

From Stalemate to Stability: Analyzing Ceasefire Opportunities in the Russia-Ukraine War through Ripeness, Conflict Transformation, Incremental Ceasefire Approach

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Abstract

This article examines ceasefire opportunities in the Russia-Ukraine War, a protracted and multifaceted conflict since Russia's February 24, 2022, invasion. Its objectives are to 1) to outline three important frameworks i.e. Ripeness, Conflict Transformation, and Incremental Ceasefire for peace and conflict resolution. 2) to implement those frameworks in the present Russia-Ukraine crisis, and 3) to suggest future prospects and policies for conflict resolution. The methodology of this qualitative documentary study involves descriptive documentary analysis, utilizing primary and secondary sources. The methodology of this qualitative documentary study involves descriptive documentary analysis, utilizing primary and secondary sources.

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Leveraging interdisciplinary literature and historical analogs (e.g., Arab-Israeli conflicts, Good Friday Agreement), this study employs these conceptual models (Ripeness Theory, Conflict Transformation, and Incremental Ceasefire approach) to offer complementary insights into de-escalation possibilities in a conflict marked by deep animosities and competing national narratives.

Key results indicate: 1) The conflict has not reached a comprehensive mutually hurting stalemate (MHS), and while narrow de-escalation opportunities exist, a clear 'Way Out' remains constrained by entrenched positions; 2) Effective conflict transformation demands addressing profound relational and structural injustices, currently overshadowed by immediate military and political objectives; and 3) An incremental ceasefire approach, focusing on localized and confidence-building measures, presents the most viable de-escalation pathway, despite inherent implementation challenges. The analysis seeks to provide policymakers, scholars, and practitioners with a nuanced foundation for diagnosing the conflict's intractability and identifying viable pathways toward stabilization and resolution.

Keywords: Ripeness Theory, Conflict Transformation, Incremental Ceasefire, Russia-Ukraine War, Ceasefire

Introduction

The Russia-Ukraine War, initiated by Russia's invasion on February 24, 2022, has escalated into a protracted and multifaceted conflict, exacting severe human, economic, and geopolitical repercussions. By April 2025, the war has caused widespread devastation, displaced millions, and profoundly disrupted the global order. Despite intermittent diplomatic efforts, a durable ceasefire remains elusive, reflecting entrenched historical grievances, incompatible geopolitical ambitions, and divergent national identities. Scholarly analyses of protracted conflicts rooted in such deep-seated antagonisms suggest they rarely succumb to conventional peace-making approaches, demanding instead transformative frameworks.

In light of these realities, this article seeks to critically examine the prospects for ceasefire by synthesizing insights from three major theoretical frameworks, i.e. Ripeness Theory (by William Zartman), Conflict Transformation paradigm (by John Paul Lederach), and the Incremental Ceasefire approach (an operation approach). Rather than presenting new empirical data, the study undertakes a conceptual synthesis, drawing on existing scholarly literature, historical analogues - from the Arab-Israeli conflicts to the Good Friday Agreement - and established conflict resolution theories. By doing so, it offers a theoretically informed and historically grounded analysis of de-escalation pathways in the Russia-Ukraine context.

Despite the explosion of policy analyses and real-time war reporting since 2022, a substantial research gap persists concerning the systematic application of these conflict resolution frameworks to the

evolving dynamics of the Russia-Ukraine War. Much of the current discourse remains either overly descriptive or policy-prescriptive, without embedding the conflict in broader theoretical debates about war termination, peacebuilding, and the sequencing of ceasefire arrangements. Due to the war's profound implications - not only for Ukraine's sovereignty but also for global economic stability, NATO-Russia relations, and the international rules-based order - addressing this conceptual gap is a critical scholarly imperative.

The article aimed 1) to detail exploration of the three theoretical frameworks, outlining their assumptions, mechanisms, and relevance to contemporary conflicts. Further it aimed 2) to applies these models to the Russia-Ukraine War, analyzing opportunities, constraints, and points of divergence. Lastly, 3) the study critically assesses the strengths and limitations of each framework in capturing the complexities of the conflict and reflects on the prospects for future research and policy innovation.

Theoretical Frameworks

The subsequent sections undertake a critical exposition of the three theoretical frameworks, delineating their foundational premises, illustrating their application across historical conflict settings, and evaluating their analytical relevance to the evolving dynamics of the Russia-Ukraine War.

