An Examination of the Limits of Multilateral Diplomacy: Negotiation, Mediation and Peace Agreement in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War. A Conceptual Analysis.

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Abstract

This study was intended to develop a new conceptual framework for the conflict governance and peacebuilding through the examination of the limits of multilateral diplomacy: negotiation, mediation and peace agreement in the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. Case study design was adopted with thematic analysis for data analysis. From the study outcome, the new conceptual framework suggested that when negotiation, mediation and peace agreement are in action, it would influence the Russo-Ukraine conflict drivers. The framework also showed that sustainable peace/conflict rest on the multilateral diplomacy in action and the conflict drivers. This is a reverse reaction where ineffective/effective action of multilateral diplomacy to bring Russo-Ukraine war to an end would deescalate or escalate conflict through the same limitations. Potential intervention suggested from the study findings include: Open communication, understanding power dynamics, historical, cultural, economic, and political relevance, avoidance of isolation of actors to conflict, establishment of hegemonic leader, impartiality on diplomatic engagement, willingness and commitment to implement peace agreement and joint cooperation from all parties to dispute.

Keywords: *Multilateral diplomacy, negotiation, mediation, peace agreement, conflict*

1. Introduction

Peace between Russia and Ukraine is severely constrained. 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 multilateral diplomacy: negotiation, mediation, and a peace agreement. It is against this backdrop that this research was carried out to examine the limits of multilateral diplomacy: negotiation, mediation, and peace agreements with a multiple perspective and new conceptual framework indicators for ending the Russo-Ukraine War.

2. Conceptual perspective

The major concepts operationalized in this study includes multilateral diplomacy, negotiation, mediation, and peace agreement.

Multilateral diplomacy

According to Pouliot (2016), this is the process of managing international relations through conversations mediated by diplomatic or governmental officials of three or more governments. Nonetheless, a lot of people have talked about and examined how multilateral diplomacy "does not work" or "works." In an ideal world, everyone would have to cooperate and there would need to be a single rule for multilateral diplomacy to have any impact (Wiseman, 2015). Multilateral diplomacy is also the cooperation of three or more nations working towards a shared goal. The primary means by which it has evolved in tandem with bilateral diplomacy are congresses and conferences. The formation of international organisations, particularly the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the European Union, is the starting point of modern multilateral diplomacy. Multilateral diplomacy is an essential kind of international diplomacy in light of the present issues and globalisation. Only through mutual cooperation can we solve the global challenges we face, including climate change, migration, sustainable development, opportunities presented by new technology, and threats associated with them. More so, the researcher affirmed that despite the need for cooperation between Russia and Ukraine, there has been continuous gaps in the success of multilateral diplomacy to ceasefire. Hence the need to scrutinize the limits of multilateral diplomacy in the Russia-Ukraine War.

Negotiation

This 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

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 negotiation

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.

Mediation

Through the use of skilled communication and negotiation tactics, an unbiased third party neutral helps disputing parties resolve conflict through the organised, 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 achieve 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.

Peace agreement

The term "peace" is disputed. In academia and by governments, the absence of war and physical violence is a common negative definition of peace (Gawerc, 2012). This presents several issues, not the least of which is the fact that various parties to a dispute frequently define peace in different ways. Johan Galtung distinguished between negative and positive peace in order to describe peace in a more expansive and affirmative manner (Grewal, 2003). Positive peace also includes the absence of structural violence (death from poverty) and cultural violence (things that cause people to be blind to injustice or enable them to justify it), in contrast to negative peace, which is the absence of direct violence (people being killed). Therefore, while the positive peace of reconciliation and psycho/social healing generally entails the negative peace of order and the cessation of direct violence, they are not incompatible with justice.

