

The Role of Public Administration in Managing War Between Russia and Ukraine

Dr. David Aniefiok Titus

Federal University Otuoke
Bayelsa State, Nigeria
titusda@fuotuoke.edu.ng
08139486401

Dr. Namso Mbon

Department of Public Administration
Akwa Ibom State University
Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
08028846040

Mbuotidem Ibanga Edem

Ritman University, Ikot Ekpene
Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
07081701423

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Abstract

Every country at peace has the potential to be at war; likewise, countries at war (cold or hot) have the potential to experience peace. Either way, public administration appears to be the only constant factor; hence the main aim of examining its role in managing the war between Russia and Ukraine. The study was anchored on the theory of administrative behaviour. A qualitative research design was adopted in this study. Data for the study were obtained from secondary sources. The research objectives were to: establish the role of public administration in the management of war; and compare how public administration has shaped the management of war in Ukraine and Russia. Findings from this study revealed among others, that public administration in wartime plays a role in entrenching a harmonious society by taking advantage of the opportunities to create a stable social environment. For instance, while public administration in Russia plays the role of justifying the invasion of Ukraine and causing war, it plays the role of justifying defence in Ukraine and showing citizens the efforts of the government in ensuring they are safe amid 'instability'. To this end, countries or nations of the world should not only learn from this war but strengthen their respective public administration institutions for effective and efficient service utilization.

Keywords: Role, Public Administration, Managing, War, Russia-Ukraine.

Introduction

Public administration permeates more areas of human endeavours than could be imagined. It is a phenomenon that is ubiquitous and can be found in operation in many areas, especially in places that are considered to be open and accessible to the public. Many people have also built careers out of public administration and such people are referred to as administrators.

Furthermore, public administration is a field which Uwizeyimana & Maphunye (2014) observe has experienced continuous shift from one theory to the other over a period spanning more than a century. Meanwhile, a record of public administration as a process or activity, shows that it has undergone several modifications. For instance, Uwizeyimana & Maphunye (2014) note that the phenomenon, as a theory was replaced by New Public Management from the 1970s to the 1990s. New Public Management, itself, was also replaced by governance from the 1990s to date.

This historical perspective shows how public administration has evolved. It exposes the dynamic nature of the subject and how it has undergone modifications, perhaps, to suit prevailing situations with the view of addressing issues that fall within the purview of public administration-centered solution.

While part of the essence of public administration is to sustain public trust, especially with regard to governments, Rondinelli (2007) posits that public administration has come to occupy a central position in governance and worthy of discussion and debate on daily basis. The author further observes that globalization, a phenomenon that is increasing transactions among countries in trade and investment, has also caused citizens to demand more from their governments, a development that has led to growing dissatisfaction with or lack of trust in government. Continuing on the role of administration, Ayee (2005) also notes that development administration was introduced as a result of the identification of administration as the primary obstacle to development rather than economic.

Moreover, public administration has a link with politics, even though, in the submissions of some scholars, the two have been separated for a long time. This has been criticized also by public administration scholars. On this backdrop, Overeem (2023:7) notes that the idea of a dichotomy within government between public administration on the one hand and politics on the other might not pose challenge. Politicians are elected, public administrators are appointed; the former make decisions, the latter prepare and execute them. However, the author submits that for over seventy years, students of public administration have vehemently criticized the dichotomy that has been created between politics and administration.

The implication of the afore-discussed – mixing politics and administration in the same discourse – suffices that whatever political structure exists, there is an element of administration, albeit public administration, that exist in every structure of government or governance, and in whatever prevailing situation – whether of war or at a time of relative peace and calm.

Consequently, Demir (2023) observes that the role of public administration in the political process has been of great concern since the emergence of public administration as an academic field in the late 1880s. Whereas politics refers to the process of “who gets what, when, how and why?” the question of how public administration relates to the political process, is of pivotal importance to scholars and practitioners alike.

In war and in peace time, at every level of politics – local, state, national and international, public administration remains a constant, and practitioners continue to deploy it with the view of creating public trust for governments. In international politics, it is even a more needed endeavour arising from the complexities that lie therein. These complexities are explainable owing to the divergent dispositions of different countries that subscribe to the provisions of international laws and regulations, having been found under certain umbrellas such as the European Union, United Nations, etc.

