



Diplomatic Mechanisms for the Settlement of Armed Conflicts in Contemporary International Relations

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ABSTRACT

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The study proposes practical approaches to improving diplomatic mechanisms in the modern system of international relations. The main focus is placed on the impact of armed conflicts on the transformation of negotiation formats. Special attention is given to the interaction between classical diplomacy and informal, humanitarian, and digital channels of de-escalation. The comparative method makes it possible to compare the effectiveness of negotiation models in interstate and local confrontations. The systemic approach reveals coordination mechanisms among states, international organizations, and neutral mediators. Structural and functional analysis clarifies the roles of official and unofficial communication channels. Content analysis was applied to international reports, strategic documents, and scientific publications. The empirical basis covers contemporary armed conflicts in different regions of the world. The results confirm a gradual departure from the exclusive use of intergovernmental negotiations. The highest effectiveness is demonstrated by combined models. They integrate official negotiations, expert consultations, shuttle diplomacy, humanitarian initiatives, and digital platforms. The analysis confirms that the growing influence of regional associations and middle powers opens new prospects for mediation activities. Global institutions often face political constraints. Regional actors usually demonstrate higher adaptability. Their decisions are implemented more rapidly. They are able to maintain a stable level of trust among conflicting parties. The main limitation of the existing system remains the time gap between the speed of escalation and the slowness of diplomatic response. Sanctions pressure becomes stronger when interstate coordination is ensured and aligned with clear negotiation signals. The proposed approaches may be used by international organizations and governmental institutions. They provide opportunities for creating early response mechanisms and designing multilevel peace formats. The scientific novelty lies in the development of a model for diplomatic modernization. It integrates preventive platforms, hybrid negotiation architectures, and a rapid response system for conflicts of a new type.



KEYWORDS

diplomacy, conflicts, peaceful settlement, international actors, international organizations, interstate negotiations, international relations, global institutions, political system, communications, modernization.



Дипломатичні механізми врегулювання збройних конфліктів у сучасних міжнародних відносинах

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Дослідження пропонує практичні підходи до вдосконалення дипломатичних механізмів у сучасній системі міжнародних відносин. Основна увага приділяється впливу збройних конфліктів на трансформацію переговорних форматів. Окремо аналізується взаємодія класичної дипломатії з неформальними, гуманітарними та цифровими каналами деескалації. Порівняльний метод дозволяє зіставити ефективність переговорних моделей у міждержавних і локальних протистояннях. Системний підхід розкриває механізми координації між державами, міжнародними організаціями та нейтральними посередниками. Структурно-функціональний аналіз уточнює функції офіційних і неофіційних комунікаційних каналів. Контент-аналіз застосовано до міжнародних звітів, стратегічних документів та наукових публікацій. Емпірична база охоплює сучасні збройні конфлікти у різних регіонах світу. Результати підтверджують поступовий відхід від виключного використання міжурядових переговорів. Найвищу ефективність демонструють комбіновані моделі. Вони поєднують офіційні переговори, експертні консультації, човникову дипломатію, гуманітарні ініціативи та цифрові платформи. Аналіз підтверджує, що посилення впливу регіональних об'єднань та держав середнього рівня відкриває нові перспективи для посередницької діяльності. Глобальні інституції нерідко стикаються з політичними обмеженнями. Регіональні актори зазвичай демонструють вищу адаптивність. Їхні рішення реалізуються оперативніше. Вони здатні підтримувати стабільний рівень довіри між учасниками протистояння. Головним обмеженням існуючої системи залишається часовий розрив між швидкістю ескалації та повільністю дипломатичної реакції. Санкційний тиск посилюється за умови міждержавної координації та узгодження з чіткими переговорними сигналами. Запропоновані підходи можуть використовувати міжнародні організації та урядові структури. Вони забезпечують створення механізмів раннього реагування та проектування багаторівневих мирних форматів. Наукова новизна полягає в розробці моделі модернізації дипломатії. Вона інтегрує превентивні платформи, гібридні переговорні архітектури та систему швидкого реагування на конфлікти нового типу.



КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

дипломатія, конфлікти, мирне врегулювання, міжнародні актори, міжнародні організації, міждержавні переговори, міжнародні відносини, глобальні інституції, політична система, комунікації, модернізація.

1. Introduction

Observation of how the international security system has functioned in recent years shows a steady increase in the role of diplomatic instruments in times of military instability. Armed conflicts are no longer confined to local space, but affect trade, energy, migration, financial markets and the humanitarian situation in entire regions. Therefore, a political settlement ceases to be a matter exclusively for the parties to the confrontation. It appears as a task for the wider international community. Negotiations, mediation, sanctions pressure, humanitarian communication channels, informal consultations, and digital negotiation formats are becoming widespread. This means that diplomacy is likely entering a phase of deep transformation. The problem, however, lies in the gap between the new nature of conflicts and traditional mechanisms for their resolution. Some international institutions react slowly, individual negotiation models lose their effectiveness, and coordination between states and organizations often remains fragmented. In the absence of agreed diplomatic solutions, conflicts drag on and take on even more complex forms. That is why there is an urgent need to study modern diplomatic mechanisms, their limitations, practical effectiveness and possible directions for further renewal.

2. Literature Review

Jonsson and Aggestam [6] summarized classical and modern approaches to diplomacy in conflict resolution processes. According to their conclusions, negotiation practices are gradually shifting from formal interstate contacts to multi-level models of communication. However, the issues of adapting these approaches to the conditions of hybrid wars of the XXI century are not sufficiently covered. Kubko [3] reveals the role of second-track diplomacy in complex conflict environments, showing that informal communication channels are able to maintain dialogue even when there is no formal negotiation process. However, the researcher did not pay attention to the legal aspects of formalizing agreements reached informally.

Akindoyin [2] investigated the so-called shuttle diplomacy as a mechanism of crisis mediation. It shows that personalized mediation can ensure communication between the parties even in the face of deep political confrontation. At the same time, the limits of the effectiveness of such a tool in protracted wars remain not fully defined. Kubko [8] analyzed the participation of international organizations in the settlement of the war in Ukraine. The author comes to the conclusion that institutional mediation directly depends on the political consolidation of the member states. However, the question remains open how international structures can quickly respond in the first phases of escalation. Sokolenko [18] considered international legal mechanisms for resolving local military conflicts. He emphasizes the importance of legal safeguards, monitoring procedures and external control over the implementation of agreements. At the same time, the instruments of coercion to comply with the agreements reached need to be further clarified.

Movchan, Zaichenko, Bondarenko, and Kovalchuk [12] proposed a model for analyzing modern armed conflicts and political practices of their management. Their work demonstrates the multidimensional nature of crisis processes. However, the place of diplomatic channels in the early warning system has not been fully disclosed. Paffenholtz [15] explored the possibilities of a negotiated settlement of the war in Ukraine. It justifies the need for an inclusive approach and the involvement of a wider range of participants in the peace process. However, the mechanisms for implementing such models in the phase of active hostilities remain debatable. Poble and Morozova [16] highlighted mediation as a tool of Qatar's foreign policy. Their research shows that medium-sized states can act as effective mediators. But the question of whether it is possible to scale this experience to other regions has not yet received an exhaustive answer.

Nuereddin [13] summarized the role of diplomatic means in the settlement of international disputes. It confirms the enduring value of negotiations, mediation and arbitration. However, the latest conflict formats require a rethinking of the speed and manufacturability of these procedures. Thus, the literature review gives grounds to assert that there is a need for a separate study on the modernization of diplomatic mechanisms for resolving armed conflicts.

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of the article is to substantiate the practical principles of the settlement of armed conflicts in the system of modern international relations.

