

# Quarterly Newsletter



DIRECTOR - EMMA MCANDRY

## Here’s what has happened in the last month and what’s to come!

Welcome to the Spring Quarterly Newsletter of 2026! Seeing the increasing sun, longer days with daffodils, crocuses and tulips in my garden always makes me feel positive.

This quarter has been one of growth, momentum, and meaningful engagement.

We’ve continued to expand our training, delivering impactful courses across new and returning regions, while strengthening our presence in Pakistan through continued collaboration.

New partnerships within the UK and across the globe are secured and also pending, which is really exciting!

Our mediation panel remains actively engaged, with a steady flow of matters reinforcing the importance of effective dispute resolution in both commercial and interpersonal contexts.

It’s particularly exciting to see how our work continues to translate into real-world impact, with more individuals and organizations recognizing the value of dialogue-led solutions.

On a personal note, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the continued dedication of our team. It’s a privilege to work alongside such a driven and supportive group of individuals.

As always, we welcome your thoughts, contributions, and suggestions for future newsletters.

I hope you enjoy reading this quarter’s updates.

Warm regards,

*Emma McAndry*

In this newsletter you can expect:

- News and Updates
- New Clients and Stories of Impact
- Articles and other projects
- Changes to the Team
- Training and Development
- Cases and Case Studies

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## CHANGES TO THE TEAM



We are pleased to share some internal developments within the EMS team. Kawish and Uneeb have successfully progressed to the role of EMS Support Trainer and are now also accredited assessors. In addition, Laricelle, who has already been contributing as a trainer, has now qualified as an EMS assessor.



## MEDIATION TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT NEWS

This year has already been an active one for training and development. We have delivered **three Civil & Commercial courses, one Workplace course, a Workplace Conversion course, an Observation+ event, and a dedicated mediation CPD day.**

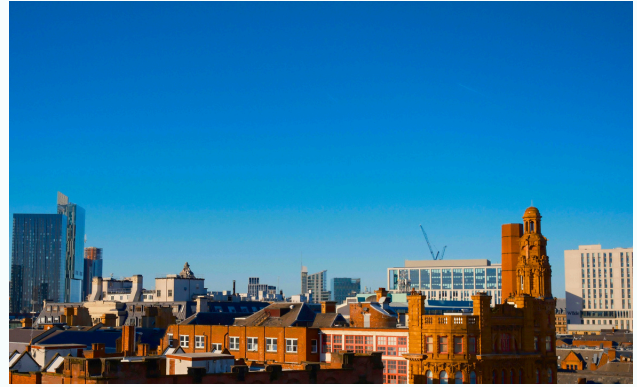
A particular highlight was our continued engagement in Pakistan. Emma had the opportunity to visit for the third time—having previously been to Lahore in April, Islamabad in August, and returning again to Islamabad this January.

The most recent course was held at the **High Court Bar Association**, located adjacent to the High Court during a high-profile case, resulting in a strong media presence. The cohort included **several senior judges from Islamabad and Kashmir**, requiring heightened security arrangements, particularly for one high-profile participant.

During the visit, Emma was invited to the **Supreme Court for a tour**, followed by a **meeting with the Chief Justice of Pakistan and Justice Miangul**. Discussions centred around their plans to establish a court-annexed mediation centre, reflecting a growing institutional commitment to ADR.

Emma was also honoured with traditional gifts, including shalwar kameez and a pashmina, which she wore during the final day of assessments and the closing ceremony. The event was attended by **senior members of the judiciary and bar, as well as the Prime Minister of Kashmir**. Emma's closing remarks were warmly received, particularly as she incorporated newly learned Urdu phrases and drew meaningful connections between mediation principles and cultural as well as religious traditions, including references to the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the resolution of the Black Stone dispute.





## New Clients

After 10 months of meetings, negotiations, form-filling, and contract drafting, we are delighted to announce our newest client: **IKEA**. This marks a significant addition to our growing portfolio of globally recognised organisations, including **Weetabix, Heineken, Dr Oetker, the Law Society**, and another client who must remain confidential.