The above established: the importance of public administration, as well as its indivisibility from politics, is another phenomenon that is ubiquitous and affects many areas of national life in such a manner that could even cause unrest and war. It is necessary to examine the role of public administration in managing the the-yet-to-fully end war between Russia and Ukraine. This is the crux of this study, and by extension (as ideal type bureaucratic-rational institutions) a reliable template for further study on the rationality (Ita & Titus, 2018:57) or otherwise of war option by the two countries.

Statement of the Problem

Wars are offshoots of minute conflicts which graduate to crisis and could emanate from the mismanagement of political activities. Every nation at peace today has the potential of experiencing a full-blown war, likewise, nations at war (cold or hot) have the potential of experiencing peace. This does not, however, portray peace as the absence of war.

Countries such as Rwanda have experienced wars at one time or the other. Nigeria even recorded a civil war that lasted for three years, between 1967 and 1970. Most recently, Ukraine and Russia have been at war over the former’s decision to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – NATO, an

organization that has the United States, an ‘enemy’ of Russia at its helm. Most of these wars are rooted in politics, albeit international politics.

The aforesaid notwithstanding, amid the instability in the polity and such societies, one thing among many that appears to be constant is public administration. The government continues to interface with the citizens and even attempts to make them see that the war and whatever is identified as the reason for such engagement, is for a good cause, such that will in the end, benefit the entire nation and its citizens.

With public administration having become an important phenomenon whether in war or peacetime, it becomes pertinent to see what role(s) it plays in the management of war going on between Russia and Ukraine. Therefore, in this study, a question to answer in the main is: what is the role of public administration in the management of war between Russia and Ukraine?

Conceptual Explanation

Undoubtedly, public administration, like many concepts, does not have a generally accepted definition. This is typical of concepts in the social sciences and humanities. To add to this, Nwanisiobi & Christopher (2020) observe that it is difficult if not impossible to define this concept in one sentence, and cited some scholars who believe that an attempt to so do will cause mental paralysis instead of enlightenment and stimulation. The authors see the word “public” as people of a given state, whose will is represented by the government. Administration refers to the management of the affairs of the said people. Invariably, public administration represents the process of the government’s management of the affairs of its citizenry.

While Kettl in Nwanisiobi & Christopher (2020) see public administration as a subfield of political science, Lalor (2014) opines that public administration is primarily between the government and citizens. For Uchem & Erunke (2013:60), to understand public administration, one must, first of all, pay attention to the individual concepts. These authors believe that administration is a cooperative effort of a group of people in pursuit of a common goal. This is in tandem with an earlier submission that public administration involves the people. It is the public first that is at the centre of administration. They add that administration, as a global phenomenon, occurs in diverse institutional settings. For instance, administration is divided institutionally into public administration and private administration. The former operates in a governmental setting, while the latter operates in a non-governmental setting or business enterprise.

Kaur & Singh (2013) cited one of the fathers of public administration, L.D. White, as having defined the concept as comprising all operations meant to fulfil or enforce public policies. This definition, the writers note, covers many operations in many fields such as the sale of public land, the negotiation of a treaty, the award of compensation to an injured workman, the quarantine of a sick child, manufacturing uranium 235, and grazing policy.

Scholars such as Uchem & Erunke (2013), believe that the diverse definitions of public administration are contingent on the different perspectives and environments of the scholars. Also, administration involves more than one person who pursues not just a common goal, but such that neither of them can independently achieve. The writers also aver that public administration, a concept, more related to the government, could be seen as a cooperative effort of groups and/or people to achieve the aims of the general public.

Worthy of note at this point are three schools identified within the scope of public administration, capable of backing up every other definition of the subject matter. The schools are: - the integral school, the managerial school, and the ‘body of knowledge’ school. The first defines public administration as the sum total of activities embarked on with the view to fulfilling public policy. The managerial school as the name implies views the subject from the prism of management and thus, sees public administration as an area that is specifically concerned with only those persons engaged in the performance of managerial functions in an organization. This school developed such functions of public

administration as summarized in the acronym 'POSDCORB' meaning: planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting.

The third and last school sees public administration from a position of enhancing the use of human cooperative action, at the theoretical or practical level, to solve the practical challenges that affect governmental service delivery (Uchem & Erunke, 2023). They view the concept as one directed towards the understanding of government and administration; best considered as a branch of social science. Invariably, they see it as an academic field of study concerned with the workings of government toward some set goals.

For Kolin (2014:1), war is an act of organized violence carried out by political units against each other. The author further suggests some decent interpretations of this definition thus, "Firstly, violence is not war unless it is carried out in the name of a political unit. Secondly, violence carried out in the name of a political unit is not war unless it is directed against another political unit".