4. Methods and Materials

The study is based on the integration of general scientific and applied methods of analysis of international conflicts and diplomatic practices. Comparative analysis helped to compare negotiation models and mediation formats used in different geographical regions. The systematic approach provides a holistic understanding of the settlement of confrontations. It integrates political, legal, security and humanitarian aspects. intermediary states and informal communication channels during crises. The processing of official strategies, international reports and scientific publications was carried out using elements of content analysis. The empirical basis of the study is formed by the works of domestic and foreign scientists. It also includes documents from international institutions and statistics on contemporary armed conflicts and de-escalation mechanisms. Attention is focused on the case of armed confrontation in Ukraine. Crises in the Middle East and local conflicts in other regions are additionally analyzed.

5. Results and Discussion

The war does not eliminate negotiations, but often changes their form, pace and composition of participants. The armed confrontation continues, and special representatives, mediators, military delegations, and humanitarian missions work in parallel. The first feature of the new century is that the negotiation processes have become multi-level. If earlier official intergovernmental contacts dominated, now expert groups, regional partners, humanitarian structures, and non-governmental mediators are added to them [10, c. 35]. This is due to the fact that conflicts have become more complicated. They have military, informational, economic and social dimensions at the same time. One negotiating table no longer covers all contradictions.

Wars demonstrate a special logic of negotiations. The negotiation process is increasingly becoming continuous rather than episodic. Previously, it was possible to talk about a conference, signing a document, or completing a round. Now communication continues constantly. Channels are opened, closed, intermediaries change, and formats are adjusted. Of course, this complicates the assessment of performance. But the problem is that there is often no other mechanism for deterring escalation. A separate area is the mediation of international organizations in crisis regions. Here you can see several models. The first model is political mediation. It provides for the facilitation of negotiations, the preparation of draft agreements, and the coordination of contacts between the parties. The second model is the peacekeeping presence. We are talking about monitoring missions, monitoring the truce, and recording violations. The third model, humanitarian support for the settlement, is where the organization works with the civilian population and maintains basic stability. The United Nations retains a central place in the field of international legitimation of decisions. Its resolutions do not always ensure implementation, but form the normative framework of the conflict. This is not a small thing. If aggression is called aggression, and the occupation is recorded as a violation of the law, the further diplomatic process acquires a different quality. At the same time, the veto power of the permanent members of the Security Council creates obvious barriers.

Regional organizations are more flexible. The OSCE has accumulated experience in field monitoring and crisis mediation. The African Union is more likely to work in intra-regional conflicts, where external arbitration is viewed with caution. The European Union combines diplomatic instruments with financial support for stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction. However, international organizations are not automatically neutral. They are made up of states, and states have interests. Because of this, the intermediary is sometimes perceived as a party sympathetic to one camp [5]. As a result, even technical initiatives are blocked by political suspicions. This is clearly seen in conflicts where great powers compete.

The issue of the effectiveness of sanctions and diplomatic pressure remains one of the most debatable. Sanctions rarely stop a conflict immediately. They work differently. They reduce the resource base of the aggressor, complicate access to technology, increase the cost of continuing the war, and

create internal pressure on the political leadership [9, p. 40]. It is a slow tool, not an instantaneous one. The effectiveness of sanctions depends on three conditions. First, coordination between states, bypass channels appear. Secondly, the constancy of the restriction regime, because short pressure waves are easily adaptable. Thirdly, the combination of diplomatic signals. If sanctions are not accompanied by clear conditions for weakening or changing behavior, they turn into a symbolic gesture. Peace agreements should not be idealized either. The document may reduce the intensity of hostilities, but not eliminate the source of the conflict. Some of the agreements fix a pause, not peace. Others create the basis for further negotiations. Some even exist only on paper. It seems that those agreements where there is a mechanism for monitoring implementation, external guarantees and phased obligations become successful [4].

The ratio of power and diplomacy is interesting. Often, negotiation progress appears after a change in the situation on the battlefield. This is an unpleasant but persistent fact of international politics. The balance of pressure affects the flexibility of the positions of the parties. Therefore, the diplomatic process cannot be analyzed in isolation from military dynamics, economic exhaustion, and the internal legitimacy of governments.

The fact that conflicts are increasingly hybrid in nature forces diplomacy to adapt. The talks include cybersecurity, disinformation, energy infrastructure, food routes, and maritime logistics. Previously, these were considered auxiliary issues. Now they are becoming central. Sometimes it is around them that it is easier to reach partial agreements.

