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Journal of Political Science: Bulletin of Yerevan University

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In this Issue

The relevance of political research is determined by significant changes occurring in the contemporary world order, particularly the transformation of the international regime of civilizational democratization, liberal hegemony, the protection of human rights and freedoms, nuclear non-proliferation, and so on. These transformations are occurring simultaneously with a redistribution of power centers within the international system, further exacerbating the tendency toward destabilization of international relations. By studying the mechanisms behind the formation of a new order of hard, soft, and smart power—a new nuclear order—it is possible to formulate optimal approaches to decision-making to reduce threats to international security. The current period of global politics has been marked by the increasing instrumental role of nuclear weapons both in countries' national security agendas and in discussions within international institutions. An assessment of these processes has been reflected in political science discourses, as in recent years the nuclear factor and the role of nuclear weapons have become a cause of war and confrontation.

In the article '*Reforming the EU Asylum and Visa Application Processes: Challenges and Solutions*,' Stanyo Dinov analyzes the problems of the EU's unified migration system, which is governed by legal norms that clarify the conditions and procedures for granting asylum and visas, as well as international protection. The author conducts a comparative analysis of the main features of the national legislation of EU member states, which represented a crucial achievement in the development of an international system for regulating forced migration. According to the author, this system has undergone a qualitatively new development, designed to simplify the movement of EU citizens throughout the EU and, in some respects, complicate this process for third-country nationals. In this context, the relationship between the legal regime of asylum and temporary protection in the EU, which are analyzed in this article, remains insufficiently explored. The author also focuses on the challenges of implementing the provisions of universal international agreements on refugees through secondary EU law. Furthermore, over the past decade, there has been a dearth of scholarly analysis of complementary refugee protection in the EU, which has undergone significant transformation due to the massive influx of citizens from various countries into EU member states. Therefore, the author's academic interest focuses on both the political and legal conditions for granting asylum to refugees, as well as the procedural aspects surrounding these legal relationships in the EU.

In his article, '*The Effectiveness of Biosecurity Policy Regulation in China*', Bagrat Vardanyan draws on a comparative analysis of China's biosecurity, which is increasingly alarming the public, politicians, and scientists due to the growing threat of biological threats. China's biological security encompasses a wide range of issues, the solution of which in modern conditions is becoming part of national security as a necessary condition for the country's sustainable development. According to the author, China's national regulatory and methodological documents define biosecurity as a system of medical, biological, organizational, and engineering measures and tools aimed at protecting personnel, the population, and the environment from exposure to

pathogenic biological agents. The relevance of this research topic is linked to the transformation of the very nature of global governance, in which biosecurity is becoming an integral element of sovereignty, domestic resilience, and international influence. This is coupled with the intensifying international competition for biosecurity standards and the growing political significance of this infrastructure.

In the article '*Restructuring and its Nexus with National Security and Development Management in Nigeria: An African Policy*', Jibrin Ubale Yahaya analyzes the key factors shaping Nigeria's national security as one of the continent's leading states, successfully overcoming the challenges associated with long-standing military regimes and achieving some success in addressing international challenges. In the era of globalization, the African continent has been affected by political modernization and transformation, yet the ruling elite viewed democratic change as a means of preserving and strengthening its position in the new historical context. Characteristics of military regimes in Nigeria included the concentration of power in the hands of the head of state, the assertion of a single political system of governance, the absence of democratic freedoms, and the suppression of all dissent, often through brutal means. Guided by a desire to lead Nigeria out of its impasse through the consolidation of democracy and restructuring, respect for fundamental human rights and the implementation of liberal economic reforms, the new administration has declared its goal to be the restoration of health in all sectors of the Nigerian economy and social life, the eradication of the painful legacy of military regimes, the establishment of a strong democracy and the creation of a viable economy.

In his article '*Towards an African Solution-Oriented Approach to Conflict Analysis in African Peace and Security (2002-2022)*', Abraham Ename Minko examines security issues in African countries, as it remains difficult to pinpoint the direction of political processes in the region. This allows for a precise identification of potential threats to regional and international security that may arise from these processes. The article analyzes the complex dimension of security and peace in the region and raises a number of research questions, among which the key one is the question of resilience mechanisms. This question requires an examination of political transformations in the region, taking into account global trends. In the context of this research question, it is necessary to study the processes that influence the manifestation of state strength or weakness in the Horn of Africa, which is only partly determined by globalization. A comparative study of the main research question is complicated by the lack of comprehensive theoretical approaches that would allow for a precise explanation of processes in the Horn of Africa region from a unified perspective on international security. Furthermore, conflicting approaches to the study of security currently exist. On the one hand, security is viewed from a global perspective: this approach results in researchers concentrating on the analysis of global problems, forecasting their emergence and development, and potential solutions. While valid, this approach does not allow for a thorough examination of the regional situation, which can often refute theoretical conclusions applicable at the global level. On the other hand, security is viewed from a regional perspective, which analyzes the local-regional situation over a specific period of time, preventing conclusions about the international significance of trends expressed in the region. It is equally erroneous to limit the analysis of regional

security issues to merely examining the severity of global problems and trends or to studying only local security configurations.

In their article '*Strategic Diversification of China's Foreign Policy in Africa: The Belt and Road Initiative and the Transformation of China's Public Diplomacy in Nigeria*', Ashot Aleksanyan, Arusyak Aleksanyan, and Adedeji Daniel Gbadebo analyze China's growing role in global politics and on the African continent, the increasing importance of states as sources of human capital and natural resources, and the transformation of China's strategy toward Africa. China's increased activity in Africa, along with its new positioning on the international stage, necessitates studying this issue. In Nigeria and other African countries, China's successes in economics, energy, and diplomacy have marked the beginning of this shift. While China may not have set such a goal, it is nevertheless gradually displacing Western powers from their traditional spheres of influence. Certainly, China's strategic diversification and strengthening of its position in Africa, as well as in other regions of the world, serves as a good example of this. According to forecasts, demand for raw materials will increase in the medium term, making the fact that Africa accounts for at least a third of the world's proven natural resource reserves particularly significant. This new trend in China's foreign policy stems from the African continent's importance not only for natural resource extraction but also for regional security. Essentially, if implemented, China's initiatives will mark a transition to a new stage in global human development, where collective interests will prevail over the private aspirations of individual states. These Chinese initiatives are underpinned not only by interstate dialogue based on mutually beneficial commercial relations but also by the adoption of rules for equal political partnership, regardless of the political strength and economic influence of the contracting countries. This approach by the Chinese leadership to interstate cooperation has already created the foundation for public diplomacy and China's soft power with nearly all countries worldwide, enabling countries involved in this process to establish and strengthen mutual political, scientific, and cultural ties, both within China and among themselves. Given the energy, raw materials, industrial, biological, and labor resources of developing countries, a new situation is emerging that significantly alters the global balance of power and significantly determines the global political climate. In other words, China's foreign policy strategy, aimed at expanding mutually beneficial relations with developing countries, is shaping a new framework for interstate dialogue.

In '*John Rawls and the Pursuit of Social Justice in Contemporary Nigeria: A Philosophical Study*', Oladele Daniel Idowu and Esther Oluwaseun Idowu analyze issues of justice within John Rawls's conceptual framework, attempting to model social and philosophical thought around justice in Nigerian political life. Concepts of justice in contemporary Nigerian society serve as a value criterion for analyzing social reality and addressing questions about changing social relations. Assessing various phenomena in Nigerian society as just or unjust reflects the economic, political, legal, and social conditions that give rise to them. The significance of social justice in Nigerian society is determined by the following key factors: first, the need to theoretically develop a model of a just society against the backdrop of persistent and deepening social and economic inequality and the violation of democratic rights and

freedoms. Second, it has practical significance, as an analysis of existing and implemented principles of justice may enable the design and implementation of fair and effective social policies in the future. Social experience shows that the concept of 'social justice' becomes especially relevant in public consciousness during periods of dramatic social change caused by economic, political, and spiritual crises. Thirdly, there is a need to rethink the spiritual and value orientations of contemporary Nigerian society. This article examines J. Rawls's theory and its particular significance in contemporary Nigerian society, where social justice can serve as a value-based foundation for sustainable development. The authors note that Rawls's principles of justice take on new meaning as one way out of the current societal crisis. They can serve as a foundation for social reform and the consolidation of a modern democratic society, and can also be used to address the challenges of sustainable development in modern society.

In the article '*Risks of Military Confrontation in the South Caucasus in the Context of Geopolitical Transformations*', Siranush Melikyan examines the main risks posed by the unpredictability and instability of the South Caucasus geopolitical situation, taking into account trends toward integration and the formation of a multipolar world, as well as power politics, the push for a new hegemony, and the expanding zone of conflicts and local wars. The author focuses on the diversification of post-war Armenia's military policy, which, starting in 2020, must simultaneously defend its state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and right to historical choice, seek to preserve and develop the national identity of the Armenian people in the homeland and in the diaspora, and contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the region. The author also draws attention to the post-war situation and the presence of unresolved conflicts in the region, including armed ones, and the threat of new ones, which urgently dictates the need to develop an updated military policy, applicable to the conditions of the region, and to find ways to resolve existing contradictions. It is clear that the complex military-political situation in the South Caucasus requires the military-political leadership of the three countries to pay the utmost attention to issues of ensuring regional security. The views of the South Caucasus countries on the formation of their own military policies in the region are still in the process of formation and, therefore, do not yet have a stable, systemic character. Therefore, there is an urgent need to analyze ongoing processes and phenomena in the region and explore opportunities to generate forecasts for various development scenarios based on these analyses, with the aim of identifying measures to neutralize the negative impacts and enhance the positive impacts of the states' military policies on security in the South Caucasus.

In the article '*Rethinking the Sharing of Challenges in Allied Relations: Indicators for Assessing Relations in the Dynamics of Armenian-Russian Military Cooperation*,' Alen Ghevondyan analyzes the Armenian-Russian allied relations in the context of the increased activity of Western actors in the South Caucasus, who have sought to expand their influence in the post-Soviet space. Unlike Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Armenian leadership has pursued a consistent policy of ensuring national security within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), while maintaining partnerships and constructive relations with the EU, the United

States, and other Western partners. Under an economic and communications blockade by Türkiye and Azerbaijan, Armenia is considering strategic cooperation with Russia, attempting to address existential threats and ensure its own security in the region. According to the author, Russia and Armenia are faced with the task of seriously understanding ongoing regional processes that could negatively impact the strategic nature of Armenian-Russian relations. Given current trends in regional integration processes, it is necessary to seek new joint approaches to addressing regional security and peace issues. These circumstances necessitate an analysis of the dynamics of Armenian-Russian relations, as studying this issue allows us to identify the foreign policy priorities of Armenia and Russia, define the principles of Armenian-Russian strategic cooperation, and identify challenges in developing bilateral and multilateral relations in the context of regional security and stability in the South Caucasus. The need for a scientific examination of the above-mentioned issues and the search for urgent solutions confirm the relevance of this study.