War remains a means of preserving the balance of power, which has been considered essential to the survival of the system. Although recent wars do not seem to bear this assumption out, there is no certainty that wars, once fought between the United States and the Soviet Union in Vietnam, and elsewhere around the world during the Cold War struggle, could not be replaced by new ones as a result of the change in the distribution of capabilities across states in the system after the end of the Cold War.

To Egus (2020), even the youngest children perceive war in concrete terms such as combat, weapons, and soldiers, and all children have a definition of war. Clausewitz (2017) sees war as an act where force is employed, and there is no limit to the use of force in war. According to Cicero in Egus (2020), war is a means to resolve conflicts with coercion. The last definition suffices to say that there is a precursor to war; it could be a bad situation that turned sour but involves some form of force given reviewing situations and bringing about solutions.

Furthermore, Bicheno (2001:1) extends the concept of war by talking about "total war," which to him is "the whole population and all the resources of the combatants committed to total victory and thus become legitimate military targets". Total war can be unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral and is noted for the absence of rules or restraint in the planning and execution of military action in pursuit of unlimited political goals.

From the foregoing, we can infer that war is a process with an end in mind, and is often violent and coercive. When nations go to war, cold or hot, there is in many breaths, a political undertone with nations seeking to secure their territory and interests. Some could fight and engage in wars because of issues in which other nations have mutual interests, but a common denominator is that there is destruction in the course of wars.

Consequences of War

According to Nordhaus in Khudaykulova et al., (2022:48), the costs of wars are often underestimated. The author posited that the net present value of the costs of waging war, rebuilding, and the macroeconomic consequences vary from \$100 billion to \$1.9 trillion. Glick & Taylor (2010: 102) found the trade-related costs of World War I were 2.55% of world GDP on a flow basis, which equates to a stock value of \$104 billion in 1913).

During the current conflict, the EU has increased investments in DE carbonization, digitalization, and resilience. In the current case of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the expenses of decreasing the reliance on Russian imports in the short run would amount to €100 billion, of which €50 billion would be invested in rebuilding the reserves, and €25 billion would be an additional cost for other suppliers and €25 billion would go to the coordination of distribution over EU (European Commission, 2022). The above data on the consequences of war are mere tips of the iceberg.

Russia and Ukraine War

There have been hundreds of civil wars since 1945 with their casualties in millions and there was great hope during the brief euphoria in 1989/90 that the end of the Cold War would herald the beginning of a

new era of widely enjoyed improvements in economic welfare, prosperity and peace achieved through greater harmony of interests and cooperation between and within countries. Regrettably, though not surprisingly, it is the sceptics who have turned out to be right.

Notably, civil and international wars are not the only forms of organized aggression and brutality. Several countries have experienced intercommunal violence, genocide, coups and high levels of organized crime occasioned by economic factors such as poverty, unemployment economic stagnation and rapid income deterioration as presently experienced in Nigeria. The fact that rates of growth tend to be much lower in war-affected economies than in those that have not experienced civil conflicts makes the underlying problems even worse.

Economic conditions are of critical importance. However, they cannot be considered independently of non-economic factors for the simple reason that there is a strong interaction between the two. To achieve their objective, economic policies must therefore take into account the capacity of a society (its institutions and resources) to solve the problems created by the divisions and tensions that are responsible for recurring violence.

Geographically, the two countries are in Europe. Ukraine, a puppet of the central authority in Mosco, gained independence in 1991 from the erstwhile Soviet Union (USSR), which was Russian-dominated. The origin of the current conflict between the two countries lies in Russia's age-long desire to control its periphery, embodied by Vladimir Putin after his ascent to power in 2000. Invariably, part of his ambition was to hold Ukraine tied to Russia economically and politically for selfish reasons. Observably, his initial strategy was soft coercion, but it became more assertive and aggressive over time (www.chathamhouse.org). Below are their geographical maps showing obvious closeness to each other.



Figure 1: Map of Russia showing closeness of Ukraine and Moscow.



Figure 2: Map of Ukraine showing closeness to Russia.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted the theory of Administrative Behavior developed by Herbert Simon in his book ‘Administrative Behaviour’ in 1947. The theory’s mainstay is that organizations can be understood by the process of their decision-making. The theorist advances the concept of “bounded rationality,” which scholars note, demonstrates the recognition of the limitation of pure reasoning in decision-making. In other words, while it might be largely rational, rationality is limited by other factors, including incomplete knowledge and the inability to process information.