1. William Zartman's Ripeness Theory

William Zartman's Ripeness Theory offers a robust conceptual framework for analyzing the optimal conditions under which conflicts may be ripe for negotiation, specifically identifying moments when a conflict's cessation becomes not only desirable

but also feasible (Zartman, 1989). The theory hinges on two pivotal elements, i.e. the emergence of a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS) and the existence of a plausible "Way Out." The MHS occurs when both parties in a conflict experience escalating costs - whether in the form of military casualties, economic deterioration, or political marginalization - that render continued confrontation more detrimental than pursuing a negotiated resolution. This condition is not merely a matter of tangible losses, but also a psychological impasse, wherein both sides recognize that victory is either unachievable or prohibitively costly (Zartman, 2001).

The second critical element of Ripeness Theory, the "Way Out," is the recognition by both parties of viable alternatives to the ongoing conflict. This often involves the intervention of external actors - such as third-party mediators, international pressure, or the introduction of credible proposals - that can guide the conflicting parties toward a resolution. It was rightly explained by Muscular Mediation theory, which stresses the role of third-party actors who assertively intervene to shape the conditions for peace. Unlike neutral facilitation, this approach involves applying leverage - through sanctions, diplomatic pressure, or incentives - to encourage the conflicting parties to negotiate.

Ripeness Theory has illuminated numerous landmark peace processes throughout history, providing valuable insight into the dynamics of conflict resolution. In the case of the Bosnian War (1992–1995), for example, the protracted loss of life, territorial disintegration, and mounting international intervention ultimately led to the Dayton Agreement, as the warring factions recognized that further violence could yield no decisive victory (Zartman,

2001). Similarly, the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) reached its conclusion when both nations, having endured significant economic and military strain, acknowledged that continuation of hostilities was unsustainable. In addition to this, the examples like the Good Friday Agreement and the Camp David Accords (1978) show how external actors, through muscular strategies, can force conflicts into a ripe state by directly influencing the parties involved. Zartman underscores that the state of ripeness does not emerge automatically but is often precipitated by external actors who intensify the costs of conflict or offer viable exit strategies (Zartman, 1989).

The application of Ripeness Theory to contemporary conflicts, such as the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, invites a critical assessment of whether escalating losses—both human and material—are pushing the warring parties toward a mutually hurting stalemate. In this case, the theory prompts a deeper inquiry into whether a viable exit strategy is discernible, particularly given the entrenched positions of both Russia and Ukraine, and the role of external actors, including US, NATO, and the European Union, in shaping the conflict's trajectory.

Moreover, when examining peace processes such as the Good Friday Agreement (1998) and even the Arab-Israeli conflicts, it becomes apparent that the concept of ripeness transcends a simple theoretical construct, often requiring the alignment of political will, external pressures, and the recognition of the futility of continued violence. In both the Northern Ireland peace process and the eventual peace talks between Israel and Palestine, the actors involved were confronted with a heightened sense of

mutual hurt and the realization that negotiation offered the only viable path forward to achieving some form of resolution.

Thus, while Ripeness Theory provides an invaluable lens through which to assess the dynamics of peace negotiations, its application must consider not only the internal costs of conflict but also the role of external influence in shaping the contours of negotiations. Therefore, Zartman's framework underscores the complex interplay of internal and external forces that determine the moment at which a conflict reaches its "ripe" stage for resolution, highlighting the importance of strategic intervention and the recognition of mutual losses in any peace process.

2. John Paul Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory

John Paul Lederach's Conflict Transformation theory presents a paradigm shift from conventional conflict resolution, advocating for a dynamic, long-term strategy aimed not merely at resolving immediate disputes but transforming the root causes of conflict by addressing the underlying relationships, structures, and systems that perpetuate violence (Lederach, 1997). Unlike traditional approaches that focus primarily on negotiating settlements, Lederach's model embraces a holistic vision of peacebuilding, which involves reshaping social dynamics over a prolonged period. At the heart of this approach is the understanding that conflict is not a singular occurrence but an ongoing continuum, necessitating interventions at multiple stages.