This issue of the journal includes a book review dedicated to the renowned Dutch philosopher Benedict (Baruch) Spinoza (1632-1677), a thinker whose work continues to attract attention. Spinoza represents an unconventional yet classic example of a philosophizing thinker in European philosophical culture. The author of this review attempts to take a fresh look at the established, even familiar, characteristics of Spinoza's philosophical toolkit, his methodology, and the principles for constructing his system. In this regard, the author more clearly expresses his own position on the relationship between metaphysics and ethics in the context of his works on moral philosophy. Distinct and highly fruitful ideas on the relationship between metaphysics and ethics in Spinoza's moral philosophy have been advanced by many Spinozists. Spinozism's new perspective and, accordingly, systematic studies of Spinoza's work have become a key dimension of contemporary philosophy.

Editorial Board

REFORMING THE EU ASYLUM AND VISA APPLICATION PROCESSES: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

The European Union is experiencing a period of profound uncertainty, marked by global instability, armed conflicts, diverging international approaches to human rights, and growing migration flows. Current asylum and visa systems, shaped by national interests, are failing to address these challenges. Rising migration, coupled with domestic social pressure, risks undermining the EU's credibility in upholding its human rights obligations. With all EU Member States affected to varying degrees and facing rising costs for security, crime prevention, and social services, the conditions for a common solution are clear.

The functioning of the EU's asylum and visa systems highlights institutional challenges while simultaneously providing a strategic opportunity for coordinated action.

Asylum and visa procedures face significant challenges, including fragmented rules, inconsistent standards, slow processing, and poor coordination among EU Member States. This article analyzes these challenges and proposes three interrelated policy solutions for systemic reform. In this sense, their success depends on the willingness of Member States to compromise, align national interests with EU goals, and commit to genuine cooperation.

Even partial adoption of solutions would significantly improve the current state of affairs. Proposed solutions include: (1) harmonizing the legal framework through uniform legislation, (2) accelerating digital standardization through improved operational tools, and (3) strengthening cooperation through joint training and more efficient funding management.

Keywords: *Dublin Regulations, Migration, Asylum, Eurodac, Asylum Procedure Regulation, Schengen Information System, Visa Information System, Entry-Exit System, European Travel Information, Authorisation System.*

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Introduction

The EU's ability to manage migration is a key test of its political cohesion, institutional capacity, and commitment to human rights. Yet in practice, a widening gap between legislative ambition and implementation has revealed persistent weaknesses in both asylum and visa systems. The Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which forms the EU's asylum legal framework, is widely criticised for lacking solidarity and consistent enforcement across member states. The CEAS was built on three key directives qualification, procedures, and reception which were later replaced by the 2024 New Pact on Migration and Asylum, yet many core challenges remain¹. While the Schengen visa process is more harmonised, it remains partly fragmented, with ongoing digital access gaps, varied document requirements, discretionary decisions, and unequal consular access in third countries.

As Da Conceicao-Heldt (2018) observes, the EU's failure to act effectively during the refugee crisis reflected the partial empowerment of institutions and the absence of a unified response revealing structural flaws in migration governance. Although CEAS and the Schengen Visa Code were designed to ensure fairness and uniformity, their inconsistent application across member states has led to operational failures and rising political tensions.²

The 2024 New Pact on Migration and Asylum, along with digital instruments like Eurodac and the Entry/Exit System, aims to boost efficiency and solidarity.³ However, critics argue the reforms prioritize border control and returns over fundamental rights, highlighting ongoing tension between security-focused policies and the EU's human rights obligations.

This paper employs a qualitative legal-policy analysis, drawing on Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalism and Thielemann's burden-sharing theory, to examine how institutional fragmentation and national self-interest shape EU migration policy (Thielemann 2003; Moravcsik 1998). According to Moravcsik's theory, member states

¹ European Parliament and Council of the European Union. 2013. Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast). Official Journal of the European Union L 180, June 29, 2013, pp. 60-95. Accessed July 3, 2025. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2013/32/oj>; European Parliament and Council of the European Union. 2013. Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast). Official Journal of the European Union L 180, June 29, 2013, pp. 96-116. Accessed July 3, 2025. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2013/33/oj>; European Parliament and Council of the European Union. 2011. Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast). Official Journal of the European Union L 337, December 20, 2011, pp. 9-26. Accessed July 3, 2025. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2011/95/oj>.

² European Parliament and Council of the European Union. 2019. Regulation (EU) 2019/1155 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 amending Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code). PE/29/2019/REV/1. Official Journal of the European Union L 188, July 12, 2019, pp. 25-54. Accessed July 3, 2025. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/1155/oj>.

³ European Commission: Directorate-General for Communication. 2024. Pact on migration and asylum – Fast and efficient procedures. Publications Office of the EU. Accessed July 3, 2025. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/242027>.

prioritize national interests, often obstructing progress toward a unified asylum and visa policy. This perspective highlights their reluctance to cede sovereignty in migration governance. Against this backdrop, the central research question of this investigation is: How can the EU enhance coordination to improve asylum and visa systems while upholding human rights and maintaining operational capacity?

Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative legal-policy analysis, grounded in liberal intergovernmentalism and burden-sharing theory, to examine EU migration governance, focusing on the CEAS and the Schengen Visa Code. It addresses institutional fragmentation, national self-interest, and the tension between solidarity and state sovereignty. Drawing on legal texts, policy reports, and academic literature, it offers an in-depth evaluation of legal frameworks and their implementation to identify key challenges.

Legal and policy framework

The EU's migration framework is complex, spanning asylum, visas, border control, and return procedures. Its human rights protections are rooted in international and regional instruments such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, the European Convention on human rights, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the 2024 Pact on Migration and Asylum. Despite efforts to harmonise policies, implementation continues to vary across member states.

Asylum

Asylum framework has evolved from the foundations set by the 1997 Dublin Convention and its subsequent regulations.⁴

1) Dublin I

Dublin I, based on the 1990 Dublin Convention and implemented in 1997, assigned asylum responsibility to the first EU country of entry to prevent asylum shopping, reflecting the interests of northern and western member states.⁵ However, it was criticized for disproportionately burdening border states, lacking solidarity, and ignoring asylum seekers' preferences or family ties, leading to inefficiencies, secondary movements, and humanitarian concerns. Its implementation varied across member states, resulting in legal uncertainty and inconsistent outcomes, undermining fairness and effectiveness.

2) Dublin II

Dublin II aimed to clarify responsibility criteria, especially for asylum seekers with family ties in the EU, and introduced Eurodac to identify applicants.⁶ While it sought

⁴ European Communities. 1997. Convention determining the State responsible for examining applications for asylum lodged in one of the Member States of the European Communities - Dublin Convention. Official Journal C 254, August 19, 1997, pp. 1-12. Accessed July 3, 2025. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_1997_254_R_0001_01.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Council of the European Union. 2003. Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an

to prevent asylum shopping, it still burdened border states disproportionately and failed to ensure fair responsibility-sharing, reinforcing imbalances and raising concerns about EU solidarity.

3) Dublin III

Dublin III enhanced procedural safeguards by granting asylum seekers appeal rights and access to information, and introduced an early warning mechanism for crises.⁷ However, it failed to address the core issue of unequal burden-sharing among member states.

4) New Pact on Migration and Asylum

The 2024 New Pact on Migration and Asylum builds on Dublin III to harmonise the EU's fragmented system through a mandatory but flexible solidarity mechanism involving compulsory relocation and stricter enforcement. While some member states back this, Hungary and Poland oppose it, citing sovereignty.⁸ The Pact sets out four priorities: 1) tougher border screening using tools like Eurodac, along with return procedures and crisis protocols; 2) streamlined asylum with unified refugee status, rights protections, and anti-abuse measures; 3) shared responsibility via clearer rules, financial and operational support, and limits on secondary movements; and 4) enhanced cooperation with third countries to curb irregular migration and expand legal routes. Critics say the Pact prioritizes control over protection, shortens appeals, shifts EU duties to countries with weaker rights records, and allows states to pay instead of relocating migrants undermining fair responsibility-sharing.⁹

5) Recent Legislative Developments

Eurodac 2024, adopted on 14 May, implements the Dublin II framework for an EU-wide fingerprint database.¹⁰ Key concerns include the use of Real-Time Biometric Identification (RBI) and potential rights breaches. Though general-purpose AI is allowed, its use raises questions about safeguards. Eurodac now links with platforms

asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national. OJ L 50, February 25, 2003, pp. 1-10. Accessed July 3, 2025. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2003/343/oj>.

⁷ European Parliament and Council of the European Union. 2013. Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast). Official Journal of the European Union L 180, June 29, 2013, pp. 31-59. Accessed July 3, 2025. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/604/oj>.

⁸ Liboreiro, Jorge. 2024. "EU completes reform of migration rules despite Poland and Hungary voting against." Euronews, May 14, 2024. Accessed July 2, 2025. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/05/14/eu-completes-reform-of-migration-rules-despite-poland-and-hungary-voting-against>.

⁹ The Times. 2024. EU votes for €2bn reform of migrant laws, April 10, 2024. Accessed July 2, 2025. <https://www.thetimes.com/world/article/eu-asylum-seekers-first-country-migration-m9lk75gcq>.

¹⁰ European Parliament and Council of the European Union. 2024. Regulation (EU) 2024/1358 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on the establishment of 'Eurodac' for the comparison of biometric data in order to effectively apply Regulations (EU) 2024/1351 and (EU) 2024/1350 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Directive 2001/55/EC and to identify illegally staying third-country nationals and stateless persons and on requests for the comparison with Eurodac data by Member States' law enforcement authorities and Europol for law enforcement purposes, amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council. PE/15/2024/REV/1. Official Journal of the European Union L, 2024/1358, May 22, 2024. Accessed July 2, 2025. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1358/oj>.

like the Eurotourist Travel Information and Authorisation System and is one of five databases in the Schengen visa system.

The EU Asylum Procedure Regulation (2024) aims to create a faster, more uniform asylum process across the EU.¹¹ However, it faces criticism for mandatory border procedures that may infringe on individual rights, uneven implementation due to differences in member states' capacities and legal frameworks, and its failure to prevent secondary movements from the country of first application.

Despite over two decades of effort, issues with implementation such as burden-sharing, efficiency, and human rights concerns still persist in the asylum procedure.

Visa

The Digital Schengen reforms, particularly Regulation (EU) 2023/2667, enhance coordination among six EU systems: the Schengen Information System (SIS), Visa Information System (VIS), Eurodac, Entry-Exit System (EES), European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS), and European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS), with third-country consultations (ECRIS-TCN)¹². These interoperable systems aim to streamline visa processes while balancing security and fundamental rights. ETIAS, supported by AI-based RBI, is applied only in criminal cases and complies with GDPR and the AI Act. Tools like the European Search Portal (ESP) and Multiple Identity Detector (MID) enable data-sharing and analytics.

Despite digitalisation, challenges persist, such as ensuring efficiency, consistency, and fundamental rights, especially as biometric and AI usage expands. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) highlights that discrepancies between EU law and national practices, particularly in countries like Greece and Italy, undermine solidarity and fairness (Riemer, Rau and Schalast 2025).

Comparison

The EU asylum process is partially harmonised under the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which includes the Asylum Procedures Directive, Reception

¹¹ European Parliament and Council of the European Union. 2024. Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU. PE/16/2024/REV/1. Official Journal of the European Union L, 2024/1348, May 22, 2024. Accessed July 2, 2025. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1348/oj>.