Singh (2020), while contributing to the discourse, observes that the theory rejected the notion of an omniscient ‘economic man’ capable of making decisions that bring the greatest benefit possible and instead proposed the idea of an ‘administrative man’ who ‘satisfices’— looks for a course of action that is satisfactory. This may suggest why nations will prefer to go to war with the view of solving a problem considered political. It does not necessarily sound rational, and even if it does, it has proven to be more detrimental, and destructive too, to the warring nations. The nations under study are good examples of this.

Administrative behaviour theory is a decision-making theory and is based on the complexity of human association and events. It is a principle of chain of command and reaction and establishes the process of identification of the best course of action from a set of objectives i.e. it shows that there are several alternatives to weigh and select the best alternatives. Moreover, Ofuase et al., (2021) opine that the decision-making process is an analysis of a cycle of awareness, initiatives, alternatives, preferences, choices, and actions, and is aimed at solving problems and resolving issues.

The theory of administrative behaviour, from the foregoing, attempts to explain how leaders especially, arrive at the decisions they take. These decisions are taken to resolve the issues at hand. It explains the decision of political leaders of nations to go to war with the view of resolving issues they perceive to encroach on their territory. This proves the relevance of this theory to this study

Public Administration and Management of War in Russia and Ukraine

Barabasherv (2016) opines that present-day wars are instigated by issues emanating from local complexes of innovations that combine scientific, technological, economic, and social entities; and that these influence the development of countries – both those directly participating and others that are not participating. Also, Akobia (2021) in a reflection on public administration in wartime, holds that violence and democratization are identified as the two most important variables affecting overall public administration performance. The author adds that the bid to entrench informal rule in countries openly endangers and paralyses the positive gains and developments seen in public administration.

Gulli (2006) opines that the government through public administration, has a role to play in entrenching a harmonious society by taking advantage of the opportunities to create a stable social environment. This suggests that amid war, the role of public administration could include ensuring that the war comes to an end. Likewise, Panic (2005) bearing in mind that the end of a war is the beginning of another, avers that public administration plays the role, or should at least, play the role of reconstruction, development and entrenching sustainable peace. This could be by finding a means to assuage all parties and finding lasting solutions to issues that caused the crisis, as well as other issues raised by the crisis. Government in war situations aims to strengthen public institutions, with the view to setting the nation on a path to reconciliation and ensuring that citizens, especially civilians, adapt to the course of the war through public administration.

From the foregoing, we learn that public administration is a routine business of the government aiming at ensuring the citizens are in one piece amid whatever situation prevails in a given country. During wartime, public administration aims at ensuring that the citizens, especially civilians are well shielded from the military of warring nations, as well as making provisions for them as long as the war lasts.

Worthy of note at this point is the fact that the management of the war in both Ukraine and Russia is a function of public administration. The two countries in separate ways have tried to make their citizens see that they are doing their best to ensure their safety, to be seen as making provisions for them and shielding them from the violent activities of the war.

While Russia shut down the operation of every media house (indigenous and foreign-owned), it perceived that such a decision was not favourable to its invasion. However, as part of information control measures, Baev (2022) notes that President Putin finds it necessary to issue a series of goal-setting documents on the basic National Security Strategy. This becomes imperative as E-governance has come to partner with public administration as never before (Titus & Akpan, 2019:1117) Ukraine, on the other part remains resistant and keeps its hands on the plough of the same issue for which the Kremlin has remained hell-bent on fighting it – joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It is against this backdrop that Baev (2022:1) posits that the strategy of a protracted war can lead to victory only if the economy and society are fully mobilized via administrative mechanisms.

Furthermore, looking at how Ukraine responded to the Russian invasion, Ukraine President, Volodymyr Zelensky is quoted to have posited that there was "no alternative" for Ukraine other than the return of Crimea into its control. Zelensky also condemned Russia's treatment of Crimea's Muslim Tatar community (Diehn:2023). The Muslim ethnic minority is indigenous to the Crimean Peninsula. However, many, at the time of the study, had fled, fearing persecution, while others are currently detained by Russia.