According to Bell and O'rourke (2010), peace agreements are contracts meant to put an end to a violent conflict or drastically alter one so that it can be dealt in a more constructive way. There are various types of agreements that can be reached during a peace process and these include a ceasefire, pre-negotiation, preliminary, comprehensive framework, and implementation agreement. These sequences show the step by step to follow while you are making a peace agreement. The researcher agrees that the aforementioned step by step are crucial to peace agreement. However, why is the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has not attained this peace agreement? Therefore, this gap was closed by the researcher by studying the limits of peace agreement in bringing the Russia-Ukraine war to an end.
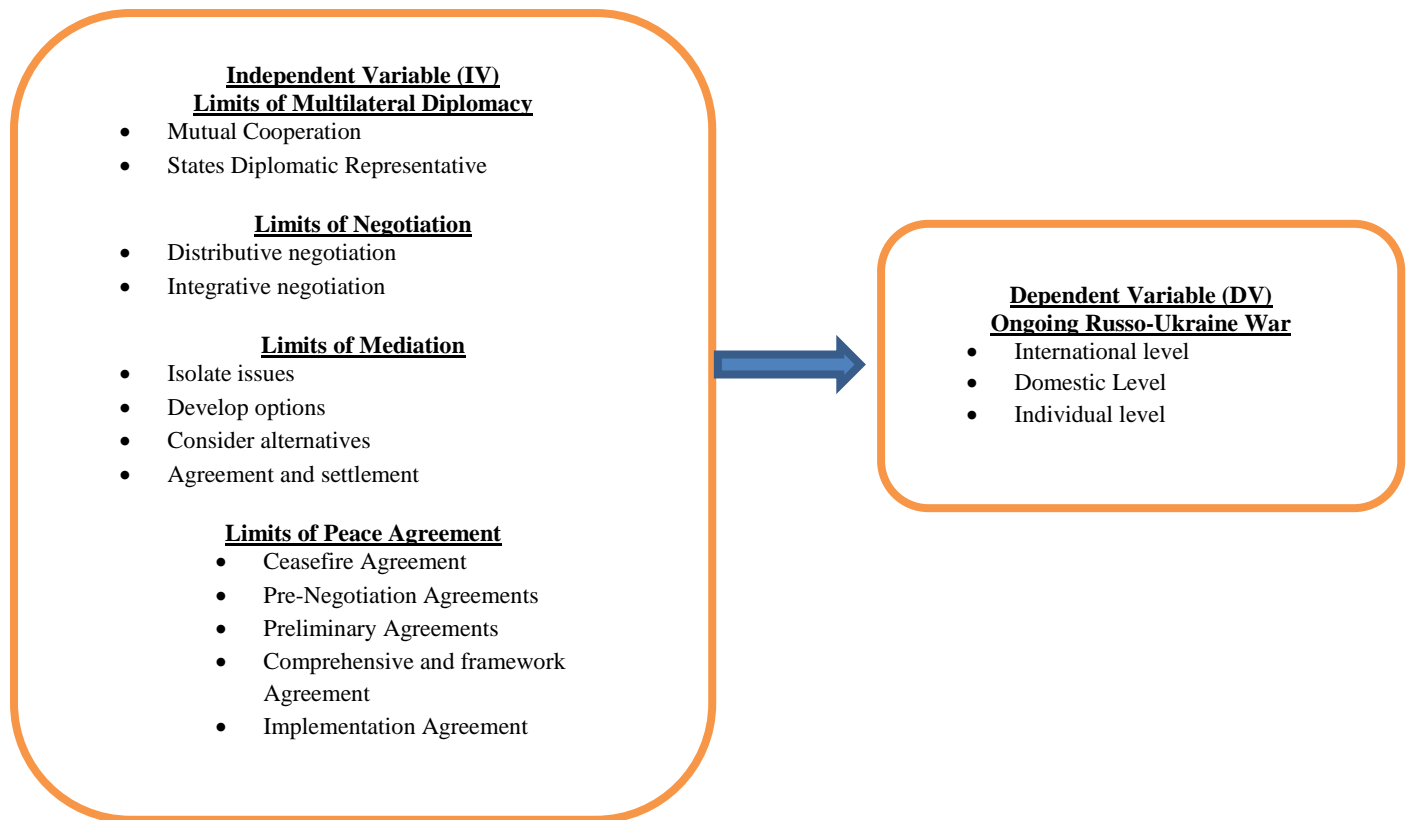
Figure 1 above was the adopted conceptual framework showing how the variables relate to each other. The diagram showed that multilateral diplomacy: negotiation, mediation and peace agreement predicts the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war showing that war arises due to the interactions between these three key rationales; international, domestic and individual levels of analysis. The international level, according to Lopez and Johnson (2020), investigates elements like anarchy and power distribution that only function "above" states. At the domestic level, factors like bureaucratic design and regime type are factors that are distinctive to individual governments. The individual level investigates how a person's psychology—that is, their beliefs, culture, and personality—contributes to the start of a war.

As per the UN Peacemaker Databank (2006), which was mentioned by Yawanarajah, Nita, and Julian Ouellet (2003), every kind of agreement within the framework has a unique function and contributes positively to creating a positive momentum for a final resolution. A cease-fire, pre-negotiation, preliminary, comprehensive framework, and implementation agreement strategy are all part of a peace accord. But because the content of these agreements might occasionally overlap, it can be difficult to separate one from the other. Not every conflict requires every kind of agreement. Step-by-step agreements that result in a full settlement may be part of some processes. Alternative peace approaches can aim to fully negotiate a single agreement.

3. Concept contextualization

This study applied a working definitions by the scholar as it was applied in the context of the study. The following terms were defined: multilateral diplomacy, negotiation, mediation, peace agreement, ceasefire, pre-negotiation agreement, preliminary agreement, comprehensive framework agreement, and implementation agreement.