¹² European Parliament and Council of the European Union. 2023. Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU. PE/16/2024/REV/1. Official Journal of the European Union 2024/1348, May 22, 2024. Accessed July 2, 2025. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1348/oj>; European Parliament and Council of the European Union. 2018. Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 September 2018 establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and amending Regulations (EU) No 1077/2011, (EU) No 515/2014, (EU) 2016/399, (EU) 2016/1624 and (EU) 2017/2226. PE/21/2018/REV/1. Official Journal of the European Union L 236, 19.9.2018, pp. 1-71. Accessed July 2, 2025. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1240/oj>, and *the six EU systems*: European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. Accessed July 2, 2025. <https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/activities/large-scale-it-systems>.

Conditions Directive, Qualification Directive, Dublin III, and Eurodac Regulation. These laws set minimum standards, but member states have discretion in their implementation, leading to significant variation in procedures, reception conditions, and recognition rates. In contrast, the Schengen visa application process is more harmonised, regulated by the EU Visa Code and the VIS. However, national discretion remains, particularly in handling supporting documents and additional checks. While the visa process is largely harmonised, the asylum process is only partially so, with variations undermining consistency and solidarity.

Key Challenges

1) Implementation Challenges, Delays and Fragmentation

The EU's asylum and visa systems face major implementation challenges, causing delays and inefficiencies. Regarding Schengen visas, despite harmonisation, member states retain discretion: document requirements vary by applicant origin, and decisions differ due to security or diplomatic concerns. Processing times and rejection rates also vary slightly between consulates. Poor interoperability between national asylum systems hampers information sharing and coordination, complicating application tracking and consistent decision-making.¹³

Political resistance has fragmented the asylum system. Countries like Hungary and Denmark have imposed restrictive measures suspending asylum processing and lowering reception standards fuelling a “race to the bottom” and undermining EU solidarity and responsibility-sharing (Kohlenberger 2024).

The EU's fragmented migration governance results in inconsistent asylum and visa policies, encouraging “asylum shopping” as applicants seek countries with more favourable conditions, undermining solidarity and fairness (Kohlenberger 2024). Frontline states like Greece and Italy face disproportionate pressure, while others, such as Hungary, have restricted or suspended asylum procedures (Alipour and Noyan 2024). These disparities erode public trust and weaken the EU's human rights credibility. System inefficiencies, particularly in asylum processing, hinder effective migration management. In Germany, decisions average 7.6 months up to 26 months with appeals exacerbating uncertainty and administrative backlogs (Ewfrf 2025).

2) Pressures on Asylum Systems, Complexity and Inefficiency of Migration Management

The EU faces growing pressure from high asylum numbers and complex migration patterns. In 2024, Germany received the most asylum applications (237,000), followed by Spain, Italy, and France countries closer to key migration routes (Liboreiro 2024; Liboreiro 2025). By contrast, Hungary received only 45 applications, reflecting restrictive national policies.¹⁴ Hungary has recently limited housing support for Ukrainians, raising concerns over unequal treatment.¹⁵

¹³ European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. 2024. Eurodac - Annual Report 2023 - Report, December 10, 2024. Accessed July 2, 2025. <https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/our-publications/eurodac-annual-report-2023-report>.

¹⁴ International Investment. 2024. Asylum in the EU in 2024: Application statistics, policy changes and forecasts, April 24, 2025. Accessed July 3, 2025. <https://internationalinvestment.biz/en/analytics/5614-asylum-in-the-eu-in-2024-application-statistics-policy-changes-and-forecasts.html>.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch. 2024. “Hungary: Ukrainian refugees losing housing.” *September 11, 2024*. Accessed July 3, 2025. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/11/hungary-ukrainian-refugees-losing-housing>.

In addition, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), formerly EASO, faces criticism for limited resources and authority. Its budget remains far smaller than Frontex's, highlighting a stronger focus on border control over asylum support.¹⁶

3) Fairness, and Systemic Vulnerabilities

The current system is vulnerable to abuse, with ineligible individuals exploiting oversight gaps. Authorities often struggle to support vulnerable applicants, such as unaccompanied minors or trafficking victims. Allegations of fraud and misconduct within the EUAA raise concerns about the asylum process's integrity and transparency.¹⁷ These issues highlight the need for robust oversight and accountability mechanisms to ensure the protection of migrants' rights.

Data protection is another major issue. When personal data is transferred to third countries, applicants lack assurance about how their information will be handled, raising privacy and rights concerns.¹⁸

These issues undermine public trust and challenge the EU's credibility as a union committed to human rights and solidarity (Kohlenberger 2024).

Policy Recommendations

Based on the identified deficiencies, this paper recommends the implementation of the following three policy reforms:

1) Harmonization of Procedures and Standards via Uniform Law

As mentioned, the asylum and visa system is legally harmonised to a degree but unevenly implemented, resulting in fragmentation. EU laws set minimum standards, yet member states retain discretion in applying them, leading to significant differences in procedures, reception conditions, and recognition rates.

Under the principle of shared competences (Article 4(2)(j) TFEU), the EU must take stronger action to harmonize asylum procedures and reception standards. Current disparities place unequal burdens on member states, especially those with limited capacity or high exposure to migration. A common approach would promote fairness, predictability, and reinforce the Area of Freedom, Security, and Justice.

A new unified law could be based on Article 78(1) TFEU, which calls for a common asylum policy; Article 78(2), which supports a Common European Asylum System; and Articles 78(3) and 80, which allow for temporary mandatory quotas based on GDP and population. Given that member states cannot agree on all aspects, targeted harmonization could serve as a practical alternative to full standardization.

2) Accelerate Digital Integration-Unified EU asylum & visa platform

Building on existing digitalization in visa and parts of the asylum process, the EU should accelerate development of interoperable digital platforms. Enhancing the

¹⁶ EUAA. 2024. EUAA statement of revenues and expenditures 2024, February 13, 2024. Accessed July 3, 2025. <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/euaa-statement-revenues-and-expenditures-2024>.

¹⁷ EUAA. 2024. Case of alleged irregularities at EUAA officially closed, March 22, 2024. Accessed July 3, 2025. <https://euaa.europa.eu/news-events/case-alleged-irregularities-euaa-officially-closed>.

¹⁸ EDPS. 2025. Migration management: data protection is one of the last lines of defence for vulnerable individuals, May 28, 2025. Accessed July 3, 2025. https://www.edps.europa.eu/press-publications/press-news/press-releases/2025/migration-management-data-protection-one-last-lines-defence-vulnerable-individuals_fr?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

European Search Portal and Central Identity Repository would enable real-time data sharing among member states, reducing delays and administrative burdens.

With Digital Schengen expected to be fully operational by 2025, progress in cross-border data management can support this goal. Currently, the EU lacks an integrated digital asylum system. Asylum processing relies on Eurodac for biometrics, fragmented national systems, and limited EUAA. These systems function in isolation and do not facilitate consistent or unified data exchange across member states.

Linking asylum systems with Visa Schengen would advance a coherent digital infrastructure. While Eurodac and VIS allow limited cross-checking, VIS neither manages nor processes asylum claims.

This paper proposes creating a centralised digital asylum platform, interoperable with Visa Schengen, to streamline case management, increase transparency, and harmonise procedures EU-wide.

3) Strengthen Technical Cooperation and Funding Utilization

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) should be used more effectively to support technical cooperation among member states. This includes investing in shared infrastructure such as joint reception centres and interoperable data systems and allocating funds based on needs assessments to address disparities in capacity. However, considering legislative developments since the 1990s and theoretical frameworks like Moravcsik’s liberal intergovernmentalism and Thielemann’s burden-sharing theory, a drastic shift in member states’ willingness to cede core competences remains unlikely (Thielemann 2003; Moravcsik 1998).

While a unified digital system could improve efficiency and coordination, it will not eliminate the disproportionate burden on border states.

Nonetheless, this recommendation remains the most realistic path forward. Building on existing Digital Schengen initiatives, efforts should focus on expanding AMIF funding particularly to support operational needs in border states. AMIF has faced criticism for inefficiency and limited operability. A practical first step is to boost its effectiveness through greater investment, better staffing, and stronger cooperation mechanisms.

This includes boosting the authority, training, and local implementation capacity of frontline states, as well as supporting integration efforts at municipal and regional levels. Prioritising these achievable reforms will help the EU optimise current resources and lay the foundation for a future common digital asylum system and harmonised legal framework.

Table 1. Comparison of Policy Recommendations: Pros and Cons

Recommendation	Pros	Cons
1. Harmonization of Procedures and Standards via Uniform Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotes consistency in asylum decisions across member states. - Enhances legal certainty for both applicants and authorities. - Reduces asylum shopping and irregular secondary movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low political feasibility due to member states’ reluctance to cede sovereignty (Moravcsik, 1998). - Risk of lowest-common-denominator outcomes. - Slow and complex legal implementation process. - May not address short-term

	- Strengthens EU solidarity and credibility in upholding asylum rights.	operational issues.
2. Accelerate Digital Integration – Unified EU Asylum and Visa Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improves data sharing and interoperability across systems. - Increases efficiency, transparency, and processing speed. - Reduces duplication, fraud, and delays. - Supports long-term development of the Common European Asylum System. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires significant initial financial and technical investment. - Raises data privacy and security concerns. - Risk of technical inequality among member states. - Depends on political trust and willingness to integrate systems.
3. Strengthen Technical Cooperation and Funding Utilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most realistic and actionable in the short term. - Enhances capacity of border states via AMIF and EUAA support. - Builds trust through shared training and best practices. - Supports gradual convergence without legal overhaul. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May not result in full legal harmonization. - Risk of inefficient or uneven fund allocation. - Long-term dependency on external technical support. - Uneven improvements if not consistently monitored.

Conclusion and discussion

Considering the pros and cons, this paper recommends increasing technical support and funding, with the precondition of improving AMIF's operational capacity. Secondly, it proposes the development of a digital asylum platform interoperable with the Schengen Visa system. These steps aim to optimize the use of EU resources and, in the long term, promote a unified asylum and legal framework.

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Ethics Statement

The author confirms that this study was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BIOSECURITY POLICY REGULATION IN CHINA

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Abstract

This article examines political science issues related to biological risks and biosecurity, which have acquired exceptional significance due to a number of global processes. The increasing frequency of pandemics, the rapid advancement of genetic engineering, and the potential threats posed by biological weapons underscore the relevance of this topic. In recent decades, the accelerated spread of pathogens and the resulting epidemics have become global challenges. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated society's vulnerability to biological risks, simultaneously highlighting the critical need for robust biosecurity systems. At the same time, against the backdrop of globalization and the deepening of international relations, the spread of pathogens from one region to another has become faster and more uncontrollable. Biological risks pose not only a threat to public health but can also cause economic damage, disrupt ecosystem stability, and even become a national security issue. Moreover, the unpredictable consequences of the potential use of biological weapons make this topic a subject of critical scientific and political debate. These circumstances require the development of innovative and modern approaches to the effective management and prevention of biological risks. Such approaches must integrate technological, scientific, and legal solutions aimed at ensuring biosecurity at both the global and local levels. In this regard, a comparative analysis of biological risks, their impact on public health, national security, and ecosystems, as well as modern approaches to ensuring biosecurity in China, are of particular importance.