*As part of this engagement, we will be delivering workplace mediation training to a cohort of IKEA staff, alongside facilitated conversation training for line managers and team leaders. This proactive model enables organisations to address low-level conflicts early, while ensuring that more complex or longstanding disputes are handled through structured mediation. It is a forward-thinking and highly effective approach to workplace conflict management.*

Our three-year contract with **Staffordshire County Council** has now successfully concluded, and we are pleased to share that they have opted to extend this partnership for a further year. This reflects the strength of our collaboration and the efficiency of the referral systems we have developed together.

*To date, we have conducted approximately **40 cases for the Council**, generating estimated savings of over **£200,000 in conflict-related costs**.*

Finally, we are on the cusp of formalising a partnership with another UK-based mediation provider to deliver civil and commercial training internationally. Our initial focus will be India, where the recent **Mediation Act 2023** has sparked a nationwide movement—“**Mediation for the Nation**”—aimed at reducing the burden on the justice system. As noted in The Indian Express (January 2026), this represents a potential “*golden period*” for scaling mediation practices: not every case requires litigation, and **the time for mediation is now**.

## Upcoming Trainings

We are especially looking forward to Emma's upcoming session on 24th April, where she will share her journey of establishing EMS, along with practical insights and guidance for aspiring mediators.

We are currently awaiting confirmation from IKEA, Pakistan, and India regarding upcoming training schedules. Once finalised, we will be better positioned to plan additional offerings, including Workplace Conversion courses, CPD sessions, and Observation events.

As always, we welcome collaboration. If you have ideas for courses or partnerships, we would be delighted to explore them with you. Tap on the LinkedIn or Whatsapp Icon to get in touch!



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## Training & Courses – 2026 Calendar

As we continue to expand our training offering globally, we're pleased to share our upcoming courses for the remainder of the year. These programmes are designed to support both new and experienced practitioners in developing practical, high-impact mediation skills.

Whether you're looking to qualify, convert, or deepen your expertise, there are multiple opportunities to get involved.

Month	Dates	Course	Type
<b>April</b>	14–16, 20–21	Civil & Commercial (Split Week)	CC
	22–23	Workplace Conversion	WP Conversion
	24	CPD Day – <i>Forging a Successful Mediation Business</i>	CPD
	w/c 27 April	Workplace Mediation	WP
<b>May</b>	w/c 4 May	Workplace (Online – Dubai, TBC)	WP
	20–21	Observation+ Event	Obs+
<b>June</b>	w/c 1 June	Workplace (Manchester Met University)	WP
	Jun 8, 2026	Introduction to Mediation	CPD
	9–10 June	Mediation Representation	CPD
	w/c 22 June	Civil & Commercial	CC
<b>August</b>	w/c 24 August	Civil & Commercial	CC
<b>September</b>	w/c 21 September	Civil & Commercial	CC
<b>October</b>	w/c 5 October	Workplace Mediation	WP
<b>November</b>	w/c 16 November	Civil & Commercial	CC

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# Mediation Cases

So far this year, we have successfully completed **15 mediations**, with several more scheduled and a steady stream of enquiries ongoing. While January is typically a quieter month following the year-end rush, this year proved to be an exception, with four cases completed in January alone.

The majority of our work continues to be in workplace mediation, reflecting our contractual engagements, although we are seeing a gradual increase in civil and commercial matters.

Geographically, most cases have been based in the Midlands, aligned with our primary contracts, alongside additional cases in the North West (including Manchester), the London area, and several conducted online.

Recent cases have included a complex inter-university dispute involving a joint research project with multiple stakeholders, as well as a high-level mediation between a Council Chief Executive and the political leader of the same Council.

Currently, we are managing a mediation between two councillors from opposing political parties, where tensions have already attracted local media attention. This presents a particularly challenging dynamic.

We also have an ongoing group mediation involving three managers, which may extend into a further mediation between one of the managers and her team.

Additionally, we have been approached regarding a potential mediation between leaders of Jewish and Muslim communities, following tensions arising from the handling of a Premier League football match.

We remain committed to supporting the development of future mediators. Wherever possible, our mediators are accompanied by an EMS graduate, ensuring that learning extends beyond the classroom into real-world practice.



