in bringing the Russo - Ukraine War to an end. In the chunks of corpus used for analysis, the major sub-themes that emerged from the list of materials chosen were; inconsistent international intervention, diplomatic bias, fragility of ceasefire, military superiority, and actors at play. The diagram below display these factors.



Source Field Data (2024)

Figure 1: Factors that limits mediation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end

From these list of sub-themes, I analysed each of the concepts as pertains to this study and possible outcomes for each concept. The first was the inconsistent international intervention discussed below.

Inconsistent international intervention

The inconsistent international intervention emerged as the first sub-theme that impede mediation effort in Russo-Ukraine war. In one of the articles, this was made clear as I explicated specifically below:

The threat of economic isolation and restrictions on trade and finance can create leverage for mediators and enhance the prospects of reaching a peaceful resolution. The influence of international sanctions following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 has been seen as a significant factor in initiating the Minsk negotiations and pushing for a mediated settlement (Lamy & Watson, 2021).

These concepts, economic isolation, restriction on trade and finance created avenue for mediation that made an impact in 2014, since then the resurgence of February 12, 2022 does showed that there is inconsistency on international actors intervention. Why the spark of another war if the Minsk negotiations was implemented properly? Sanctions couldn't scare Russia anymore because it has found ground to relate with those who relate with him. The international community has been disunited in action toward peace. The disorganization, disunity in voicing out a clear approach and condemning acts that are not inconformity with the international law and international humanitarian law must be condemned with consistent approach to solve a problem. Unfortunately, the dangers of who is involved, who supports who, who is against who and what is my interest and gain for supporting or not supporting a particular actor sets the international community into a disable state and inability to act with consistency during such occurrences. Generally, international actors through third-party intervention should maintain consistency in it approach to facilitate peace and must speak in unison not one actor acting against the other. Collaborative efforts means target in mind with a solution that is both achievable and sustainable while every actor is involved. None compliance arise when the house is unorganized. To make mediation a tool for dispute settlement, the lesson of Russia-Ukraine war should serve as an example to everyone. We may have different interest, but on the table on peace, objectivity and compliance is a must. First, to come up with solutions for both parties at war; to enable parties facilitate room for peace deal and finally to enable them consolidate what has been agreed upon without taking sides or intentions to isolate any actor. This led to the next discourse on diplomatic bias as another impeding factor to effective mediation to this conflict detailed in below.

Diplomatic bias

Diplomats are believed to have all the skills and ability to mediate in any giving circumstance. Unfortunately this can only be effective when application is intended to make an impact as opposed to advancing once interest amidst chaos. Diplomatic bias, ranked second as one of the factors that has made mediation unsuccessful in Russo-Ukraine war. One of the articles analysed had this to say:

A variety of factors, such as the nature of the dispute, the relationships between the parties, the mediator's bias,

the international setting, and the mediation style, have all been linked to mediation success (Marandici, 2022).

Mediator bias and mediation style were further broken down for its direct relation to the sub-theme of discourse. Mediator's biasness only surface as a result of the dispute characteristics, inter-relationship among parties involved. Therefore, mediators are weakened to become bias in their proceedings to suit actor's interest who they represent. In this regards, the outcome will always be fruitless. In a bid to reach a consensus, it is imperative to have an independent and unbiased mediators who understand the need for peace deal and to facilitate the warring parties take a step to win-win solution. However, mediation style watered down all efforts made by the mediating institutions in this war. Therefore, I recommend mediators to pay attention to problem solving as opposed to masking in the face of unfortunate and inhuman situations.

Self-gain and interest should be the commitment to create a positive impact for duty you are trusted to do not adding wound to situations that you know that no amount of manipulation can settle instead escalate the conflict. When actors are at war, they are calling for attention to bring about settlement from international community and when the interventions become part of the conflict everything goes back to abnormal. Conflict brings a lot of disadvantages which of course inevitable, reconstructive solutions must be fastened for the sake of national, regional and global security and peace.

It is recommendable that actors at war, allow independent mediators apply diplomacy to maintain unbiased stands. It is high time this style of mediation stops. Commit resources for effective use by ensuring that parties allow mediation channels to be objective and independent. Enticement and manipulation of their powers to effectively exercise their duties makes diplomacy lose meaning. And to revive this, there is need to agree that no party should influence any mediator in anyways possible. The next sub-theme also showed that fragility of ceasefire contribute to the ineffectiveness of mediation to bring Russia-Ukraine war to an end.