Keywords: *biosafety, biological risk, risk management, centralized management system, genetically modified organisms, biological weapons.*

Introduction

Modern countries are driven by the desire to focus their efforts and resources on preserving and strengthening not only their territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty, but also biosecurity. In recent years, amidst the instability of international relations and the emergence of a new world order, the current political, economic, and

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military situation threatens to escalate into a large-scale international biosecurity conflict. The system for ensuring international and national biosecurity, based on economic, political, sociocultural, informational, and other aspects, represents a complex set of relationships and intentions, the implementation of which will not only preserve global peace but also strengthen the nation-state foundations of many countries. The nation state, as the primary actor in modern politics and international relations, its interests, and the traditional aspects of national biosecurity as the foundation of global and regional security, have once again become the primary focus of science and public life.

Biological risks have become one of the main challenges to health, the economy, and environmental sustainability. Modern conceptualizations of biological risks can be broadly categorized into four primary groups: infectious diseases, laboratory-acquired infections, genetically modified organisms, and biological weapons (Yassif 2017; Cameron 2017).

Infectious diseases remain one of the most significant threats to modern societies, despite humanity's evident successes in combating them. Infectious diseases are health disorders caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as viruses, bacteria, or fungi. They can be transmitted from person to person, from animals to humans, as well as through environmental exposure (Lindahl and Grace 2015). According to the data from the World Health Organization (hereinafter referred to as WHO), infectious diseases are the second leading cause of mortality worldwide and the primary cause of premature death. According to the organization's data, approximately 2 billion people worldwide contract an infectious disease each year, of which more than 17 million result in fatalities. On a daily basis, approximately 50,000 deaths are attributed to infectious diseases¹.

Laboratory-acquired infections also constitute a significant and serious threat. In general, the highest level of biological risks is observed during work involving pathogenic microorganisms. Laboratory-acquired infections are defined as cases in which laboratory personnel become infected with pathogens present in their work environment, which are either used or stored in the laboratory. Such infections can occur for a variety of reasons, including violations of safety protocols, equipment malfunctions, or accidental release of pathogens.

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are considered one of the greatest achievements in molecular biology and molecular genetics. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are defined as living organisms whose genome has been altered through genetic engineering methods to develop specific desired traits. Through this method, the transfer, modification, or removal of genes enables the creation of organisms with new traits, the likelihood of which would be very low or impossible to achieve through natural mutations (Fuller 2022, 81). These are widely used in addressing both fundamental and applied challenges, particularly in the treatment of genetic diseases, the development of next-generation pharmaceuticals and cosmetic products, the creation of new crop varieties in agriculture, the production of transgenic animals with economically valuable traits, and other related applications. However,

¹ WHO. 2024. Global report on infection prevention and control 2024. November 29, 2024. Accessed April 10, 2026. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240103986>.

alongside these possibilities, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) also pose significant risks. These risks are associated with food allergenicity, toxicity, the production of toxins, alterations to the ecological roles and functions of living organisms, the reduction of biodiversity, and other related factors (Delfosse 2005, 321-322).

Biological weapons are defined as biological agents or microorganisms that are used with the intent of mass infecting and destroying humans, animals, or plants. The basis of biological weapons lies in the intentional use of pathogens, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or toxic substances. Biological weapons are perceived as weapons of mass destruction that can have devastating effects, both physically and psychologically. Currently, major powers have focused their attention on biological weapons and their technologies, as nuclear weapons are viewed as a deterrent whose use carries the risk of unpredictable consequences. Chemical weapons also do not serve as a suitable alternative for carrying out terrorist activities, as their transport, storage, and use are significantly more complex. Furthermore, the risk of material leakage and the likelihood of user detection pose additional challenges. Furthermore, the development of biological weapons is a significantly easier and cheaper process compared to the creation of nuclear and chemical weapons (Crowley and Dando 2024).

Modern approaches to biological risk management in China

Amid profound transformations in international relations, issues of national independence and sovereignty are becoming a central focus for all countries. It is in this context that the civiliarchic development (Aleksanyan 2020) of China's national biosecurity systems is of crucial importance.

A study of China's progressive experience in all its manifestations reveals that the biosecurity of individuals, the environment, and society has always been central to humanity's priorities. Throughout history, beginning with the earliest civilizations, the essence of human existence has become increasingly complex, inevitably leading to an evolution in approaches to biosecurity.

China's rapid economic and military-strategic development has served as impetus for both the pursuit of full sovereignty and a rethinking of the process of establishing a new multipolar global order. The multipolar order, which is emerging against the backdrop of contemporary geopolitical changes, is characterized by a redistribution of centers of power due to China's economic growth, accompanied by increasing hybrid influence on China from many countries. Therefore, a study of the functioning of China's national biosecurity system and mechanisms (Resnik 2014, 150-155), and a comparative analysis of these systems with those of other countries, is of scientific and practical interest in identifying common threads, similarities, and differences, with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness and development of this system, which has a definite impact on contemporary international relations (Xu and Shi 2025).

China, as the most populous country in the world and a nation with rapidly developing scientific and technological potential, faces complex and multifaceted challenges in managing biological risks. These challenges are driven not only by the size of the population but also by the country's integration into the global economy and trade systems, which increases the risk of the introduction and spread of biological

risks (Liu, Rao and Bradleigh Vinson 2014). In this sense, ideology plays a decisive role in the formation of a national biosecurity system. The development of a reliable national biosecurity system is closely linked to a clear definition of national interests and values, as well as the identification of existing threats and the development of effective strategies to neutralize them.

China's biosafety system is aimed not only at protecting the health of its own population but also at preventing and controlling epidemics at regional and international levels. To this end, the country has established strict laws and regulations, which include measures for prevention, detection, and rapid response in times of crisis. Through the effective combination of legislative regulations and management mechanisms, China aims to become a key player in the field of biosafety. Specifically, this involves promoting regional cooperation and the development of solutions that align with international standards. In the past few decades, China has faced a number of biological threats, including the SARS, H7N9, and COVID-19 pandemics. These experiences have served as a strong impetus for systemic reforms and biotechnological innovations (Cao 2021).

In China, the process of managing biological risks is divided into three main phases: prevention, detection, and response. Prevention is the first and most critical phase of biological risk management, aimed not only at preventing risks but also at mitigating their potential consequences. In China, prevention measures are implemented based on a coordinated and multi-faceted approach, encompassing legislative regulations, educational programs, scientific research, and technological solutions (Chen, Zhang, Ding and Wu 2020).

Specifically, China's Biosafety Law was adopted in October 2020 and came into effect on April 15, 2021. It is a comprehensive legislative document that regulates various aspects of biosafety, ranging from epidemic prevention to the management of biotechnology. It defines the procedures for managing biological risks, including the transportation, storage, use, and disposal of biological materials (Huigang, Cui, Xiaoli and Zhiming 2021). According to the law, the Central Authority for National Security Affairs is responsible for coordinating and making decisions in the field of biosafety. Its primary objective is to establish a mechanism for coordinating efforts aimed at ensuring biosafety. This mechanism is intended to oversee actions carried out by provinces, autonomous regions, and cities directly under the central government's jurisdiction within the scope of biosafety. According to the law, the coordinating mechanism is composed of responsible bodies under the State Council, including those overseeing health, agriculture, science and technology, as well as military affairs. It is tasked with analyzing and evaluating trends in biosafety and promoting the development of the country's biosafety system. Within the framework of the coordinating mechanism, an office is to be established, which will be responsible for implementing ongoing operations, as well as an expert committee tasked with providing consultation in the process of researching the national biosafety strategy and decision-making².

² Biosecurity Law of the People's Republic of China (Adopted at the 22nd Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Thirteenth National People's Congress on October 17, 2020). Accessed August 16, 2025. http://en.npc.gov.cn.cdurl.cn/2020-10/17/c_703568.htm.

China's Law on the Prevention and Control of Epidemics was enacted in 1989 and has been revised several times since then to align with public health needs and epidemic situations. This law is one of the most important components of China's health legislation, aimed at preventing the spread of epidemics and protecting public health. This law regulates the responsibilities of both the public and private sectors in the event of epidemics and establishes safety standards for laboratories working with biological materials. The law classifies infectious diseases based on their level of danger into categories A, B, and C, thereby determining the level of control applied to each. It provides for quarantine measures to prevent the spread of epidemics and regulates the process of establishing emergency response mechanisms to coordinate responses to epidemics³.

In China, a number of legal regulations are in place aimed at overseeing the development, use, production, and trade of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The legislation stipulates that the development and trade of GMOs are subject to state approval and licensing. Producers are required to submit relevant data, including the results of safety testing, in order to undergo the necessary inspections. According to the legislation, the presence of GMOs must be indicated on labeling, which contributes to raising public awareness. These strict regulations are aimed at risk reduction as well as promoting reliable, environmentally safe, and sustainable biotechnological solutions⁴.

In China, laboratories working with biological materials are required to comply with international biosafety standards. Laboratories are classified according to biosafety risk levels (BSL-1, BSL-2, BSL-3, BSL-4), with specific requirements established for each level. The operations of laboratories are regularly inspected by governmental authorities to ensure compliance with safety requirements (Wu 2019).

The detection phase of biological risks in China represents a central component of the management process, aimed at identifying risks at an early stage and ensuring prompt response. China is making significant investments in the development of innovative technologies and scientific research essential for biological risk management. Scientific centers in China are actively working on genomic technologies, enhancing the capabilities for risk detection and research (Qin and Sun 2019). Sensor devices are also utilized for the early detection of biological risks, providing the ability to identify biologically hazardous materials at initial stages. These technologies are employed at border checkpoints, in laboratories, and in public areas. Research programs on biosafety and risk management are a priority for both the public and private sectors. The government encourages investments, particularly in the construction of innovative laboratories, the study of biological materials, and the production of biotechnologies (Zhang, Lu, Zhang et al. 2023). China has established extensive laboratory networks specialized in the monitoring and detection of biological risks. These laboratories are equipped with advanced technology, enabling the conduct

³ National Health Commission of the PRC. 2019. "Law of the People's Republic of China on Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases." Accessed August 16, 2025. https://en.nhc.gov.cn/2019-03/05/c_74526.htm.

⁴ China's GMO Regulations Overview, USDA, 2023. Accessed August 16, 2025. <https://fas.usda.gov/data/china-revised-draft-measures-labeling-agricultural-gmos-published-comments>.

of genetic analyses and the rapid detection of pathogens and viruses. China has also implemented comprehensive monitoring systems that collect data from healthcare institutions, laboratories, and border checkpoints. These systems enable the analysis of the situation in a short period and provide early warnings about potential epidemics (Sun, Song, Wang, Zhao and Zhang 2022).

In domestic politics, China considers the identification of individuals and society with the Party and the country fundamental to long-term political stability and biosecurity (Min, Zhang, Liu et al. 2025). China's national biosecurity is closely linked to the resilience of the Communist Party of China. Following Xi Jinping's re-election as head of state, a series of regulations and legal acts have been adopted that have strengthened various areas of biosecurity.

In recent years, China's cultural and historical spheres have seen a growing recognition of the importance of protecting traditional cultural values and history. Despite communist values and a system of party control, China also faces challenges in the cultural and historical spheres. In particular, the Chinese authorities' behavior during COVID-19 restrictions has raised questions about the public's perception of the Communist Party's role.