## Testimonials:

**16 Mar 2026** – Client feedback on a workplace mediation co-mediated by Nimish Patel and Emma McAndry:

*"I had a wonderful experience despite the nature of conflict. The arrangements and organization were excellent. Communication was very effective. The session was worth it and my objectives were achieved in a conducive environment."*

**17 Mar 2026** – Testimonial by Scott Smith Chartered FCIPD on the Workplace Mediation Training Course:

*"Thank you for creating a fun and focused learning experience. I thoroughly enjoyed the course and really appreciated the time and effort that went into making it work. Emma and the wider team are very knowledgeable and helped me understand and appreciate different approaches."*

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# Mediation Cases Study #1

I really enjoyed reading the case study prepared by Louise Nicholls in the New Year EMS Newsletter, entitled 'A little workplace shuttle'. The description of shuttling between rooms immediately took me back to the time of Lockdown, when meetings and workshops were routinely shuttled between screens on Zoom. I wondered how it would work with mediation and so how fortuitous, therefore, that when I recently had the opportunity to observe a mediation, the shuttle method was also used.

My name is Suzanne Hughes and I felt very privileged to be given the opportunity, by EMS, to observe Roger Levitt in action. Roger brings a wealth of experience to his work as a mediator. Alongside many other high-profile roles, he is a Board member and Director of the CMC, and his depth of knowledge and calm approach were evident throughout the process. I knew from the outset that this would be an invaluable learning experience for me and that I would take away insights that would help shape my own mediation practice.

The mediation was conducted online, which was a real bonus for me. Being based in the South East of the UK, I often find it difficult to tie in observing or attending face-to-face mediations that take place in the North of the UK. In addition, I was particularly keen to understand how an online workplace mediation, using the shuttle model, could work effectively when relationships had deteriorated to such an extent. Observing this in practice felt extremely timely and relevant.

The situation

The mediation involved two Directors of a business whose working relationship had become progressively worse over the past couple of years. What had initially been tension and frustration had gradually developed into a significant breakdown in trust and communication. By the time the mediation was arranged, matters had reached the point where neither Director was prepared to communicate directly with the other, even face to face in a professional setting.

Despite this, both individuals acknowledged that the situation was unsustainable and that they needed to find a way forward for the sake of the business. That shared recognition provided an important starting point for the mediation, even though their views on how matters had arisen – and how they should be resolved – differed considerably.

Initial individual meetings took place the day before the joint mediation day. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to observe these preliminary sessions. However, Roger helpfully forwarded to me the information each Director had prepared, outlining what they were hoping to achieve and suggesting possible ways forward. Simply reading these documents was hugely informative. One Director provided a relatively short summary, while the other produced a very detailed document running to several pages. The contrast in approach immediately highlighted differences not just in communication style, but in expectations and priorities. I was very keen to see how these differences would play out during the mediation process.

On the day

I did not actually see the two Directors interact at all during the day, as the mediation took place entirely via shuttle. Even in an online environment, neither party felt able to sit together in the same virtual room. The day therefore began with Roger meeting the first Director privately, talking through the process and ensuring they felt supported. We then left that virtual room and repeated the same process with the other Director.

It quickly became apparent that the Directors held very different views about each other's involvement in the business. Despite having formally defined roles, they disagreed on responsibilities, levels of oversight and decision-making authority. Communication was another major area of difficulty. They had been unable to agree how and when updates should be shared, particularly around day-to-day operations, projected sales and financial information.

The mediation progressed slowly. One Director would put forward a proposal, which Roger then conveyed to the other Director. That proposal would be reviewed, challenged, amended or expanded upon, before being sent back again. This shuttle process continued throughout the day, with incremental adjustments made at each stage. Although progress was measured, there was a clear sense that movement was being made, however slowly.

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By the end of the day, a detailed framework was emerging and was in a far better place than at the start. This framework covered agreed principles relating to meeting structures, roles and responsibilities, communication methods and the sharing of business updates and information. Importantly, both Directors were able to recognise that progress had been made.

It was agreed that the dialogue would continue via email over the following seven days, with Roger continuing to mediate the exchanges. The intention was to refine and finalise the framework within that timeframe, allowing space for reflection without losing momentum.

### **Key takeaways**

Observing an experienced mediator at work was an incredibly valuable learning opportunity for me.