Multilateral diplomacy
This was used in this study as an approach of using more than two countries to negotiate among Russia and Ukraine for the sake of a peace agreement to be signed using diplomatic approaches readily available.

Negotiation
This means ways or paradigms to be adopted in the discussion that both Russia and Ukraine would feel acceptable to adopt to bring peace to both countries.

Mediation
In this study, it means using a third party known as a mediator who can use the neutral ground to resolve the conflict going on between Russia and Ukraine without taking sides.

Peace agreement
This means in this study the ability of both Russia and Ukraine to sign an agreement to end the ongoing war and bring peace.

Ceasefire

In this study, it was referred to as the first attempt of advocating for agreement to end the use of force or aggression on both parties, Russia and Ukraine territories.

Pre-negotiation agreement

This mean in this study the second step in establishing a peace agreement by making an initial step to discuss and persuade both Russia and Ukraine to establish a peace agreement.

Preliminary agreement

This was referred to in this study as the third step of setting or mapping out ways of making a peace agreement to be signed between Russia and Ukraine to end the war.

Comprehensive framework agreement

This also was referred to as the fourth step that could be taken by following the appropriate terms negotiating between Russia and Ukraine to arrive at a given point to establish peace through a series of discussions, mediation, and layout for the peace agreement.

Implementation agreement

In this study, this is the last stage of enactment, consolidation, reparation, and assessment of agreed terms to end the war and then signing of the peace agreement and follow-up to ensure that what was agreed on is being put into action by both parties in this case Russia and Ukraine.

4. Study outcomes

In this study, a new conceptual framework emerged to address the limits of multilateral diplomacy: negotiation, mediation and peace agreement in the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war. The diagram below depict the overall study outcome. This new framework emanated from the analysis and each emerging themes and subthemes formed the foundation of this suggested model presented in figure 2 below.

FINAL OUTCOME
Sustainable Peace/Conflict escalation

MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY IN ACTION
- Negotiation
- Mediation
- Peace agreement

RUSSO-UKRAINE CONFLICT DRIVERS
➢ Actors' interest
➢ Power dynamics
➢ Military superiority
➢ Actors at play
➢ Fragility of ceasefire
➢ Diplomatic bias
➢ Inconsistent international intervention
➢ Structural bias, inadequate leverage and polarized mediator
➢ Historical, cultural and political differences
➢ Ineffective communication
➢ Question of equity and justice
➢ Power imbalance within UN Security council
➢ Inability of actors to compromise
➢ Absence of hegemonic leader

POTENTIAL INTERVENTION
❖ Open communication
❖ Understanding power dynamics
❖ Historical, Cultural, Economic, and Political relevance
❖ Avoidance of Isolation of actors to conflict
❖ Establishment of hegemonic leader
❖ Impartiality on diplomatic engagement
❖ Willingness and commitment to implement peace agreement
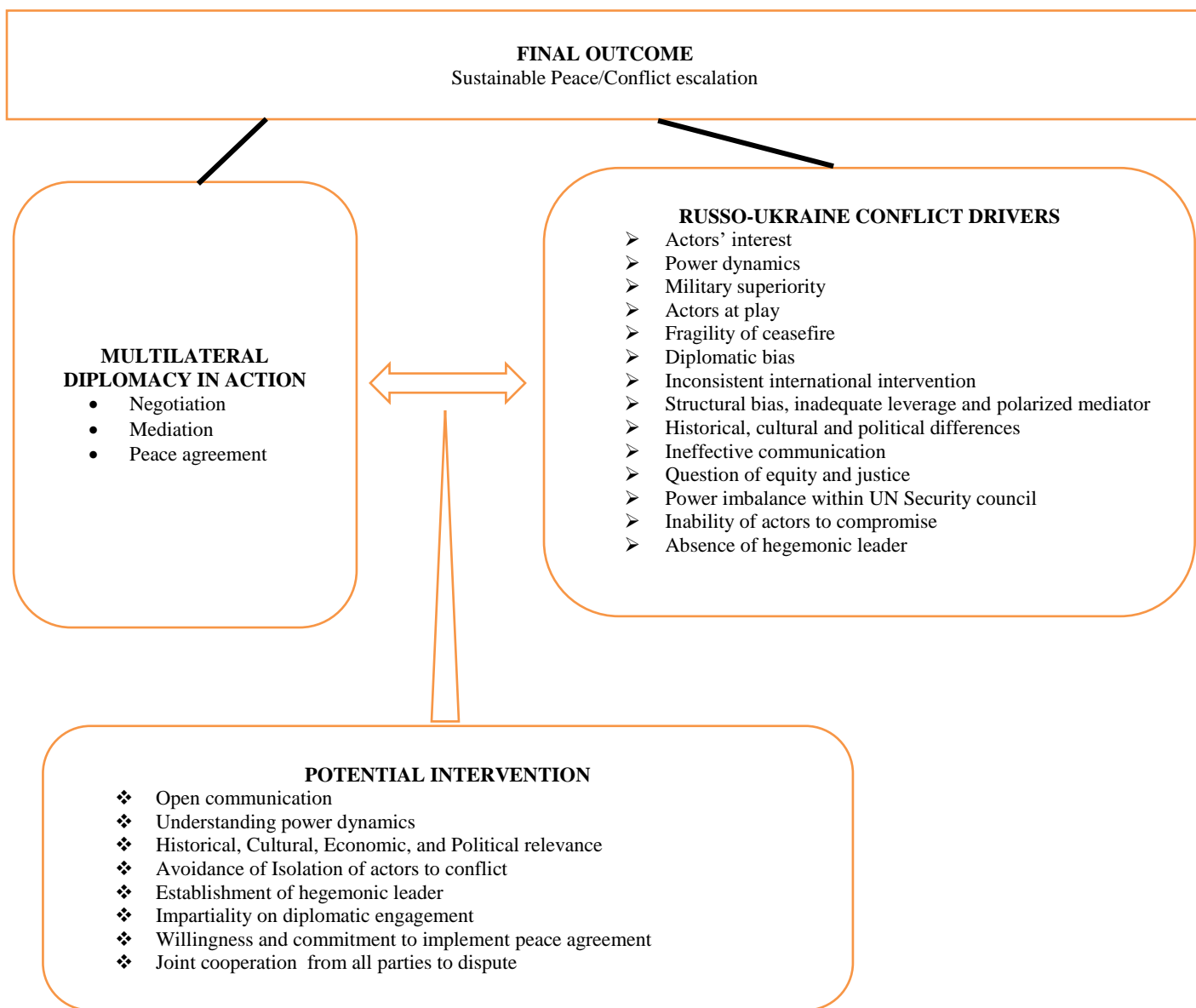❖ Joint cooperation from all parties to dispute