China is actively involved in international cooperation projects in the field of biosecurity. In particular, China is a member of several international organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and others. These memberships are of significant importance to China, as they enable the country to play an active role in global biological security frameworks and strengthen regional cooperation (Wang 2020).

In terms of information security, China has a comprehensive information security system covering doctrinal, legal, and instrumental aspects. Furthermore, China has created fully-fledged digital ecosystems, encompassing virtually the entire spectrum of software and hardware that underpin the country's digital sovereignty. A number of countries are still taking the first steps toward developing software that represents comprehensive information control systems, filtering unwanted content online and restricting user access to certain foreign websites and services, including using Chinese developments (Yassif, Korol and Kane 2023). Such systems are relevant for protecting against both external and internal information security threats.

Conclusion and discussion

In conclusion, it can be stated that China's biosafety system represents a comprehensive and multi-faceted mechanism that regulates all stages of biological risk management, ranging from prevention to response. However, the system also faces a number of strategic, structural, and technological challenges that call into question the overall effectiveness of the system.

In particular, the legislative framework is relatively new and has not yet addressed the full range of issues. China has a centralized biosafety system, overseen by the State Council. State authorities, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Agriculture, operate within the framework of a unified system. China's centralized approach enables swift decision-making at the

national level, which is crucial during emergencies; however, it limits the autonomy of local authorities. In contrast to China, the United States' biosafety system is multilayered and decentralized, incorporating state and local institutions. The decentralized model promotes the involvement of local institutions and makes the response system more flexible.

Despite important steps aimed at scientific research and technological development, China remains dependent on international collaborations in the field of biological sciences and technologies, particularly in terms of innovation, equipment, and the exchange of biological data. This reliance limits the flexibility and preparedness of its biosafety system in addressing complex biological threats. There are also challenges in the field of laboratory biosafety, particularly as the majority of laboratories in China working with biological materials operate under varying levels of security requirements. The operation of BSL-3 and BSL-4 laboratories is particularly problematic due to insufficient levels of safety and control measures.

Although biosafety is one of the priorities of state policy, public involvement in this process remains quite limited. Citizens are not sufficiently informed about biological risks, preventive measures, and the policies implemented by the state. The low level of public awareness may lead to issues related to the effectiveness of responses during emergencies.

China is often criticized for its lack of transparency in the field of biosafety, particularly regarding information exchange during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of transparency reduces international trust in China, which may deprive it of support from international partners and hinder the development of global biosafety mechanisms.

The mechanisms for ensuring national biosecurity have been clarified and operationalized in relation to the Chinese political system. This mechanism is understood as a complex dynamic system that changes under temporary conditions and consists of the following subsystems: 1) the conceptual and doctrinal subsystem (the main goal of this subsystem is to create a unified ideological basis for coordinating the efforts of all structures and institutions responsible for ensuring national biosecurity, as well as to form public consciousness regarding the importance of protecting national interests), 2) the subsystem of forces (or institutional - the main function of which is to coordinate the actions of various actors to effectively counter threats to national biosecurity), 3) the subsystem of means (representing a set of material, technical, informational, financial and other resources used by government agencies and organizations to perform tasks to protect national interests and prevent threats), and 4) the subsystem of spheres (specific areas of national biosecurity). China uses a structural and functional approach, creating a system from subsystems, that is, based on a systems approach, taking into account the possibilities of leveling threats in various spheres of society.

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Ethics Statement

The author confirms that this study was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.

Conflict of Interest Statement


The author declares no conflict of interest.

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RESTRUCTURING AND ITS NEXUS WITH NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: AN AFRICAN POLICY

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Abstract

This article analyzes the fundamental conditions governing national security and development management in Nigeria. In this regard, it takes into account the specifics of Nigeria's political history during the colonial era and the unification of the Northern and Southern Protectorates. This paper attempts to determine whether current calls for restructuring in Nigeria, despite the objections of some groups, will provide a bright future for the country. Restructuring is examined in terms of granting states greater power than the federal government, as well as in terms of resource control and the creation of state police forces.

Nigeria's security is challenged on a number of fronts, including the inability to feed itself, ensure economic growth and decent living conditions for the majority of the population, and protect itself from external aggression and internal conflict. All of this is exacerbated by an underdeveloped scientific and technological base, as well as inadequate governance. Despite the country's abundant natural resources, they are either underutilized or under the control of international economic entities that are primarily concerned with their own financial well-being rather than the well-being of local residents. Globalization brings with it problems such as the illegal exploitation of human and natural resources, unrestrained by any international norms, the infiltration and active operation of international organized crime groups, amidst weak legal protections for citizens and pervasive corruption, which also poses one of the main threats to Nigeria's national security.

The article concludes that modern Nigeria is in dire need of patriotic leaders who could strategically lead the country toward sustainable development.

Keywords: *political restructuring, national security development, political history, colonial era, administrative convenience, military intervention, patriotic leaders, sustainable development, globalization.*

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Introduction

The importance and relevance of Nigeria's restructuring demands and the objectives to support the political calculation of the people's aspirations within their territorial landscape are the main subjects of this study. This is required in order to quantify the extent of national development and the security components that have been a part of it since the post-colonial era. This paper will make an effort to examine some historical elements and contrast them with the current reasons behind calls for the Nigerian state to be restructured from its current configuration to a contemporary, democratic new form of government.

Given the factors affecting the elite, it makes sense that those who are unable to achieve political relevance and power in Nigeria would continue to call for political restructuring, while others would use it to gain access to resources and power at the state level as well as political relevance. The people in charge of affairs at the center will continue to view the agitation as a diversion and a waste of time because the majority of calls for political restructuring, also known as true federalism, aim to decentralize the Nigerian Federation in order to create stronger state components or regions and a weak central government (Vinson 2017).

Northern resistance to Nigeria's restructuring was another aspect of disagreement over the factors and demands of other parts of the nation regarding what constitutes the basis of national unity and cohesion, in the context of addressing issues of political restructuring, devolution of powers to promote genuine federalism, and the preservation of national issues (Aiyede 2013). It is frustrating that, despite the North's insistence on maintaining the status quo and constructiveness against any calls for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC), efforts to address issues of national importance continue unimpeded (Onwudiwe 1999; Egwim 2026).

The scholars' citations above help us to understand that the restructuring of the Nigerian state has always been based on the argument that the national agenda is biased in favor of some areas and elements while disparaging others. As a result, it became common for any region that felt oppressed or marginalized by others and was unable to obtain benefits from the state to organize into an oppositional or agitational group in order to cast doubt on the foundations of the coexistence and unity of the country. It makes sense that the separatists from Eastern Nigeria have returned to call for the creation of the Biafran Republic via MASSOB and the Kalu Group; in the South-South, dynamic youth are demanding resource management, while in the South West, certain factions are advocating for the Yoruba nation. People in the north want to keep things as they are. The recent wave of violence that has accompanied agitation has occurred despite the roles that the people of South Eastern Nigeria were given under the administrations of Obasanjo and Jonathan. It is particularly prominent today in the South East and South West during the Buhari Administration, which ran from 2015 to 2022, and it has seriously compromised national security. For example, in the South East, agitators have threatened to hold elections in 2023 if their demand for the release of their leader is not met, and they have declared Monday to be a free working day in the Zone. Can we continue this way while maintaining our claim to be a single nation? Likewise, the Federation is on the verge of disaffection due to the planned and orchestrated Fulani/herdsmen-farmers conflicts in recent years, which are fueling the

call for a Sovereign National Conference and restructuring. This further supports the opinions of academics who believed that meeting the needs of the populace is the only way for the political leadership in Nigeria to continue to exist and pursue its aspirations for growth.

Therefore, the main goal of political restructuring should be to pinpoint the elements that divide and unite the country while advancing security, development, and unity. Reviewing the weight of Nigeria's challenging past is also necessary in order to achieve the process of political realignment, restructuring, and balance that will impact the country's future. Finding solutions to the problem is extremely complicated, anachronistic, and multifaceted because it is frequently believed that the problem transcends public service, politics, ethnicity, religion, access to the economy, and the use of power since the colonial era. Much of the resistance seen is rooted in concerns about the constitutionality and ramifications of addressing the national issues, as well as the potential for the Nigerian State to fall apart.

Statement of the Problem

As seen in several independent states, political restructuring is essential to achieving political stability as well as the general socioeconomic development and security of the modern state in Africa. This is required in the context of modernization, the impact of social movements, and the goals and transformations of the economy that accompany the establishment and reengineering of the existence of contemporary states in a foreign setting in order to create new nations with political and territorial jurisdiction. Because of this, a significant portion of this research focuses on the mechanisms of power, leadership, coercion, and the extent of threats to the existence of new African states and their ability to maintain their sovereignty while growing up to modern standards current stage of globalization.

The post-colonial population may not have been unfamiliar with many of the political difficulties that Nigerian leaders have faced since the country's independence. It is clear that different parts of the Nigerian Federation are still calling for a political restructuring of Nigeria, which, depending on which side one takes, is causing worry, trepidation, agony, hope, and distraction. Ever since Nigeria's independence from Britain in the post-colonial era, calls for holding constitutional conferences to amend the country's constitution through the promulgation of Constituent Assemblies and, more recently, a Sovereign National Conference have dominated the observable factors of political restructuring.

The Nigerian state has failed to achieve its desired goal of sustainable development and national security, despite the efforts of its political leadership and allies since 1960 to change public opinion through political restructuring and the reorganization of state institutions and policymaking processes. Therefore, there was an urgent need to ensure structural and institutional coherence to quell calls for constitutional amendments and changes, and to hold a sovereign national conference to address national concerns and political restructuring that would remain viable in the public eye. As a result, Nigeria's political development was staged and, with difficulty, achieved piecemeal.

Security in the Context of Insecurity

It is important to briefly consider the definition of security in the context of insecurity, as public authority and governance represent the state, its primary responsibility to ensure the safety of its citizens and society. Clearly, the state possesses the resources necessary to ensure security and prevent anarchy in society, and therefore the role of public authority in ensuring the safety of citizens and society is crucial to the justification of the state's existence (Jega 1996).

According to O. Fagbadebo (2025), security is perceived as a dynamic state that encompasses a state's ability to counter threats to its core values and interests. In this sense, Nigeria's security rests on two important pillars: maintaining and protecting the socio-economic order in the face of internal and external threats. This includes promoting a preferred international order that minimizes threats to core values and interests, as well as domestic order, and external security threats.

The ongoing process of globalization, which has encompassed not only the global but also virtually all national markets, has a varying impact on the economic development of states, regions, and integration associations. At the same time, for economically lagging countries, which includes most African countries, globalization makes it difficult to attract investment and sell their goods in foreign markets, leading to a slowdown in economic growth and the emergence of economic crises. Under these circumstances, developing countries are actively promoting interstate trade and economic cooperation within various regional associations.