There were many things that I took away, but three key reflections stand out:

- Firstly, not all mediations conclude on the day – and that’s okay. Some workplace situations are complex and emotionally charged, requiring time and space for resolution. What matters is being clear about next steps: how the mediation will continue, how communication will be managed, and what additional costs or commitments may be involved.
- Secondly, the use of a detailed mediation briefing note was particularly effective. Roger sent this to both individuals in advance. It covered an overview of mediation, expectations and ground rules, and included much of what might traditionally be delivered verbally in opening statements, but in far greater depth. He also provided a structured list of questions for each Director to reflect on before meeting him. I found this approach quite powerful at this level of dispute. While it may not suit every mediation, in this case it helped focus thinking and manage expectations from the outset.
- Finally, it is important to remain flexible and adapt the process when needed. Things do not always go to plan, and each mediation is different. The primary objective is to support the parties in reaching an agreement that works, and sometimes that means adjusting the process to meet their needs.

I am extremely thankful to EMS for providing me with the opportunity to observe this mediation and to learn from such an experienced practitioner. I would definitely recommend observation if you haven't had the chance to do this as yet.

**By: Suzanne Hughes**

## **Mediation Cases Study #2**

I attended a two-day workplace mediation, observing both the individual and joint mediation process.

On day one, each party was seen separately. This provided an opportunity to build rapport and establish trust, allowing both individuals to openly share their perspectives on the situation. I found this stage particularly valuable in validating each person's experience, while also gently encouraging reflection. This included sense-checking how certain proposals might be received by the other party and supporting each individual to consider the situation from a different perspective.

At the end of day one, it felt uncertain whether the case would progress to a successful joint mediation, as the issues presented appeared complex and emotionally charged.

However, by day two, there was a noticeable shift. One party in particular appeared to have reflected on the previous discussions, which seemed to positively influence their openness and approach. During the joint mediation, both individuals were able to share their perspectives in a constructive way. They demonstrated a willingness to listen, showed mutual respect, and began to understand each other's viewpoints more clearly.

As a first-time observation of workplace mediation, I was struck by how the process came together. Despite initial uncertainty, the structured approach and opportunity for reflection enabled both parties to move forward, ultimately agreeing on a way ahead.

**By: Amz Nagra**

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## Mediation Cases Study #3

This was my first mediation as an observer/support following my training at the end of last year. It was a privilege to watch Emma at work and see the tools she and her colleagues had shared in training being put into action in a real-life scenario.

This mediation was between a business owner and their former landlord, a charity, with the charity seeking to recover outstanding several months of rent and utility bills, and the costs of refitting the space after it was vacated by the business. Both parties had strong concerns and firm positions going into the mediation, and there had also been a breakdown of trust between the two.

The situation was complicated by two other factors. First, there was only a short time available for the mediation itself (half a day). Also, at the request of one of the parties there were no joint sessions, which meant shuttling between both for the duration of the mediation. Despite these obstacles, Emma skilfully navigated between the two parties and was unflinching in keeping the process on track.

After some time spent exploring and identifying positions and concerns, the looming deadline helped both parties narrow down their focus to their core issues and identify 'red lines' which they weren't willing to cross. Shuttling between the two and sharing offers brought a zone of agreement where both parties could meet into focus, though it involved helping both parties realise it required making some painful concessions and compromises. It also meant the mediation running over into 'extra time', though the extra hour proved to be necessary for both to meet in the middle and make a last-minute agreement to settle some of the outstanding costs.

Overall, this outcome of this mediation confirmed for me something Emma emphasised during training: that a successful compromise involves both sides accepting some things they are unhappy with but ending up with something they can live with. Extending the mediation beyond the original schedule also reinforced the point that flexibility is key to the process. Finally, it brought home to me how stressful and intense the process can be for the parties, and the importance of the mediator being able to (1) build rapport with the parties in order to foster an environment of psychological safety, and (2) empathise with the parties' frustrations and worries in order to understand their thinking, which is key to making progress.