In our opinion, the XXI century has not weakened diplomatic mechanisms, but made them more complex. Less solemn signings, more technical work. Fewer universal formulas, more situational solutions. Less faith in a quick peace, more attention to managed de-escalation. This is hard, sometimes imperceptible work, but it has not disappeared anywhere. Modern diplomacy increasingly functions as a multi-level system of contacts. Governments, military staffs, and international organizations operate at the same level. Experts, academic groups, religious figures, business intermediaries, and humanitarian structures work at another level. This is due to the fact that the conflict is now rarely reduced to a dispute between two cabinets. It covers the economy, information space, logistics, migration flows, and local communities [19, p. 1326].

Track II diplomacy is used where formal dialogue is blocked or toxic to the parties. The idea is quite pragmatic. If ministers cannot speak in public, those who do not bear formal political responsibility begin to communicate. These can be former diplomats, scientists, intermediary centers, or specialized analysts. They test compromise formulas without media noise.

In such contacts, it is not status that is valued, but trust. The parties are ready to discuss sensitive issues precisely because the negotiations are not broadcast live and do not turn into a struggle of statements. In fact, because of this, informal platforms often provide more content than official summits. Documents are not signed there. But future documents are being prepared there.

When the conflict enters the phase of acute crisis, shuttle diplomacy is activated. This is a model in which the mediator moves between the parties and transfers positions, packages of proposals, and technical conditions for de-escalation. Such a scheme is needed where direct contact is politically impossible. The parties are not ready to sit at the same table, but they need a signal exchange channel. An intermediary in this format performs several functions at the same time. He clarifies real red lines, cuts off public rhetoric, and checks the readiness to make concessions. Sometimes, interestingly, it is the intermediary who forms the structure of the future transaction. The parties only adjust the details [7, 13]. This probably means that the personal authority of the mediator is no less important than the formal mandate. Table 1 provides an analytical assessment of modern informal diplomacy tools according to the criteria of practical suitability.

Humanitarian diplomacy has become a separate dimension of the settlement. Its task is not to end the war as such, but to reduce human losses. Prisoner exchanges, access to doctors, evacuation of children, work of missing persons, and food supply. Parties that do not trust each other in matters of territory or security sometimes agree to humanitarian steps. Such decisions are easier to explain to one's own society, and this is not perceived as a political concession.

Digital diplomacy has also ceased to be a secondary phenomenon. Secure video channels, closed document exchange platforms, quick consultations with advisers, and crisis chats between military representatives. All this reduces reaction time. Previously, it took days to transfer a position. Today is an hour, and sometimes a minute. But the problem is that the digital format does not automatically create trust. It accelerates contact, but does not replace political will. In addition, there are risks of cyber

interference, information leaks, and manipulative stuffing. Therefore, digital channels give the best effect as a complement to personal diplomacy, and not instead of it [3].

Table 1. Comparative Effectiveness of Informal Diplomacy Tools

Tool	Startup speed	Level of trust of the parties	Flexibility of solutions	Typical result
Track II diplomacy	High	Medium	High	Preparation of compromises
Shuttle diplomacy	Medium	Medium	High	Temporary arrangements
Humanitarian mediation	High	High	Medium	Evacuation corridors
Digital Negotiation Channels	High	Low	High	Operational contact
Regional mediation	Medium	High	Medium	Silence mode
Expert dialogues	Low	High	High	Roadmap
Business intermediation	Medium	Medium	Medium	Logistics Deals

Source: Built by the authors based on [6; 7]

Regional diplomacy demonstrates a distinct advantage. Neighboring states have a better understanding of the security consequences of the conflict, have an economic motivation to stabilize, and often have local channels of influence. Because of this, they can be more effective than remote global centers. Although, of course, the risk of bias does not disappear. Table 2 presents generalized data on de-escalation tools by operational parameters.