Lederach divides the peacebuilding process into three interrelated timeframes, i.e. short-term crisis interventions, mid-term negotiation structures, and long-term reconciliation efforts (Lederach, 2003). Short-term actions - such as ceasefires and

humanitarian interventions - are designed to reduce immediate violence and suffering, thereby creating the necessary space for more sustained dialogue. Mid-term interventions focus on establishing inclusive platforms, such as formal peace talks or mediation processes, to ensure continued engagement and a foundation for negotiation. In the long-term, Lederach emphasizes the need to address deeper structural issues such as historical grievances, identity-based conflicts, and systemic power imbalances, fostering the necessary conditions for reconciliation, trust-building, and mutual understanding.

One of the most illustrative examples of Lederach's Conflict Transformation theory in practice is the Colombian peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which spanned from 2012 to 2016. In this case, supplementary agreements on land reform, disarmament, and transitional justice helped rebuild the social fabric of a society torn apart by decades of war (Lederach, 2014). These agreements went not only beyond the ending of hostilities, but also they focused on transforming the underlying societal structures that fueled the conflict. It also involves tackling economic disparities and the marginalization of rural populations. Lederach's framework proves particularly useful in such contexts, where the roots of conflict are deep and historical, requiring extensive efforts in healing and tolerance-building to create lasting peace.

When applied to the Russia-Ukraine war, Conflict Transformation approach calls for the acknowledgment of both immediate humanitarian needs and the long-term challenges of reconciliation. In this case, short-term ceasefire agreements might

alleviate the suffering of civilians, while mid-term negotiation processes could establish channels for continued dialogue. However, the long-term effort would require confronting more intractable issues, such as divergent national identities, competing geopolitical aspirations, and the deep scars of historical conflicts. The ongoing struggle between Russia and Ukraine reflects how national identity and historical memory - issues central to Lederach's framework - complicate efforts at reconciliation, as each side clings to contrasting narratives of history and self-determination.

Lederach's theory is also relevant in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, where the transformative approach could help address the profound distrust and historical grievances that have plagued peace efforts for decades. A key aspect of his framework is that true peace is not merely the cessation of violence but the transformation of relationships at every level - social, political, and economic - so that the conditions for future conflict are mitigated. Therefore, Lederach's Conflict Transformation theory offers a forward-looking, adaptable approach to peacebuilding that extends far beyond traditional conflict resolution methods. It stresses that lasting peace requires not just addressing immediate conflict, but also transforming the underlying structures, relationships, and systems that fuel violence. Whether in Colombia, Russia-Ukraine, or the Middle East, the theory underscores the importance of fostering understanding, building trust, and creating inclusive, sustainable platforms for dialogue - necessary elements for enduring peace.

3. The Incremental Ceasefire Approach

The Incremental Ceasefire strategy advocates for a gradual reduction of conflict through a series of step-by-step agreements -

such as localized ceasefires or humanitarian pauses - before progressing toward broader peace accords (Fortna, 2004). Unlike established theoretical frameworks attributable to specific scholars (e.g., Zartman's Ripeness Theory or Lederach's Conflict Transformation), the **Incremental Ceasefire approach** is not the singular brainchild of any one academic. Instead, it has emerged as a pragmatic and adaptable strategy, evolving from the foundational principles of **Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)** and **gradual de-escalation** strategies (e.g., Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Fisher & Ury, 1981; Larson & Ramsbotham, 2018; and DPPA 2022), provides a pragmatic method for managing conflict, allowing the conflicting parties to test cooperation, build trust, and de-escalate hostilities incrementally, without the pressure to resolve all issues at once. Its value lies in its flexibility, offering a low-risk entry point for reducing tensions while simultaneously assessing the sincerity of each party's commitment to peace. A notable example is Syria's 2016 ceasefire, which temporarily reduced violence in Aleppo and provided civilian relief but ultimately collapsed due to inadequate enforcement and persistent mistrust (The New Yorker, 2016).

The Incremental Ceasefire approach dovetails with John Paul Lederach's emphasis on short-term crisis interventions, which focus on immediate harm reduction and providing space for longer-term peacebuilding efforts (Lederach, 1997). It also aligns with William Zartman's Ripeness Theory, particularly in its strategic use of limited agreements to demonstrate the practical benefits of negotiation. By showcasing the possibility of cooperation in specific areas, this incremental method can help build trust and momentum, eventually leading to more comprehensive peace

agreements (Zartman, 1989). Historical precedents, such as the 1994 Northern Ireland ceasefire, highlight the potential of small, focused actions - like the decommissioning of weapons - to serve as critical building blocks for larger peace processes. Similarly, in the case of the Russia-Ukraine War, an incremental approach could involve reducing specific forms of combat in key regions, such as the Donbas, to help stabilize the situation and create conditions conducive to more extensive peace efforts.