Many low-income countries are characterized by technological and economic backwardness of their national economies, which prevents them from adequately adapting to the global economy and, consequently, from exerting a significant influence on processes occurring in international trade and economic relations. To prevent these negative effects, coordinated interstate economic policies are necessary, which is largely facilitated by the growing role of regional economic unions. Therefore, the intensification of integration processes in the world in the context of the geopolitical and economic challenges of the early 21st century requires an in-depth study of both the current and long-term consequences and ongoing changes in the formation of integration associations, their role in the economic development of participating countries, and the intensification of bilateral and multilateral international economic relations.

Nigeria's modern security has been based on a comprehensive approach that places citizens as the primary beneficiaries of all security and development initiatives undertaken by the government (Amali and Buthelezi 2025). Therefore, in order to advance its goals and objectives to contain internal and external aggression, control crime, eradicate corruption, enhance genuine development, progress, and growth, and improve the welfare and quality of life for every citizen, Nigeria must work to strengthen its capacity (Uzoagba, Okoroigwe and Onwualu 2026).

According to the academic sources we cited from the aforementioned scholars, insecurity is the feeling of fear or anxiety brought on by a real or perceived lack of protection. It also alludes to insufficient or non-existent safety from harm. The most obvious type of insecurity, which is reflected in all of these definitions, is physical insecurity, which also contributes to a host of other types of insecurity, including social

and economic security. This essay defines insecurity as the state's weak or inadequate economic, military, and/or human resource development conditions combined with external or internal forces or interests that jeopardize the state's human and national security.

Restructuring

Restructuring has become a new dimension in Nigerian politics, with both political and non-political figures promoting their interpretations of the term, which until recently was frowned upon by many public figures. However, what exactly is the concept of restructuring? Understandably, different political figures view the concept of restructuring from different perspectives, given that some believe Nigeria is currently a federation. The idea of restructuring has been coined by a number of individuals, including democracy activists, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, and General Ibrahim Babangida.

Restructuring is the process of changing the status quo or current system to improve its effectiveness. In the Nigerian context, restructuring is understood as a continuous campaign and agitation for the political restructuring of the country's government, in addition to other elements necessary for constitutional amendment. Restructuring also means a return to federalism with autonomous, self-sufficient federal units capable of building infrastructure, implementing other projects, and providing basic services such as health and education without central government interference. In this sense, restructuring is an act of changing the quality and effectiveness of the institutions that make up Nigeria's political system and redefining their relationships to ensure the resilience of society and the state. According to A.E. Palli (2021), restructuring implies a restructuring of all aspects of Nigerian politics. According to the definitions above, restructuring implies that Nigerian states should be legally allowed to control and own their own resources, as well as plan and implement development within their borders without central government interference. The demand for immediate restructuring of Nigeria now means a request for a review of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It refers to the devolution of powers to the federal government, in which the federal government retains control over defense and foreign policy while granting states greater powers. This is a tactic designed to bring the government as close as possible to the people (Egwim 2026).

Former vice president and 2015 All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential candidate; PDP presidential candidate in 2019 and 2023 Atiku Abubakar held the following opinions: Without a doubt, when you remove Abuja's federation allocations, many of our states are not viable now and were never viable in the first place. To make them work in the altered federal system, we must come up with innovative solutions. We can assemble a group of impartial specialists to offer alternative suggestions. All things considered, though, we need to give states more autonomy over their use of federal funds and authority and less emphasis on the federal government's provision of state funding. To continue, we must resume production and tax collection our governments in a more transparent, accountable, and sustainable manner.

From the explanation of Nigeria's restructuring concept above, we can easily comprehend how it calls for true federalism. A system that functions on the shared

responsibility of its constituent units with a central core that unites them all is referred to as true federalism.

Every region or unit is supposed to manage its own affairs, generate wealth through resource exploitation and management, and fulfill certain obligations to the federal and central government. In terms of economy, the units need to be separate and autonomous, but in terms of the military, there is room for negotiation. True federalism in practice covers more ground than just budgetary matters; it permeates all facets of state governance. The only way to achieve true federalism is to strictly follow the provisions of the constitution. True federalism is primarily characterized by constitutionalism.

In the context of reconstruction, retired General Ibrahim Babangida also strongly advocated for decentralization of powers¹, with more responsibilities devolved to the states and the federal government responsible for overseeing foreign policy, defense, and the economy. This means implementing new ideas that will strengthen Nigeria's national identity, also at the constitutional level (Ikpebe, Boykin, Osei-Kojo and Peters 2026). Decentralization of powers and restructuring will certainly not offer all the solutions. It will be helpful to shift our perspective in response to our developmental obstacles, developing new concepts and projects that justify the existence of our union. Nigerians share a common belief in unity in a diverse society, as evidenced by talk of national restructuring (Momoh and Adejumobi 2017). However, without strengthening public institutions and local government, it is impossible to enhance the functioning of dialogue and partnership among various institutions. Initial concerns about abuses by state governors against state police officers should be mitigated as citizens become more willing and confident to challenge authority. Nigeria's political leadership is striving to foster concerted efforts to steer the country toward development and progress, as a people with a shared destiny and common purpose must make decisions for the benefit of future generations.

The Crucial Questions for Nigerian Restructuring

While the calls and agitations for restructuring the Nigerian state have many and varied causes, there are also important questions requiring critical and technical answers regarding the restructuring program. These questions primarily concern what is being restructured and touch upon the legal status of the restructuring, as well as its scope and boundaries in the following dimensions:

- Nigeria's geographical location?
- What about the politics?
- The Individuals?
- The system of states?
- Who plans, leads, or oversees the reorganization?
- Who, what, and where will be represented by?
- What is the representational technique?

¹ Daily Trust. 2020. "8 things IBB said in his exclusive interview with Daily Trust." February 16, 2020. Accessed August 12, 2025. <https://dailytrust.com/listicles-8-things-ibb-said-in-his-exclusive-interview-with-daily-trust/>.

- Regarding the Nigerian Constitution and its provisions regarding the creation, repeal, and amendment of laws, is the restructuring constitutional or unconstitutional?

What is the formula for state, zone, region, and ethnic nationality representation? What will the restructuring's terms of reference be? Whose constitutional authority is it to revise or alter the laws of Nigeria? Unavoidably, these are questions that must have clear, constitutionally supported answers in order to restructure in a way that is legally and politically binding on the Nigerian government and its people (Amaechi and Muoh 2017; Titus and Ogundiya 2025; Fashagba 2015).

This is also due to the delicate restructuring process and the intricate nature of the Nigerian state and societies, which are diverse in terms of their backgrounds, experiences, directions, civilizations, and worldviews, as well as their socio-political, economic, and geo-religious orientations. Nevertheless, the following were noted by this study as being crucial to restructuring Nigeria.

Transformation of political institutions and the regime system

Nigeria was a state with three regions at the time of its independence: the North, West, and East, as well as the Federal Capital Territory of Lagos. In the Nigerian Central Government, which operated under a parliamentary system, the political parties that had the support of the majority formed an alliance to ensure that the President of Nigeria and the ceremonial head of state, the Prime Minister, would both lead the government.

Simultaneously, the political parties that received less support from the public formed an alliance in order to establish the Shadow Government, which is the position of Leader of Opposition. Similar to the British Parliamentary system, it was expected of the Opposition to keep the Government on its toes in order for it to function well. But in the process, intolerance and their persecution were brought about by a lack of tolerance and a fear that the opposition would overthrow the government. In the end, as the different actors fought for position among themselves, the country was left in even greater political turmoil.

Historically, the ethnopolitical conflict in Southern Nigeria has been viewed as part of a nationwide struggle between large and small ethnopolitical groups. The first attempts to understand it were undertaken by colonial scholars in the context of constructing a system of political governance, and later by Nigerian scholars conducting research in independent Nigeria and beyond. Their work focused primarily on the factor of ethnicity, the problem of ethnic minorities and ethnic representation, and the study of the 'colonial legacy' that led to the artificiality of administrative-territorial entities and the uneven development of the country. Since the late 1990s, when ideas about the economic determinism of various types of intra-state conflicts gained popularity in academic circles, and with the onset of armed conflicts in oil-producing regions, European and African scholars have attempted to rethink the nature of the ethnopolitical confrontation in Southern Nigeria, using theories of the oil burden, economic wars, and so on. However, these theories also do not fully reveal the nature of the ethnopolitical conflict in Nigeria.

The transformation of political institutions and the authoritarian regime in Nigeria have deep historical roots. The old traditional method of governance was based on tribal relations and religious cults. These formed the basis of non-state forms of power—chiefdoms. With increasing property differentiation within communities, the emergence of privileged groups, and the usurpation of power by tribal rulers, the process of forming traditional authoritarian regimes in the country began. In the initial stages of social development in Nigeria, collectivist traditions were characteristic of ensuring the livelihood of community members. However, these same traditions formed the roots of authoritarian, anti-democratic tendencies, which later, with the emergence of African statehood, gave rise to dictatorial authoritarian rule.

An analysis of military dictatorial regimes, regardless of Nigeria's social orientation, shows that military coups and the establishment of military regimes were made possible by the unquestioning submission of the masses to the will of the military dictators who ruled the country. Over the past decades, they have brought neither democracy nor prosperity to the country, but have instead deepened the economic and political crises. Thus, all groups of the population, with the exception of the dominant military-civilian oligarchy, have become political targets.

The diversity of military-dictatorial regimes that has characterized modern Nigeria's political life over the past three decades can be described as transitional, hybrid, and mixed authoritarian regimes of various orientations—reactionary, conservative, and liberal. At all stages of their development, a strong authoritarian influence was observed in the political system of Nigerian society.

Military-dictatorial regimes in Nigeria were characterized by political, economic, and social instability, violence, coups d'état, religious and interethnic tensions, wars, an arms race, the growing political role of the army in society, and corruption. In examining military dictatorships and the stages of their development, we encountered another equally complex issue: the role of the army in the country's socio-political development. We found that this role is far from straightforward. The purpose of the army and its role in Nigeria changed at different stages of the national liberation struggle. Thus, while addressing the dual national objective of eliminating the colonial system and achieving political independence, a process of consolidation of various ethnic groups was underway. At that moment, the army was at the center of events, not only bringing all peoples and tribes together by setting a common goal but also serving as an important tool in the fight against tribalism and interethnic strife.

Similar to this, the government has tried to impose price controls on export and retail sales in an effort to discourage hoarding and price increases. Significant efforts have also been made to reduce access to foreign exchange in order to strengthen the country's reserves and economy and to create room for the naira's value to increase on the global market. Ultimately, the period of austerity measures during the second republic demonstrated that Nigeria lacked the political will, independence, and selflessness necessary to maintain the economy and find the necessary resources to make it function, regardless of the global superpowers.

This is the reason Nigeria's economic standing keeps declining as a result of the country's borrowing to fund its government and implement public policies to the extent of taking up loans from the IMF and World Bank and implementing structural

adjustment plans during the Babangida administration, which ultimately altered the direction of the country's economy by selling off public assets and defragmenting the market.

At the time, Nigerian military leaders and their civilian allies launched a number of public policies intended to advance equity and development initiatives in order to open up Nigeria and carry out development projects. Certain topics covered in the public service and education systems resulted in the quota system's introduction and the merit system's collapse via the use of federal character principles, with its resulting in a decline in the quality of public spaces, a rise in incompetence, waste, and a progressive reduction in the scope of putting national development plans into action because of a lack of knowledge and strong national politics surrounding social services and infrastructure (Mariotti and Meacci 2026).