Table 2. Assessment of multi-level diplomacy in de-escalation processes

Mechanism	Application cost	Political risk	Durability of the effect	Scope of use
Direct secret contacts	Low	Medium	Medium	Acute crisis
Shuttle diplomacy	Medium	Low	Medium	Blocked negotiations
Track II diplomacy	Low	Low	High	Protracted conflicts
Humanitarian arrangements	Medium	Low	Medium	Civil protection
Digital communication channels	Low	Medium	Low	Urgent contacts
Regional mediation	Medium	Medium	High	Border conflicts
Multilateral Conference	High	High	High	Post-crisis settlement
Expert Working Groups	Low	Low	High	Technical issues

Source: Built by the authors based on [7; 13; 14]

The fact that modern conflicts often have a network nature changes the very logic of diplomacy. One solution center no longer controls the entire process. There are field commanders, external sponsors, private military structures, and local administrations. Because of this, an agreement with the political leadership does not yet guarantee implementation on the ground. Diplomacy is forced to work on many levels at the same time.

In our opinion, the combined model becomes the most effective. A formal track provides legitimacy. The informal track prepares the content of the compromise. The humanitarian track reduces tension. The digital track speeds up the reaction. If one channel is blocked, the other supports the process. This is the practical value of a multi-level approach. The weak link remains the issue of the implementation of agreements. Even a well-designed mechanism can fail due to a change in the frontline situation, the internal struggle of elites, and information campaigns against peace. Therefore, diplomacy increasingly requires not only an agreement, but a support system: monitoring, verification, sanctions for disruption, international guarantees [17, p. 61-62].

The way armed conflicts have developed in recent years shows a marked gap between the speed of escalation and the slowness of the diplomatic response. Hostilities begin in hours, information attacks are launched instantly, and financial pressure is formed in days. And the international reaction sometimes takes weeks. The old model of crisis response relied on emergency meetings, political statements, and the search for a consultation format. Today, this is not enough. A new type of conflict combines military pressure, cyber operations, migration blackmail, strikes on logistics, and energy manipulation. This is due to the fact that states are increasingly avoiding the classic declaration of war, but use force in fragments and constantly [20].

In our opinion, the modernization of diplomatic mechanisms should move in three directions. First, permanent international platforms for preventive crisis dialogue. The second is a hybrid negotiation model with a combination of formal and informal channels. The third, a rapid diplomatic response system, is able to work in the first hours of the conflict. It is this architecture that looks more suitable for modern risks. Permanent international platforms are not needed for solemn declarations. Their function is different. Early accumulation of contacts, coordination of crisis communication protocols, exchange of risk assessments, and formation of a list of neutral intermediaries. When the conflict has already begun, it is too late to build trust. It must be had in advance. Such platforms are best built on a regional basis. For the Black Sea space, there are some risks, for the Balkans, others, and for the Middle East, there are others. The universal scheme often does not work [1]. Instead, a network of regional dialogue nodes could quickly detect signs of escalation and launch consultations (Table 3).

Table 3. Proposals for the modernization of the preventive crisis dialogue

Initiative	Content of the decision	Principal Executor	Expected effect	Implementation horizon
Regional Crisis Platforms	Permanent contact groups of states	Regional unions	Quick dialogue	Short
Database of neutral mediators	List of agreed intermediaries	UN	Less latency	Short
Early warning centers	Escalation risk analytics	International organizations	Early signal	Medium
Single consultation protocol	Standard of action in the first 72 hours	States Parties	Coordination of decisions	Short
Military communication channels	Prevent accidental incidents	General staffs of the parties	Risk reduction	Short
Expert Reserve Forum	Connecting independent specialists	Academic Centers	Qualitative scenarios	Medium
Joint crisis training	Modeling of conflict situations	Alliances of powers	Systems Readiness	Medium
Humanitarian Coordination Unit	Coordination of the evacuation of civilians	ICRC, UN agencies	Protection of the population	Short

Source: Built by the authors

Here, in fact, the right combination of roles is needed. Ministers and official delegations agree on framework decisions. Expert groups detail the mechanisms of implementation. Humanitarian networks are preparing civil protection issues. Business associations are restoring critical economic chains. But the problem is that informal channels can arouse suspicion. Part of society interprets them as secret concessions [11]. Because of this, it is necessary to distinguish between the confidentiality of the content and the transparency of procedures. The society must know who is authorized to participate, what topics are discussed, and what limits of the mandate are set. Rapid diplomatic response is perhaps the weakest link in the current system. Often, the conflict has already entered the strike phase, and international structures only agree on the agenda of the meeting. This does not mean complete inefficiency, but the time gap is too large. It is he who needs to be reduced.