To further enhance clarity a concise overview and comparison of these three frameworks is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview and Comparison of the Three Frameworks

Feature	William Zartman's Ripeness Theory	John Paul Lederach's Conflict Transformation	The Incremental Ceasefire Approach
Nature	Theoretical framework	Theoretical paradigm/ framework	Strategic methodology/ Practical approach
Primary Focus	Identifying optimal moments for negotiation	Transforming root causes of conflict	Gradual reduction of conflict through phases
Key Concepts	Mutually Hurting Stalemate (MHS), "Way Out"	Relationships, structures, systems, multi-level interventions (short, mid, long-term)	Step-by-step agreements (e.g., localized ceasefires, pauses), Confidence- Building Measures (CBMs), gradual de-escalation
Time Orientation	Specific "ripe moment" for intervention	Long-term, ongoing continuum, all stages	Gradual, incremental steps over time
Role of External Actors	Crucial for providing "Way Out" and applying leverage	Implied in peacebuilding, focus on holistic societal change	Not explicitly primary, but essential for enforcement and mediation in practice

Table 1. Overview and Comparison of the Three Frameworks (Cont.)

Feature	William Zartman's Ripeness Theory	John Paul Lederach's Conflict Transformation	The Incremental Ceasefire Approach
Contribution to Ceasefire/Peace	Explains <i>when</i> parties are ready to negotiate for peace/ceasefire	Ceasefires as short- term actions to create space for deeper transformation	Provides a practical, flexible pathway for achieving ceasefires incrementally and building momentum for broader peace

In integrating these frameworks - Ripeness Theory, Conflict Transformation, and Incremental Ceasefire - a comprehensive strategy emerges for addressing the complexities of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Ripeness Theory identifies critical moments when both sides, burdened by escalating costs and facing a lack of clear victory, become amenable to negotiation, thus opening a window for intervention. Conflict Transformation builds upon this by proposing a phased approach to peace, reducing immediate violence through short-term actions, establishing inclusive negotiation mechanisms for medium-term stability, and, simultaneously, addressing the deep-rooted cultural and historical issues for long-term reconciliation. The Incremental Ceasefire strategy complements these efforts by introducing practical, low-risk measures, such as localized truces in contested regions like Donetsk, to test cooperation and foster trust. These smaller steps can then serve as steppingstones toward more comprehensive peace accords.

Together, these three frameworks - Ripeness Theory, Conflict Transformation, and Incremental Ceasefire - form an integrated and holistic strategy that balances the immediate need

for relief with the long-term goal of sustainable peace. This approach addresses the temporal, relational, and practical dimensions of conflict, ensuring that peacebuilding efforts are both contextually sensitive and strategically phased. However, the success of this integrated strategy is contingent upon the effective enforcement of agreements and the active mediation of external actors, who play a pivotal role in ensuring the credibility and sustainability of these incremental steps.

Applying the Frameworks to the Russia-Ukraine War

This section applies the frameworks to the conflict, critically engaging with documented events and scholarly insights up to April 2025, while contextualizing these within broader theoretical perspectives. It incorporates an analysis of key developments, examining the interplay of historical, political, and social factors, and draws on academic literature to assess the effectiveness and limitations of these frameworks in addressing the conflict's complexities.

1. Ripeness: A Stalemate Without Full Resolution

By April 2025, the Russia-Ukraine War has inflicted a severe toll on both parties, reshaping the geopolitical landscape. Russia has probably suffered the loss of 430,000 soldiers, witnessed a 4.1% contraction in its GDP in 2024 compared to a 5.9 % growth in 2021, and endured growing international isolation. (Al Jazeera, 2025; Trading Economics, 2025) However, it maintains control over 22% of Ukrainian territory and continues to benefit from strategic trade relations with non-Western states such as China and North Korea (IISS, 2025). On the other hand, Ukraine has experienced the

loss of 350,000 soldiers, the destruction of 70% of its energy infrastructure, and a crippling economic collapse, though these challenges have been somewhat mitigated by Western aid and the reclamation of significant territories like Kursk, valued at \$160 billion (ISW, 2025b). While these profound costs suggest a de facto stalemate, they do not fully reflect the emergence of a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS), as both sides retain strategic aspirations - Russia pursuing territorial annexation, and Ukraine relying on sustained Western support to achieve its goals.