**By: Alex Edwards**



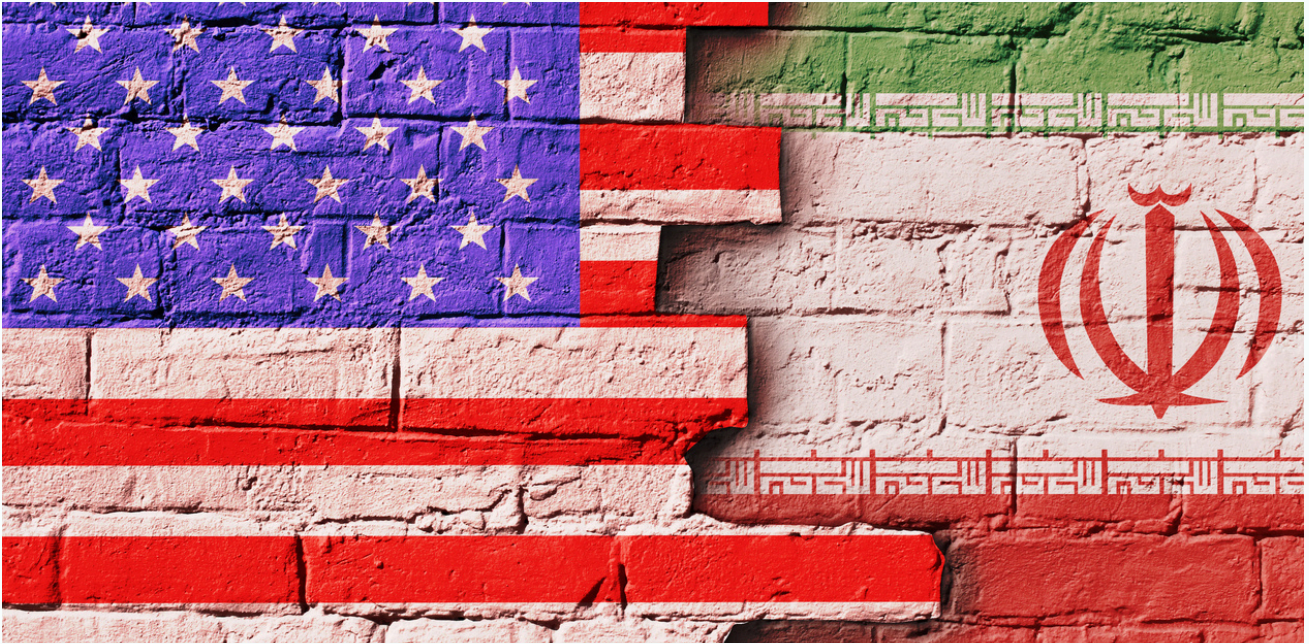
## Announcement



It's time again for the biennial National Mediation Awards! Our Emma was named National Mediation Trainer of the Year and ranked among the top three Workplace Mediators in the UK for 2022/23. In 2024/25, she served as a judge and couldn't compete. We'd love it if you considered nominating Emma again and/or any of our other trainers you feel are deserving. There's also now a Mediation Trainer Organisation award, which you might feel EMS as a whole is worthy of, either in addition to or instead of an individual trainer award. We'd be so grateful for your support. Nominations close on 24th July 2026.

CLICK HERE: [Make Your Nomination | The National Mediation Awards](#)





## THE POWER OF ACTIVE DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION IN RESOLVING INTER-STATE DISPUTES IN LIGHT OF THE CURRENT US-IRAN CONFLICT

We live in times where the world is systematically bound to one another to an unprecedented degree. Interconnected to such levels that the effect of the United States and Iran conflict has triggered intense ripples across the planet, impacting global economies and billions of lives in a matter of days.

Such geopolitical risks demand structured dialogue and mediation to prevent escalation rather than traditional confrontational approaches which often worsen tensions and benefit only one side over the other.

Historically, coercive measures have consistently been proven to be damaging to the relations between nations, creating risks of impending conflict. As seen in multiple historical instances, most evident in the 1941, US - Japan conflict (Pre-WWII) where severe economic sanctions imposed by the United States contributed to intensifying tensions between the two countries. Other examples include the broader implications of the Suez Crisis and the prolonged tensions between North Korea and South Korea, consistently demonstrating contentious impacts due to a lack of dialogue.

Similar patterns of prolonged aggression can be observed in the current dispute between the United States and Iran, where the use of adversarial approaches has been consistent throughout progression to little to no effect towards de-escalation. The show of force, threats, covert military actions and hardline diplomacy not only failed at deterrence but evidently intensified the current conflict. Any attempts at negotiations or discussions on a ceasefire were accompanied by threats to strike, worsening tensions at noncompliance and for own strategic interests.