Fragility of ceasefire

Ceasefire is a good sign for peace talk to begin. Unfortunately, it has been a delicate situation in Russo-Ukraine war. One of the interesting corpus that emerged was fragility of ceasefire as an agent that hampers the effectiveness of mediation as a peace tool to bring this war to an end. One of the articles I chose had this to say:

The fragility of ceasefires, frequently violated by both sides, poses a significant challenge to negotiations. The breach of ceasefires reinforces the perception that the opposing party is not fully committed to a peaceful resolution, further eroding confidence and impeding the negotiation process (Balmaceda, 2018).

As a researcher, there is currently a need to understand the implications of the fragility of ceasefires and explore strategies to establish a solid foundation for meaningful negotiations in the Russia-Ukraine war. What challenges this approach has been marked with re-occurrences and the parties inability to commit to what has been agreed upon thus making this war so delicate. Does this mean mediation has failed? It is yes and no.

Yes because efforts has proven abortive and no because there is a room to make effective progress once the parties at war has agreed

to compromise and settle down for peace. So, this peace making tool is still very effective when it is put to use appropriately. Actors inability and mediation style as already discussed pre-empt the whole process and since it is crystal clear, the mechanism to be put forward should address these concerns from the actor-specific perspective and commit to follow each agenda agreed upon to the latter. Trust building and commitment is vital to padlock this conflict. Going forward, I analysed the forth sub-theme which was military superiority as a causative agent that vetoed the efficacy of mediation to bring Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

Military superiority and power imbalance

States security is vital and the strength of its military ensure safety of the state. However, it is necessary to put diplomacy to use in the face of conflict because it has proven to be effective as opposed to catastrophic rain of destructions when states decides to go militarily as a means for peace. Regrettably, Russo-Ukraine war has been hijacked by military superiority and power imbalance of Russia over Ukraine and in counter-defence, supply of military equipment by USA, NATO and its allies to Ukraine has repudiate peace talk through mediation. Evidence from the one of the commentaries analysed showed:

Because it would demonstrate the United States' incapacity to mount a prompt response, the Americans do not want the Russians to deploy their military choices. It would also expose NATO's shortcomings. Since they are unsure of Berlin's future direction, the Americans are similarly reluctant to put the Germans to the test. In a way, the Germans initiated the crisis when they confronted the Ukrainians' unwillingness to move on with an EU procedure and when they provided both pre- and post-protest support to one of the rebel leaders. However, the Germans have been progressively quieter since then, and the person they backed (Commentary-Friedman, 2014).

Another significant aspect that has been scrutinized was the factor of power imbalance on mediation and the subsequent peace agreements. Researchers have pointed out the asymmetrical power dynamic between Russia and Ukraine, with Russia's significant military and economic leverage over its neighbor.

This power imbalance poses challenges for mediators in achieving a balanced mediation process and can influence the outcome of peace agreements (Biswas & Shirk, 2019).

The limitations of mediation in mitigating Russo-Ukraine war is as a result of military might and power imbalances as I have highlighted, underscoring the complexity of achieving a resolution that is acceptable to both parties. It is recommendable, military might and power is a strength and as such should be “for” not “against” in making mediation an effective solution. It was unwise to commit resources, power, and military might into losses for a problem that multilateral diplomacy through mediation can solve. Also, it could be effective for other external actors in this conflict to commit to effective mediation as priority not as an alternative so that no actor is pushed to the corner where they will turn to military approach as way forward. Along the continuum, the last sub-theme in this theme was the influence of actors at play as a contributing factors that renders mediation fruitless.

Actors at play

To understand how dynamic this conflict is, who is involve, where and how was important to this study. The emerged sub-theme unearthed that actors at play push mediation to the mud. One of the articles chosen for this discourse had this to say:

Although the United States and the European Union attempted mediation in Crimea, it was essentially ineffective because Russia intervened in a swift and decisive preemptive manner. Because Russia and the United States are the two key geopolitical actors in this conflict, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine is more enduring (2019, Carment, Nikolko, & Belo).

“Geopolitics” and “play” as concepts was vital for this discourse. In geopolitics, this places the international political behaviour in a room with geographical territory under investigation. In setting the space for the players to play. “Play” in this study is correlated to geopolitical actors who has the powers to end or escalate Russo-Ukraine war. Side by side, actors at play is very crucial to understanding a conflict and also it is dependent on the efficacy of applied mediation process and direction of the outcome.