A "Way Out" does exist, though it remains narrow and fraught with challenges. The March 2025 energy ceasefire and Ukraine's tentative acceptance of a truce indicate a limited willingness for negotiation, but Russia's demands for territorial concessions and NATO exclusion directly conflict with Ukraine's steadfast pursuit of full sovereignty and security guarantees (ISW, 2025a; The Telegraph, 2025). External pressures, such as U.S. sanctions on Russia, inconsistent aid to Ukraine, and diplomatic mediation efforts from Saudi Arabia and Turkey, provide potential pathways to peace. However, the core disagreements - over territorial integrity and security arrangements - significantly constrain the feasibility of meaningful negotiations (Arab News, 2023).

From the perspective of Ripeness Theory, the war remains on the cusp of transition. While the escalating human and economic costs may eventually drive both parties toward a point of reckoning, the absence of a clearly defined "Way Out" combined with entrenched positions on both sides underscores the difficulty in reaching a sustainable resolution. For negotiation to become a viable option, escalating costs or the introduction of more

compelling external incentives would be required to shift the calculus of both Russia and Ukraine, bringing the conflict closer to a ripe moment for peace.

2. Conflict Transformation: Bridging a Deep Divide

Lederach's framework offers both insights into progress and highlights significant obstacles in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. In the short term, the energy ceasefire temporarily restored electricity to millions, and the 2022 humanitarian corridors facilitated the evacuation of 50,000 civilians, despite violations and intermittent hostilities (ISW, 2025a; Newsweek, 2022). However, profound distrust persists, driven by atrocities such as the massacre in Bucha, where 400 civilians were killed, and President Zelensky's firm rejection of a frozen conflict solution (Al Jazeera, 2022; CNN, 2024). These factors severely undermine the long-term sustainability of peace efforts, as the underlying emotional and political divides remain unaddressed.

In the mid-term, initiatives like the 2025 Riyadh talks produced partial agreements, yet the process faltered amid ongoing instability, further complicated by Ukraine's occasional exclusion from discussions and shifting U.S. policy stances (The Guardian, 2025). The lack of consistent engagement from key stakeholders, coupled with the ever-changing international dynamics, has hindered the momentum necessary for lasting peace. These fluctuations underscore the difficulty of achieving stability without a clear, unified approach to negotiations.

Looking toward long-term reconciliation, the challenges become even more formidable. Russia's denial of Ukrainian national identity, compounded by painful memories of occupations

such as the mass graves found in Izyum, and the fundamentally divergent visions of the two countries - Russia's aspirations for global reordering versus Ukraine's pursuit of NATO membership - render the prospects for relational healing distant (Ramsbotham et al., 2024). These deep-rooted grievances, along with nationalistic fervour and historical animosities, significantly complicate efforts to rebuild trust and mutual understanding.

Therefore, Lederach's Conflict Transformation framework suggests that true peace will require sustained, inclusive efforts far beyond the current capacity of both the domestic and international actors involved. While incremental progress has been made, the path to meaningful transformation necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses not only the immediate cessation of violence but also the profound emotional and structural wounds that have been inflicted over decades of conflict. Without this long-term, inclusive commitment, the prospects for reconciliation remain distant.

3. Incremental Ceasefire: Small Steps Amid Complexity

Incremental measures have demonstrated their feasibility, with initiatives like the energy truce and the 2022 humanitarian corridors offering temporary relief and proving that limited cooperation is possible (ISW, 2025a; Newsweek, 2022). These actions align with Fortna's (2004) emphasis on achievable, small-scale steps as a means to test the sincerity of the parties involved. However, the effectiveness of these measures remains constrained by Russia's territorial ambitions and Ukraine's steadfast insistence on maintaining territorial integrity, further complicated by perceived biases in the mediation process. For example, U.S. favouritism and

European leanings in the negotiation process have been critiqued as potential obstacles to impartial dialogue.