Figure 2: Suggested conceptual framework for multilateral diplomacy: negotiation, mediation and peace agreement to bring Russo-Ukraine war to an end

The suggested conceptual framework in figure 2 above represent the interplay between multilateral diplomacy: negotiation, mediation and peace agreement to bring Russo-Ukraine war to an end. After the study, the framework suggested that multilateral diplomacy should be in action. Therefore, when negotiation, mediation and peace agreement are in action, it would influence the Russo-Ukraine conflict drivers.

The Russo-Ukraine Conflict Drivers are; Actors' interest, power dynamics, military superiority, actors at play, fragility of ceasefire, diplomatic bias, inconsistent international intervention, structural bias, inadequate leverage and polarized mediator, historical, cultural and political differences, ineffective communication, question of equity and justice, power imbalance within UN Security council, inability of actors to compromise, and absence of hegemonic leader.

The model showed that sustainable peace/conflict rest on the multilateral diplomacy in action and the conflict drivers. This is a reverse reaction where ineffective/effective action of multilateral diplomacy to bring Russo-Ukraine war to an end would deescalate/escalate conflict through the same limitations.

Potential intervention suggested from the study findings include: Open communication, understanding power dynamics, historical, cultural, economic, and political relevance, avoidance of isolation of actors to conflict, establishment of hegemonic leader, impartiality on diplomatic engagement, willingness and commitment to implement peace agreement and joint cooperation from all parties to dispute.

5. Implications for research and practice

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform and guide future efforts toward achieving a sustainable peace agreement in the Russia-Ukraine war. By an examination of the limits of multilateral diplomacy: negotiation, mediation, and peace agreement, this study provides valuable insights that could shape policy decisions and diplomatic strategies.

Also, the findings of this study will help policymakers and negotiators understand the key factors and dynamics that hinder or facilitate successful peace negotiations. By identifying the gaps in the current approaches to resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict, policymakers can devise more effective strategies and tactics to overcome these obstacles.

Furthermore, this study findings contributes to the development of new frameworks and models for conflict resolution in similar geopolitical contexts. By examining the specific context of the Russia-Ukraine war, the study shed light on innovative approaches to multilateral diplomacy: negotiation, mediation, and peace agreement that could be applied to other conflicts around the world.

Again, the study outcome also has practical implications for international organizations and institutions involved in conflict resolution and peacekeeping. It offers insights into the role of multilateral diplomacy and the coordination of efforts among different actors in facilitating a successful peace agreement. This understanding will help to shape future interventions and initiatives aimed at resolving conflicts and preventing their escalation.

Substantively, the study findings has broader implications for academic research in the field of peace and conflict studies. It contributes to theoretical advancements by providing empirical evidence and analysis on the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy: negotiation, mediation, and peace agreements in conflict resolution. This will open avenues for further scholarly exploration and contribute to the growing body of knowledge on conflict resolution.

8. Declaration of conflicting interest

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

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