Additionally, Ukraine moves to resume electricity exports to Europe, following a six-month halt as Kyiv struggled under Russian missile attacks targeting the country's infrastructure. For Russia, it is a show of military might and a fight to become the superpower in place of the United States of America. recent reports have it that Russian invading forces have continued to launch dozens of military strikes in eastern regions of Ukraine, with Kyiv's military reporting its forces had repelled 60 attacks over the past day. Russia threatened to wreck a UN-brokered grain export deal with Ukraine because of what it calls Western "obstacles" to the export of Russian food and fertilizers.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Russia and Ukraine respond differently to the war. Their public administration strategies or responses as it were, differed from each other. While Ukraine on the defensive, kept assuring its citizens of safety and seeking the aid of the USA and other countries that favour NATO, Russia continued to fire Ukraine and called the bluff of nations calling it to order.

International Communities' Reactions to Ukraine and Russia War

With the war ongoing, several reactions were drawn from international communities and countries of the world. Several countries including the United States and Germany followed up their condemnation of Russia's invasion with donations of arms to help Ukraine fight against the invaders. Similarly, Gadzo & Mohammed (2023) report that French President, Emmanuel Macron prevailed on his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, to mount pressure on Russia to withdraw from Ukraine. They add that even Greece pledged more military assistance to Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Mogul et al., (2023) observe that the Chinese President having often verbally retorted that his country is not supplying Russia with arms, but did not initially deny its support, told the French President that it is "in nobody's interest for the Ukraine war to drag on." Meanwhile, this was reported to have been published by Chinese State Media.

Finally, international media focused their attention on Ukraine and the activities of Russia upon their invasion. Media houses such as *CNN*, *Aljazeera*, *Reuters*, etc., embarked on a daily update of events.

Public administration in wartime plays a role in entrenching a harmonious society by taking advantage of the opportunities to create a stable social environment for citizens of each country while the military faces the battle. Despite the rancour, administrative officers, especially of government offices work towards the safe-keeping of citizens while fronting against their enemies through their military. Secondary data showed that administrative activities in the countries under study – Russia and Ukraine – focused on these. They made decisions on how they thought best their citizens should live in the period the war continued, and tried to implement them as policies to see that they were protected. On the other hand, the military and volunteers from within and outside the nations at war joined at the war front and the Ukrainian cities where the war has been ongoing.

Public administration plays the role of a tool for establishing mutual benefits and goodness among states and institutions. Amid war, public administration plays a role in international politics by making countries seek what is best for them, thereby altering the existing treaties and agreements between countries; they seek what is beneficial to them and the other countries whom they share friendship with. This scenario seems to play out perfectly in the way many countries responded to the issue between Russia and Ukraine, with some showing support, while others condemn, and some others staying neutral or appearing to be so.

While public administration in Russia plays the role of justifying the invasion of Ukraine and causing war, it plays the role of justifying defence in Ukraine and showing citizens the efforts of the government in ensuring they are safe amid 'instability'. Russia uses public administration-channelled narratives of the war to suit or make its citizens see that it was a security matter; a matter of securing their lives and their future including that of their children. In Ukraine, it was employed as a tool for a different reason: to ensure the safety of the citizens, children and women, especially while also showing other nations that they were concerned about their citizens who reside in Ukraine.

Public administration determined how other nations related with both Russia and Ukraine and what actions were taken for or against either of the warring countries. While nations pressured Russia to back off from Ukraine, they supported Ukraine with arms in the case where Russia was insistent.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that public administration plays an important role in the governance of a country, and this includes peace and wartime. Russia and Ukraine have been at war for a while now. It began cold but later spiked into a full-blown combative war with Ukraine mostly at the receiving end; being on the defensive end, with the view to warding off Russian forces whose aim is to take parts of Ukraine and make them become part of Moscow for easy administrative control by Russia.

Amid these, the two nations as well as other nations of the world sort means to ensure that both Russians and Ukrainians, especially the citizenry are well protected while seeking a lasting solution to the imbroglio. This required public administration as a tool to be achieved, and this comparative analysis showed it elicited different responses from international communities, in a way that saw sanctions meted out to Russia, while Ukraine received support and succour for the destruction that went on in its cities where battles are fought. Indeed, public administration remains the only constant factor at all times.

Recommendations

To avoid abuse of public administration to justify the invaluable role it plays in war situations all over the world, and Russia-Ukraine in particular, peace talks should not only be resolved but done selflessly and sincerely. By so doing, the warring countries will not only experience peaceful co-existence with their neighbours but also will achieve a sustainable one, especially, as the rationality behind the option of war seems questionable.

Also, the nearness of the two countries should be harnessed for development by peace instead of destruction by war. Finally, other countries or nations of the world should not only learn from this war but should strengthen their respective public administration apparatuses for effective and efficient service utilization.

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