Terrorist attacks have emerged as a contemporary threat and challenge to the normalization and stability of Nigerian society, occurring in the northern region, primarily in Borno and Adamawa states. These attacks subsequently spread to many parts of the northeast, where the rise of Boko Haram militants (Hassan and Olugbuo 2016), seeking to establish Sharia law, reject all forms of Western influence and education, and establish an Islamic state and traditions under a dictatorship, has led to the deaths and displacement of millions of people. The emergence of conflicts with Boko Haram in the northeast has weakened the armed forces and resulted in numerous casualties in attempts to end the insurgency or broker an elusive ceasefire (Onapajo 2026).

It is important to note that the terrorist group's access to weapons and firepower is financed by unidentified sponsors from neighboring states, Nigerian government officials, and other international organizations or foreign powers interested in either political instability or the division of Nigeria, thereby reducing the likelihood of sustainable development and creating a safe haven in West Africa.

Stories of untold suffering and bloodshed remain prevalent in the northern region due to the difficulties the Nigerian state faces in obtaining weapons from the United States and other Western countries to combat conflicts related to Boko Haram (Botha 2021). Following the escalation of terrorist attacks in the northeast and the closure of Nigeria's borders in 2017, a wave of banditry, kidnappings, and armed attacks in the northern territories spread to the northwest and north-central parts of the country by armed groups and bandits.

Unity, the Nigerian State, and Reality

A comparative analysis of the history of colonialism, including Nigeria's pre-colonial and colonial periods, provides an assessment of national unity in any attempt to restructure the country. The restructuring of the geo-ethnic and political structures of various peoples, as well as the involuntary reorganization of former African states, caliphates, kingdoms, empires, and mini-states, ultimately leading to the formation of colonial and post-colonial ethnic and religious identities of states and societies, can be primarily attributed to colonialism.

Furthermore, by disrupting the natural form and process of evolution and homogenization, the colonial policy of "divide and rule" in Nigeria had a detrimental

effect on the diverse peoples who had been united, while various ethno-religious and geo-regional groups became even more distant from one another. The legacy of colonialism creates a number of problems and tensions between various ethnic groups in post-colonial Nigeria. Therefore, modern Nigerian society is forced to bear the burden of a difficult history, like other colonized African states.

Thus, something that benefited British political, economic, and imperial interests has become an issue for Nigeria that has been unsolvable for more than a century (Titus and Ogundiya 2025).

National identity and attachment arise from a sense of a particular political and social coexistence, such as proficiency in and/or affiliation with a particular language, adherence to a particular religion, birth into a particular family or community, descent from particular historical circumstances, or possession of important information on a given issue, adding one's own interpretations or meanings based on kinship, speech, customs and traditions, religious viewpoint, place of residence, historical background, and appearance. Due to the interaction of numerous elements, including historical, religious, social, political, economic, and regional, these innate attachments have supplanted national loyalty in Nigeria and negatively impacted the country's unity.

Regardless of a person's status in a given country, they form a greater attachment and loyalty to their indigenous group than to the nation itself. This demonstrates how deeply ingrained primordial tendencies are in Nigerian culture and how they influence all aspects of national life. However, some political elites and leaders express this attachment out of fear that their ethnoregional groups might approve or dissuade them, rather than because they believe it will yield any positive results, lamenting their inability to articulate their ethnoregional grievances.

Since colonialism, maintaining Nigeria's unity has posed a significant obstacle for both nationalists and ordinary Nigerians. In this context, Nigeria's problem is that it is completely mired in an identity crisis, which explains this. The nature of colonial conquest and the forced unification of diverse peoples, nations, states, political parties, and geo-ethnic groups are the primary causes of this identity crisis. As a result, Nigerians, for example, do not see or consider each other as true fellow citizens of Nigeria, but rather as "old-timers" and "sworn enemies." It is therefore unsurprising that they face such obstacles. But the main common problem is the inability to establish stable unity for over a century.

Many political events, especially since 1966, have marred the process of national unity and integration in Nigeria. While some federating units grew tired and bored of the union, others still believed that the union must be maintained at all costs. The apparent trajectory of the Nigerian polity reflects the federation's inability to even address the fundamental problems that unite and bind people together, despite the fact that the path to statehood and federalism is an endless one, marked by mistakes, lessons learned, and corrections. Nigerians continue to debate whether to remain within the Nigerian federation or leave it, even after more than a century of unification. The previous violent attempt by the Biafrans, which was suppressed, would have seemed like just one of many, had it not been for the power and authority of the Nigerian government, which used force and put an end to any acts or threats of treason and secession by the Nigerian state.

Nigerian society has transformed from traditional to pluralistic since independence

Since independence, Nigerian society has transformed from traditional to pluralistic, characterized by a diversity of socioeconomic structures, a symbiosis of archaic economic forms with modern types and innovations, which is evident in the functioning of sociopolitical structures.

The ethnoregional stratification of the Nigerian federation has a significant impact on the country's political landscape, leading to political instability and resulting in military coups.

The country is experiencing a contradictory interaction between local and European social structures. A key component of the political process is the struggle for power between ethnopolitical clans and the highest state bureaucracy, both civil and military.

The period of military rule demonstrated that party politicians were not completely ousted from power relations but remained a key group within the political ruling class, forming part of the military administration and functioning within various political associations. During the military regimes, the political clan system continued to exist, closely linked to traditional chieftains, the bureaucratic elite, the merchant and business classes, and the press. Political clans exerted significant pressure on the military, ensuring their essential mass support. Political tensions in the country stem from the federal structure, which consolidated control of state power for northern clans in the early years of independence. The issue of maintaining the country's federal structure is the dominant theme in political life.

A crucial feature of Nigerian society is its ethnopolitical polarization, which manifests itself in the emergence and activities of political parties.

Nigerian political parties are elite in nature, supported by a small group of entrepreneurs, the upper echelons of the civil and military bureaucracy, traditional rulers, and university intellectuals. Essentially, parties are coalitions of various political forces formed within states and often united at the federal level, as they are ethnoregional and clan-based. Mass support during election campaigns is also largely ethnoregional.

Parties lack a clear structure and formal membership. Political platforms are declarative in nature and designed to attract various categories of voters – from large businessmen to ordinary urban and rural residents. Parties are led by prominent political leaders, often descended from traditional nobility of ethnoregional origin. During the period of civilian rule, the leading trend in the political process was the establishment of the People's Democratic Party as the ruling political force.

Political consolidation of Nigerian society is possible with a significant improvement in the well-being of the population, the adoption of effective measures to prevent ethnoreligious confrontation, and the further improvement of the federal system within the framework of modern constitutionalism. In a context of ethnopolitical pluralism, the challenges of developing effective means and methods for political stabilization, reducing conflict, and resolving complex socioeconomic contradictions are becoming increasingly pressing.

Building and establishing a democratic society in Nigeria will take time, as the country's political system continues to retain characteristics inherited from

authoritarian regimes that held power for many years, and power, as before, depends on the support of certain ethnopolitical groups.

The path to democratic change in Nigeria is fraught with many difficulties and will be long and difficult. The process of democratization of society, not the political regime, is particularly important here. This means political participation by broad sections of the population and the redistribution of wealth within society, not just the reform of political institutions.

Nigeria's Restructuring Challenges

The issue of restructuring has drawn criticism from numerous opponents who believe it lacks value and has become a powerful source of unrest for various stakeholders. In other words, there are a number of obstacles to the need for restructuring, including:

- The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, has extremely strict, inflexible, and lengthy procedures for any changes. Restructuring in Nigeria is seriously hampered by the complexity of amending the Constitution. The restructuring process itself involves careful scrutiny of constitutional amendments, which must undergo a rigorous and rigorous process.
- An additional obstacle to advancing the idea of restructuring in Nigeria is that the topic is not clearly defined for both supporters and opponents to understand. Many members of the elite, particularly those opposed to restructuring, misunderstand it and, therefore, misinterpret its meaning. Furthermore, most supporters of restructuring do not understand its significance, making it difficult to convey this information to opponents. 3. The idea of dividing Nigeria into several republics raises concerns. Many in Nigeria fear that restructuring the country could lead to its further fragmentation into numerous autonomous regions.
- Most proponents of restructuring base their calls for change on inequalities in the federal government, its structure, and the distribution of resources. This argument consistently serves as a reference point for most opponents of the restructuring movement, as they believe the constitution is sufficiently clear on a number of issues.
- The demand for Nigeria's reorganization has drawn criticism from economists, who claim that proponents are hiding personal interests that could fragment the country.
- According to some residents, calls for restructuring inadvertently promote secession and regionalism among many marginalized regions. It has been argued that these agitators advocated division rather than unity in diversity. This means that the restructuring movement has threatened the very foundations of the Nigerian nation.

Nigeria's Security Issues

The mechanism of public administration in Nigeria is based on a synthesis of individual principles and institutions of traditional and new forms of government

organization, conditioned by the preservation of many features of the communal organization of the region's social and economic space while simultaneously evolving in line with global trends.

The intertwining of these circumstances gives political and socioeconomic processes in Nigerian society an undulating (and often explosive) nature, as evidenced by the numerous military coups carried out on the continent since its independence.

The history of Nigeria, where, after achieving political independence in 1960, military regimes prevailed, is one of the most striking examples of this type. Characteristics of military rule included the concentration of power in the hands of the head of state and the absence of democratic freedoms. A distinctive feature of these regimes was the irreconcilable nature of the relationship between the government and the opposition, often suppressing any kind of dissent through extremely brutal methods. The military's rise to power was determined by Nigeria's economic backwardness and religious and ethno-confessional contradictions. Parliamentary institutions in the country lacked solid political roots, but merely copied the English or American models of civil government. Amid economic decline and devastation, the army, armed with the physical, material means of violence—that is, weapons—came to power. It became the dominant political force.

The structure of military governments reflected the political mechanism of power, with the regime leader, in this case a military man, controlling all branches of government. He headed the legislative and executive councils, through which he implemented domestic and foreign policy. Legislative bodies had the power to pass laws, but only with the approval of the head of state. Ministers were also under the president's control. The activities of the highest authorities were formal in nature, as real power rested in the hands of the head of state and his entourage. The monopolization of political power by the military typically led to the strengthening of conservative, and in some cases reactionary, tendencies.

In the formation of government bodies, the ethno-confessional factor came to the fore. This manifested itself in the organization of public administration at both the federal and regional levels, influencing policymaking and the implementation of specific socio-economic and cultural measures. Rivalry between the Muslim north and the Christian south was reflected in the composition of governments.

Since gaining its independence, Nigeria has battled many types of insecurity as a nation. Particularly in the last few years, this has gotten worse recently. Several noteworthy security issues that have plagued the Nigerian state recently include:

1. **Boko Haram:** Founded in 2009, this militant Islamist group has caused instability in the northeastern region of Nigeria. Due to their actions, a large number of people now live in camps for internally displaced people, and more than 2.5 million people have left their ancestral homes to seek safety elsewhere. The Boko Haram group had been involved in property destruction, kidnapping, and ambush attacks against both civilians and military personnel.

2. An Islamic movement in Nigeria (Adeakin and Gray 2019) that is in conflict with the Nigerian federal government. This group's actions have led to clashes with government security forces, resulting in numerous deaths and property destruction.