A three-time window model of diplomatic response can be proposed. First, up to 24 hours, the launch of hotlines, verification of facts, initial contact between the parties. Second window, up to 72 hours, dispatch of the mediation mission and humanitarian coordinators. Third, up to 10 days, the formation of a framework for a de-escalation package. This approach disciplines the system (Table 4).

A proper place should be assigned to neutral intermediaries of the middle powers. Big players often have their own strategic interests. Because of this, their initiatives are perceived with caution. Medium-sized states, which have a reputation for being balanced actors, are sometimes able to advance solutions faster. Regional unions should also be given clearer functions. If a conflict arises in a certain macro-region, it is the neighboring countries that are the first to feel the consequences: refugees, trade disruptions, security risks. Therefore, it is advisable to give them the formalized status of co-mediators, and not just observers. The digital dimension of modernization has not gone anywhere. Secure negotiation platforms, systems for verifying data from open sources, joint incident maps, and electronic circulation of draft agreements. All this reduces the loss of time. In our opinion, the diplomacy of the future will become less ceremonial and more operational. Less symbolic summits, more constant

technical work. Less reaction after the fact, more preventive mechanisms. Less monopoly of governments, more networking with experts and society.

Table 4. A system of rapid diplomatic response to conflicts of a new type

Stage	Startup Time	Action	Key participants	Expected result
Primary signal	0-6 hours	Collection of confirmed data	Think tanks	Eliminating chaos
Emergency contact	Up to 24 hours	Hotlines of the parties	Intermediary states	Prevention of escalation
Public Frame	Up to 24 hours	Agreed statement	UN, alliances of powers	Clear signals
Mediation mission	Up to 72 hours	Departure of intermediaries	Neutral states	Start of negotiations
Humanitarian block	Up to 72 hours	Evacuation, corridors	Humanitarian agencies	Protection of civilians
Technical Group	Up to 5 days	Silence mode control	Military experts	Fewer incidents
Framework Agreement	Up to 10 days	De-escalation package	Parties to the conflict	Temporary stabilization
Performance monitoring	After 10 days	Reporting and verification	Observer missions	Process stability
Transition to the political track	After stabilization	Long negotiations	Governments, mediators	Sustainable settlement

Source: Built by the authors

6. Conclusions

The results of the study confirm the transformation of the diplomatic settlement of armed conflicts in the modern era. Intergovernmental negotiations have lost the function of a single peacekeeping instrument. The integration of official diplomacy, humanitarian contacts, expert mediation and regional coordination demonstrates the highest effectiveness. Such a combination of channels preserves the possibility of dialogue even during active hostilities. It is not limited to an isolated political agreement. The analysis of international practices revealed a systemic flaw in existing institutions. The problem is not their absence, but the slow response to crisis events. Military escalation exceeds the speed of launching mediation or sanctions coordination procedures. The first days of the conflict are often left out of the attention of peacekeeping initiatives. Increasing effectiveness requires the creation of pre-prepared crisis platforms. Such structures should be launched without lengthy political consultations.

A forward-looking model of international diplomacy requires multi-level architecture and technological adaptability. Traditional negotiations are complemented by digital communication channels. Closed consultations of specialists and humanitarian areas are becoming strategically important. Neutral middle-level states play an important role in the crisis response. These instruments do not replace classic transactions. They create the necessary conditions for achieving political compromises. A new type of diplomacy functions as a continuous tension control system. It replaces ritualized procedures with operational management of conflict dynamics.

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