Through this medium, instead of escalation of conflict due to geopolitical position, the setting for conflict resolution demands a mutual relations that allows these actors to set their ball up for a positive impact to bring to an end the continuity of destruction detrimental to all spheres of life of inhabitant and across the space or setting of this war. Thus a cry for diplomatic intervention through mediation is echoed and both actors should be willing to make this mechanism effective through flexibility and utilisation of their might as a strength of positive transformer that conduit the current of peace to light out war in this territory then ignite durable security and peace in this region.

Reflection on the limit of mediation in bringing the Russo - Ukraine War to an end

This analysis underscore the continued importance of mediation efforts in addressing the complexities of this conflict and fostering a sustainable and just resolution. This should be the driving force for the actors at play and mediators inclusive. The second theme uncovered that inconsistent international intervention, diplomatic bias, fragility of ceasefire, military superiority, and actors at play are the key factors that impede the effectiveness of mediation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

Actors inability to compromise and mediation style as already discussed pre-empts the whole process. For this reason, the mechanism to be put forward should address these concerns from the actor-specific perspective and commit to follow each agenda agreed upon to the latter. Trust building and commitment is vital to padlock this conflict.

Relatable, this study findings contributed to the theoretical implications adopted by the study. The study adopted contingency model of third-party intervention as postulated by Fiedler in 1964. According to this approach, the kind of intervention should depend on the parties involved, the nature of the dispute, and how far along it has evolved (Bercovitch & Houston, 2000). It highlights that as conflict rises or de-escalates, different forms of involvement are suitable at different levels.

These concepts have been identified in the case study of Russo-Ukraine war making it effective for mediator to take this approach very crucial in the conflict audit assessment and mediation

processes for effective multilateral diplomatic intervention in conflict context.

To enhance the contingency model, two refinements can be considered. Firstly, extending the analysis to include the strategic, operational, and tactical levels at which military operations and national strategies are conceived. The strategic level involves identifying objectives and setting priorities for governments and international organizations, while the operational level involves translating these objectives and priorities into resources, policies, and strategies (Curran & Hunt, 2020). This was in line with the recommendations that was uncovered by the forth sub-theme on military superiority with an addition of power imbalance factored in the findings to help modify this model.

The contingency model and its refinements align well with the variable examined in this study and its relevance to peacekeeping and conflict resolution. By incorporating this theoretical perspectives, the study gained a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between different levels of intervention, the nature of the conflict, and the parties involved with a recommendation to curtail the limits of mediation in bringing Russo-Ukraine war to an end

DISCUSSION

The study was purposed to scrutinize the limits of mediation in bringing the Russo - Ukraine War to an end. The study confirmed that the inconsistent international intervention, diplomatic bias, fragility of ceasefire, military superiority and power imbalance, and actors at play are the major limits of mediation in bringing the Russo-Ukraine to an end.

The study found out that inconsistent international intervention hampers effective mediation in Russo-Ukraine war which were due to concepts like, “economic isolation, restriction on trade and taking sides or intentions to isolate any actor” crowd this theme. On the contrary, Malik, Shankar and Bindlish (2023) it is the question of “timing” and “sequencing” of mediation efforts is critical to “success.” This concepts varied but the researcher found them intertwined because time and sequence of action taken by Mediators is crucial to ensuring that there is consistency in international intervention to Russo-Ukraine war. However, choosing diplomacy as a last result when conflict has sparked renders it fruitless.

More so, “diplomatic bias” was found to limit mediation to bring to an end Russo-Ukraine war. Side by side Blažević (2023) diverged by stating that the combination of the “weak mandate” and the “co-chairs” separate and incongruous interests in the Caucasus results in the failure of the conflict resolution. However, further concepts captured this idea of Blažević in context, that is, “mediation style” for which this study confirmed that it watered down all efforts made by the mediating institutions to end Russo-Ukraine war. Therefore, I recommend mediators to pay attention to problem solving as opposed to masking in the face of unfortunate and inhuman situations to bring Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

Going forward, Nte (2023) established that sanctions and international pressures facilitates mediation process and recommends that State and non-State actors should refrain from actions capable of impeding peace and seek for conflict resolution mechanism such as mediation. Adding to his voice, I concur that actors should agree that no party should influence any mediator in anyways possible.

Furthermore the study also confirmed that this war is so delicate with the concept, “fragility of ceasefire.” This has been confirmed to contribute to the ineffectiveness of mediation to bring Russia-Ukraine war to an end. I asked, why is it so delicate? Is it the mediator’s failing to do their job or the actors failing to comply with ceasefire? More clearly, Hellmüller (2023) contribution gave meaning to this question by stating that mediators often lack the necessary leverage or influence to compel parties to reach an agreement, particularly when the parties are deeply entrenched in their positions. Additionally, concerns about the mediator’s impartiality can undermine the credibility of the mediation process. In this regards, I concur with this thesis, however, recommends that both actors and mediators in Russo-Ukraine conflict embrace impartiality and as well have the influence to mediate this conflict so as to achieve a sustainable peace.