In high-stakes conflicts involving innocent civilian lives and huge economic impacts such as the current conflict, a win-lose outcome is intrinsically flawed and inevitably unsustainable, as traditional adversarial approaches to de-escalation are commonly at the expense of one party.

The economic repercussions of this conflict have been felt across the globe in just a matter of a few days. A sudden rise in cost of essential goods triggered due to the critical shipping route at Strait of Hormuz being threatened, causing energy crisis due to disruptions in global oil markets.

Furthermore, what started as a bilateral dispute between two nations can spread rapidly into a complex multi-actor conflict. The involvement of the Houthis in Yemen demonstrates a sharp escalation of tensions with an extension of the initial conflict, now, directly affecting Yemen. This creates further regional instability and potentially impacting other shipping routes connected to Yemen. This raises a further prospect of other non-state actors being involved if the conflict persists.

In terms of Interstate mediation, the primary objectives are to reduce violence, build diplomatic ties and reach mutually agreed solutions through active dialogue that cater to the sovereign states involved. This is executed by neutral intermediaries that provide channels for dialogue.

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Although there have been claims and speculation of ongoing formal negotiations for a potential ceasefire and peace arrangements, these assertions remain still unconfirmed. However, this does not undermine the huge role played by Oman in its constant efforts to prevent regional escalation. Oman is the primary mediator, having served as a trusted neutral intermediary over the past decade displaying commitment to confidentiality and diplomacy. In the recent Iran-US conflict, it has facilitated indirect communications between Tehran and Washington in talks of maintaining nuclear limitations and de-escalation as a backchannel. Oman's capital Muscat has served as an indirect diplomatic hub for Iran and the US to encourage discussions on "Possible options regarding ensuring the smooth passage through the Strait of Hormuz during these circumstances witnessed in the region."

In light of other countries serving as neutral intermediaries, the recent developments in the conflict have seen emerging mediators including Pakistan, Turkey, and Egypt. Opening up multiple channels for negotiations within a multi-track diplomatic network, allowing breakthroughs for constructive outcomes.

Pakistan has put itself forth as a key mediator in the current conflict by hosting peace-talks between Tehran and Washington in attempts to de-escalate tensions. In recent developments, Pakistan offered a "two-phased" truce deal to end the conflict in its entirety and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, calling for a ceasefire effective immediately.

Holistically, Pakistan is coordinating with other intermediaries to de-escalate the conflict. This diversification of Mediation has opened pathways to better opportunities at effective communication and creative solutions to inter-state conflicts. Multiple neutral networks for mediation transform hostile confrontational approaches into opportunities for collaborative problem-solving, laying groundwork for peaceful mitigation of complex high-stake conflicts.

Unlike adversarial approaches where communication is through a means of coercive diplomacy, Mediation is grounded in active dialogue. We have seen multiple successful negotiations take place time and time again through bilateral dialogue or international interference. Prime illustration of this was in The Good Friday Agreement reached after direct negotiations ending decades of violent conflict in Northern Ireland with the facilitation of third parties.

Similarly, The Shimla Agreement through direct bilateral negotiations between Pakistan and India established a peaceful resolution to their disputes through dialogue. Furthermore, international mediation has been just as effective, as compellingly demonstrated by The United Nations in negotiating a ceasefire that put an end to the 8 year long Iran-Iraq conflict.

In the context of The United States and Iran, due to the complex nature of their conflict and deep-rooted mistrust, any pursuit towards active dialogue may face hinderance as a result of these factors. Although the opportunity of engagement for Iran and The United States is limited, there exists a slither of potential for pathways to open towards broader agreements through modest steps of mediation.

The necessity for mediation in this context is due to the dangers it poses to humanity. Coercion and intimidation usually serve as having short-term leverage over the other side until it is mirrored and the conflict is prolonged which could potentially lead to nuclear escalation.

When dialogue holds the power to transform conflict dynamics, military action loses its primacy. In such moments where escalation looms, dialogue ceases to be a mere approach, it becomes imperative.

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*Thank You!*