Historical parallels, such as the 1991 Yugoslav ceasefire, illustrate the limitations of an incremental approach. Without robust enforcement mechanisms and mutual trust, such measures risk failing to produce lasting peace. The absence of sustained, reliable oversight and the ongoing distrust between parties exacerbate these risks, making long-term stability difficult to achieve. However, despite these limitations, incrementalism offers a practical starting point for de-escalation, providing a framework for building momentum toward broader peace efforts. By fostering limited cooperation and testing the willingness of both sides to engage in dialogue, these measures can serve as initial steps toward larger, more comprehensive agreements. Nonetheless, the success of such an approach depends heavily on external enforcement, trust-building, and the management of deeply entrenched political and territorial disputes.

Discussion and Insights

The Russia-Ukraine War serves as a compelling illustration of the interaction between Ripeness Theory, Conflict Transformation, and Incremental Ceasefires, each framework offering unique insights into the opportunities and limitations within the conflict. Ripeness Theory suggests that the conflict is not yet fully “ripe” for resolution, as both Russia and Ukraine retain strategic optimism - Russia benefiting from territorial gains and Ukraine relying on Western support. This ongoing optimism delays the emergence of a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS), which is

typically the critical catalyst for negotiation (Zartman, 1989). Historical precedents - such as the Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda War - demonstrate how external pressures - whether from NATO, the U.S., or non-Western mediators - can expedite the ripening process, but the global implications of the Russia-Ukraine War, including energy market stability and nuclear risks, add significant complexity to the dynamics of this conflict compared to more localized struggles.

Conflict Transformation emphasizes the necessity of phased, long-term relationship-building. The peace process in Colombia with the FARC provides a clear example of how incremental agreements can rebuild trust and pave the way for broader reconciliation (Lederach, 2014). However, the Russia-Ukraine conflict presents a far more intricate challenge, given the deep-rooted historical animosities and the stark geopolitical divide between the two nations. While short-term agreements, such as ceasefires, have offered temporary relief, mid- and long-term efforts must address the exclusionary nature of current negotiation structures and the profound identity divides that characterize the conflict. These deeper issues complicate the pursuit of sustainable peace and reconciliation.

The Incremental Ceasefire approach offers a pragmatic bridge between short-term de-escalation and longer-term resolution, mirroring efforts such as the 2016 ceasefire in Syria, which provided temporary relief despite its eventual failure due to enforcement issues. Syria's fragility highlights a critical limitation of the incremental approach, as even modest agreements can quickly unravel without strong enforcement mechanisms and credible

third-party mediation. This underscores the importance of external actors in supporting and maintaining these small, verifiable steps toward peace.

Together, these frameworks point to the conclusion that while full peace remains distant, incremental, verifiable steps - if backed by strong, impartial mediation - offer a foundation for progress. However, the complexity of the Russia-Ukraine War exceeds the dynamics of previous conflicts. Unlike Colombia's internal strife or Bosnia's ethnic conflict, this war pits a nuclear power against a Western-backed state, heightening the stakes and amplifying the influence of external actors. The literature underscores distrust as a major barrier to peace, with Russia's atrocities and Ukraine's unwavering resilience solidifying entrenched positions on both sides (Sherpa & van der Lugt, 2024). While external actors, through sanctions, aid, or mediation, remain pivotal in shaping the conflict's trajectory, inconsistent approaches - such as fluctuating U.S. policy - further hinder progress (Cortright, 2023). Therefore, the war's complexity necessitates a nuanced, multifaceted approach, where incremental steps, tempered by cautious optimism, are reinforced by sustained external support and a coherent international strategy.

Conclusion

As of April 2025, the Russia-Ukraine War remains entrenched in a precarious balance between stalemate and the potential for stability. Ripeness Theory suggests that meaningful negotiations will depend on escalating costs and the emergence of a clearer "Way Out," a shift that may only be realized through intensified external

pressures. Conflict Transformation, in turn, advocates for phased interventions aimed at alleviating immediate suffering, fostering dialogue, and addressing the deep-rooted divides. However, enduring historical grievances and stark geopolitical rifts present significant obstacles to achieving lasting peace. The Incremental Ceasefire approach offers a pragmatic starting point, allowing small successes to gradually build momentum, though this process is contingent on fostering improved trust and ensuring effective enforcement mechanisms. This synthesis underscores that, while a comprehensive ceasefire remains elusive, the most feasible path forward lies in gradual, verifiable steps supported by robust international involvement. Scholars and policymakers can draw on these frameworks to navigate this conflict, one that is poised to shape the geopolitical landscape for decades to come.

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