In addition, Geukjian and AbouHarb (2019) voiced that using “military leverage” is not a sufficient condition to resolve the conflict, mainly because the interests of the external actors, need to be considered. Thus, it is important for me to pinpoint the contribution of “regional” and “geostrategic dimensions” in resolving Russo-Ukraine war while taking note of what he termed as “systemic” and “regional power balances” being constraints that hindered conflict settlement. To understand how dynamic this conflict is, who is involve, where and how is important for the mediators to be able to leverage or compel the parties involved in Russo-Ukraine war to allow mediation to be used as a conflict resolution means to bring this war to an end. In this regard, Karreth, Tir, Quinn and Joshi (2024) concurred that the inherent complexity of international conflicts is due to multiple parties involved with diverse interests, historical grievances, and power imbalances. This in the context of Russo-Ukraine war has been capitalized as challenging factors for mediators to identify and address the root causes of the conflict, leading to limited or temporary conflict resolutions.

CONCLUSION

The literature offered a lot of contributions to understanding various perspective on this concept of mediation and its limits in the case of Russo-Ukraine war. It confirmed that timing and sequence of intervention gives room for successful mediation. It continued to show the dangers of diplomatic biasness and its inability to leverage or compel the actors to come to terms. It surmised that the mediators to focus on problem solving as a neutral conduit as opposed to active mediator who take part in the conflicting interest of the actors and fail to perform the peace talk due to biasness. Also, it confirmed that State and non-State actors should refrain from actions capable of impeding peace and seek for conflict resolution mechanism such as mediation.

Furthermore, it offered more light on multiple parties involvement with diverse interest, historical grievances, and power imbalance adding to the complexity of conflict intervention through mediation processes. However, it is important to take note of regional and geostrategic dimensions to cause effective mediation to bring Russo-Ukraine war to an end.

Summarily, from the study findings, it concluded that inconsistent international intervention, diplomatic bias, fragility of ceasefire, military superiority and power imbalance, and actors at play are the major limits of mediation in bringing the Russo-Ukraine war to an end. Consequently, the study recommends peace actors to always pay attention to the context of conflict and device context specific

relevant mechanisms. Again, the study recommends actors willingness and sincere commitment for durable peace by allowing mediation to take control as opposed to sabotage of peace tools by different stakeholders involved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to my supervisor, Mr Esibo Simon Omaada for the relentless effort, cooperation and expertise in guiding me throughout this study. I am indebted to both the internal and external assessors who read this piece of work and their insights and constructive feedback shaped the entire study. Lastly to the publisher and reviewers, I am thankful for the role played to bring this work to light.

FUNDING

The author declares no funding for this study.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTEREST

The author has no potential conflicting interest to declare regarding this study.

REFERENCES

1. Balmaceda, M. J. (2018). Ukraine and Russia: From Civilized Divorce to Civil War. Oxford University Press.
2. Barbashin, A & Thoburn, H (2014). Putin's brain: Alexander Dugin and the philosophy behind Putin's invasion of Crimea. *Foreign Affairs* 31, 1–6, Available at https://bpi.enschool.org/ourpages/auto/2014/4/11/38578950/Putin_s%20Brain.pdf
3. Bercovitch, J. (Ed.). (1996). Resolving international conflicts: The theory and practice of mediation. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
4. Bercovitch, J., & Houston, A. (2000). Why do they do it like this? An analysis of the factors influencing mediation behavior in international conflicts. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44(2), 170-202.
5. Biswas, S., & Shirk, C. (2019). Peace Agreements as Power Agreements: The Minsk II Agreement and Russia's Role in Eastern Ukraine. *Geopolitics*, 24(1), 98-126.
6. Carment, D., Nikolko, M., & Belo, D. (2019). Gray zone mediation in the Ukraine crisis: comparing Crimea and Donbas. In *Research handbook on mediating international crises* (pp. 124-140). Edward Elgar Publishing.
7. Curran, D., & Hunt, C. T. (2020). Stabilization at the expense of Peacebuilding in UN peacekeeping operations: More than just a phase?. *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 26(1), 46-68.
8. Duursma, A. (2020). African solutions to African challenges: The role of legitimacy in mediating civil wars in Africa. *International Organization*, 74(2), 295-330.
9. Fiedler, F.E. (1964). A contingency model of leader effectiveness. In L. Berowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 1). New York: McGraw-Hill.
10. Friedman, G. (2014). Russia and the United States Negotiate the Future of Ukraine. Institute of Diplomacy and Global Affairs. Retrieved: https://www.acg.edu/ckeditor_assets/attachments/971/russia_and_the_united_states_negotiate_the_future_of_ukraine.pdf
11. Gardels, N (2014). Full circle: from a post-cold war peace to a world splitting into 4 blocs. *New Perspectives Quarterly* 31(4), 2–4, <https://doi.org/10.1111/npqu.11479>.
12. Geukjian, O., & AbouHarb, F. (2019). Why Did Russia's Mediation in the Syrian Conflict Fail in Making Peace? *The Maghreb Review*, 44(2), 147-179.
13. Hague, W (2014). Oral statement to Parliament: Russia's actions in Crimea. London: UK Parliament. Available at www.gov.uk/government/speeches/russias-actions-in-crimea.
14. Hellmüller, S. (2023). Knowledge production on mediation: practice-oriented, but not practice-relevant?. *International Affairs*, 99(5), 1847-1866.
15. Karreth, J., Tir, J., Quinn, J., & Joshi, M. (2024). Civil war mediation in the shadow of IGOs: The path to comprehensive peace agreements. *Journal of Peace Research*, 00223433231211766.
16. Lamy, S. L., & Watson, G. R. (2021). The EU's Sanctions Policy in Response to the Crisis in Ukraine: Smart Power, Coercion, or Mediation? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 59(3), 703-720.
17. Larson, DW & Shevchenko, A (2014). Russia says no: power, status, and emotions in foreign policy. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47(3), 269–279, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.09.003>
18. Malik, E., Shankar, S., & Bindlish, P. K. (2023). United Nations Peacekeeping: Enabling Conflict Resolution and the Role of Mediation. In *Globalization, Human Rights and Populism: Reimagining People, Power and Places* (pp. 875-898). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
19. Mankoff, J (2014). The Ukraine crisis and the future of Sino-Russian Relations. *The ASAN Forum*, 25 July. Available at <http://www.theasanforum.org/us-perspective-3>.
20. Marandici, I. (2022). The perils of biased power mediation: Insights from the secessionist conflicts in Moldova and Ukraine. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 23(1), 10-16.
21. Martz, C. (2022). Russian war crimes against Ukraine: The breach of international humanitarian law by the Russian federation. Christopher Martz et al., *Russian War Crimes Against Ukraine: The Breach of International Humanitarian Law By The Russian Federation*, Global Accountability Network.
22. Mbah, R. E., & Wasum, D. F. (2022). Russian-Ukraine 2022 War: A review of the economic impact of Russian-Ukraine crisis on the USA, UK, Canada, and Europe. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 9(3), 144-153.
23. McFaul, M, Sestanovich, S & Maeersheimer, J.J (2014). Faulty powers: who started the Ukraine crisis? *Foreign Affairs* 93, 167, www.jstor.org/stable/24483933.
24. Menon, R., & Ruger, W. (2023). NATO enlargement and US grand strategy: a net assessment. In *Evaluating NATO Enlargement: From Cold War Victory to the Russia-Ukraine War* (pp. 165-208). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

25. Morelli, V. L. (2017). Ukraine: Current issues and US policy Congressional Research Service Washington United States.
26. Muazzamoy, T. (2021). Benefits and Advantages of Mediation. *International Journal of Human Computing Studies*, 3(7), 25-27.
27. Mudrov, S. A. (2022). “We did not unleash this war. Our conscience is clear”. The Russia–Ukraine military conflict and its perception in Belarus. *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 30(2), 273-284.
28. Nte, T. U. (2023). Battlefield might and sanctions as drivers of mediation in the tigray conflict. *International Journal of Political Science and Governance*, 5(1), 10-18.
29. Rutland, P (2014). The impact of sanctions on Russia. *Russian Analytical Digest* 157, 2–8. Available at www.files.ethz.ch/isn/186842/Russian_Analytical_Digest_157.
30. Snyder, T (2014). Fascism, Russia, and Ukraine. *The New York Review of Books* 20. Available at www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/03/20/fascism-russia-and-ukraine.
31. Treisman, D (2014) Putin’s popularity since 2010: why did support for the Kremlin plunge, then stabilize? *Post-Soviet Affairs* 30(5), 370–388, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2014.904541>.
32. Tsygankov, A (2015) Vladimir Putin’s last stand: the sources of Russia’s Ukraine policy. *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31(4), 279–303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2015.1005903>.