Since the arrest of the group's leader in 2015, the security threat has increased significantly.

3. Electoral Violence: Since 1999, Nigeria's electoral process has been marred by violence in one way or another. For example, the October 2019 general elections were marked by numerous incidents of election-related violence. According to the Nigerian Center for Civil Society Research (NCSSR) (Sule, Sambo, Ahmed and Yusuf 2021), approximately 626 people were killed nationwide in the six months from October 2018 to October 2019, with the highest death toll recorded in the North-West region.

4. Communal Conflicts: In Nigeria, the number of conflicts between communities that share boundaries has been on the rise. The conflicts cut across boundaries between communities in various states, local governments, and the same local government. Conflicts are often caused by the existence of mineral resources. This has deteriorated into major disputes and risks to the country's security.

5. Clashes between farmers and herders: The conflict between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders, which was particularly noticeable in Nigeria's middle belt, has now expanded to other regions of the country. Christians from Tiv, Jukun, Hausa, and other tribes make up the majority of the farmers, while Muslims from the Fulani tribe make up the nomadic herders. Most people had viewed their conflicts through the lens of either ethnicity or religion. There has always been dispute over how the herders move their livestock between the sedentary farmers' farms and their crops are either eaten by the animals or destroyed. Significant loss of life, property, and other resources has resulted from this. The current trend of conflicts between farmers and herders poses a serious threat to national security.

6. Kidnapping: In recent years, kidnappings for ransom have become extremely common throughout Nigeria. One of the main security risks that still exists in Nigeria is this one. Nigeria has several documented cases of kidnapping. The abduction is typically connected to the herdsman.

7. Herdsmen occupying Southern forests: The security of Nigeria is once again gravely threatened by this. It has been noted that herders from the northern region of Nigeria have recently brought their livestock to the southern region of the country to live in the forests. They construct their homes, drive out the forest owners, and start a colony of cattle. The men who used to own the forests are abducted, and they rape the women. Conflicts arise between the herdsman who have invaded the forest owners' territory and themselves.

Conclusion and discussion

The security of the continent's countries, particularly Nigeria, is challenged on a number of fronts, including the inability to feed themselves, ensure economic growth and decent living conditions for the majority of the population, and protect themselves from external aggression and internal conflict. All of this is exacerbated by an underdeveloped scientific and technological base, as well as inadequate governance. Despite the country's abundant natural resources, they are either underutilized or controlled by international economic actors who are primarily concerned with their own financial well-being rather than the well-being of local residents. Globalization brings with it problems such as the illegal exploitation of human and natural resources,

unrestrained by any international norms, the infiltration and active activity of international organized crime groups, amidst weak legal protections for citizens and pervasive corruption, which also poses a major threat to Nigeria's national security.

The study provides a thorough and critical examination of the definition of restructuring, as well as its advantages and disadvantages. It also examines the definition, benefits, and challenges of national security in more detail. The study identifies the interrelationships between Nigeria's external relations, national security, and restructuring. The study found that numerous types of instability pose a serious threat to Nigeria as a state. According to the study, unless the security situation improves, Nigeria's survival as a nation cannot be guaranteed. The report also notes that Nigeria's insensitivity to security issues has led to excessive control and management in this area. The study further states that calls for restructuring have been prompted by the recent wave of instability affecting all regions of Nigeria. The study notes that the recent wave of instability in Nigeria has impacted its interactions with the outside world. The article concludes that restructuring Nigeria will help reduce the country's current wave of instability, strengthening its strong ties with the outside world and enabling it to achieve development in a variety of ways.

Based on the issues discussed in this article, the following questions will be proposed as one aspect of addressing the challenges associated with restructuring Nigeria. These questions arise because some groups feel marginalized and insecure, or see no opportunities for development in their communities or neighborhoods. In this context, I recommend considering the following aspects:

- Nigerians must support restructuring if we view it from a development perspective, as a means of achieving national security and managing instability, and not as a sentimental issue arising from regional, ethnic, or religious differences.
- Nigeria's political elite must demonstrate a sincere desire to address the country's unemployment, poverty, and instability.
- Experts and other knowledgeable individuals who understand the concept of restructuring must educate the general public about it to reduce hostility towards restructuring.
- Nigeria must undergo a comprehensive restructuring that addresses issues related to politics, the economy, and security, among other things.
- Another method of amending the Constitution is through restructuring Nigeria; therefore, to ensure a satisfactory outcome of this process, it is necessary to consult with all sections of the country's population to develop an acceptable model that will help set the country on the right path of development.

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Ethics Statement

The author confirms that this study was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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TOWARDS AN AFRICAN SOLUTION-ORIENTED APPROACH TO CONFLICT ANALYSIS IN AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY (2002-2022)

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Abstract

This paper proposes an AfSol-oriented (African Solutions) approach to conflict analysis in Africa's peace and security sphere, focusing on the period between 2002 and 2022. As Africa grapples with numerous internal and external challenges to peace and stability, it becomes imperative to examine the roles, perspectives, and interactions of all stakeholders involved in resolving conflicts across the continent. An AfSol-oriented approach calls for a shift from externally driven solutions to locally led, context-specific initiatives that promote sustainable peace and security. The study identifies the key stakeholders involved in Africa's peace and security processes, including regional organizations, national governments, non-state actors, civil society, and international partners. By examining their respective roles, motivations, and capabilities, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate web of interactions among these actors. Furthermore, the paper highlights the importance of promoting inclusivity and local ownership in conflict resolution strategies. It argues that genuine and lasting peace can only be achieved when the affected communities actively participate in shaping the solutions to their problems. The AfSol-oriented approach emphasizes the need to prioritize local knowledge, cultural practices, and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, while also complementing them with modern strategies and international support.

Keywords: *African Union, Pan-Africanism, peace, security, African Solutions-Oriented, conflict resolution, transparency, decision-making processes.*

Introduction

The emergence of AfSol as a significant concept in African peace and security can be traced back to the continent's post-colonial history and the experiences of African nations in dealing with various forms of conflict. Many African countries gained independence from colonial rule in the mid-20th century, ushering in a new era of

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nation-building and statehood (Mdhluli 2025). This process was often marked by challenges such as ethnic tensions, territorial disputes, and power struggles that laid the groundwork for future conflicts.

Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, Africa witnessed numerous armed conflicts, both internal and external. The international community, often through the UN and other global actors, frequently played a central role in attempting to mediate and resolve these conflicts. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of these interventions varied widely, with some leading to successful peace agreements and others resulting in protracted crises (Jackson 2001). It became increasingly evident that external actors, despite their good intentions, could not fully grasp the intricate social, political, and cultural dynamics of African conflicts. Moreover, the one-size-fits-all approach often applied by the international community did not consider the diversity of conflicts across the continent, further hindering successful resolution.

Against this backdrop, African leaders and scholars began advocating for a more indigenous and context-specific approach to conflict resolution. They argued that African nations and regional organizations possessed a deep understanding of their conflicts and were better positioned to develop solutions tailored to their unique circumstances. This sentiment gave rise to the AfSol concept (Abrahamsen 2013).

The adoption of AfSol reflects a desire among African nations to assert their sovereignty and agency in addressing the challenges of conflict and peacebuilding (Chekol and Beshi 2026). It represents a departure from the traditional top-down, externally imposed approaches and seeks to empower African actors to take the lead in shaping their own peace and security agendas (Vhumbunu 2024).

Furthermore, the context of AfSol cannot be separated from the changing dynamics of international relations. As African countries gained greater political and economic influence on the global stage, there was a growing recognition of their role as key stakeholders in matters of peace and security. This recognition has culminated in initiatives such as the African Union's (AU) efforts to promote African solutions to African problems (Sauti and Makaripe 2024; Abegunrin 2009).

The background and context surrounding the emergence of AfSol are deeply rooted in Africa's historical experiences with conflict, the limitations of external interventions, and the continent's evolving role in the international arena. Understanding this context is essential for comprehending why AfSol has gained prominence and why it is considered a crucial paradigm shift in African conflict resolution efforts (Brewer 2011). This paper aims to delve deeper into these dynamics and their implications for the peace and security landscape in Africa from 2002 to 2022.

Research Objectives

The research objectives serve as the guiding principles that shape the direction, scope, and purpose of this working paper. They define the specific goals and outcomes that the research aims to achieve. In the context of "Toward an AfSol-Oriented Approach to Conflict Analysis in Africa's Peace and Security Sphere (2002-2022)," the research objectives are multifaceted and encompass various dimensions of the AfSol concept and its implications.

Understanding the Evolution of AfSol

One of the primary research objectives is to trace the evolution of the term 'African-led Solutions' (AfSol). This involves examining how AfSol has developed over time, from its early conceptualization to its integration into the discourse on peace and security in Africa. This objective requires a historical analysis of the origins and development of AfSol, including its emergence as a response to the limitations of traditional conflict resolution approaches. It also entails exploring the various contexts in which AfSol has been applied and adapted across different African regions and conflicts (Núñez 2024; Onyango Ouma 2026).

Exploring Theoretical and Philosophical Underpinnings

Another critical research objective is to delve into the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of AfSol. This involves a thorough examination of the intellectual foundations that inform the concept. Researchers need to explore how AfSol aligns with or deviates from existing theories of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and international relations. Additionally, it is crucial to investigate the philosophical frameworks that have influenced the adoption of AfSol, such as Pan-Africanism and the belief in the efficacy of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms (Adem 2004). This objective aims to provide a solid theoretical grounding for the subsequent analysis.

Assessing Convergence and Divergence with Existing Frameworks

Understanding how AfSol aligns or diverges from existing conflict resolution frameworks is a pivotal research objective. It involves a comparative analysis of AfSol with traditional, Western-centric approaches to conflict analysis and resolution. Researchers must identify the points of convergence, where AfSol complements existing frameworks, and the points of divergence, where it challenges or contradicts established practices. This objective facilitates a nuanced evaluation of AfSol's strengths and limitations in addressing the unique challenges of African conflicts.

Defining Key Variables in AfSol-Oriented Analysis

This research objective focuses on establishing the key variables and factors that should be considered in an AfSol-oriented approach to conflict analysis. It requires a comprehensive review of the literature and empirical evidence to identify the critical elements that shape the dynamics of conflicts in Africa. These variables may include local agency and ownership, contextual factors, regional and international involvement, historical grievances, and socio-economic drivers of conflict. Defining these key variables is essential for developing a robust analytical framework for AfSol-oriented conflict analysis.

Analyzing Analytical Processes and Methodologies

The research also aims to explore the analytical processes and methodologies that are most conducive to AfSol-oriented conflict analysis. This objective involves a critical

examination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, case study approaches, and comparative analysis techniques. Researchers must assess the suitability of these methods for capturing the intricacies of African conflicts and for generating insights that align with AfSol principles. By doing so, this objective contributes to the development of effective tools and methodologies for AfSol-oriented conflict analysis.

Informing Policy and Practice

Ultimately, the overarching research objective is to bridge the gap between academic discourse and practical policymaking. This objective emphasizes the relevance of the research findings and their applicability to policymakers and practitioners involved in peace and security efforts in Africa. It involves translating the insights gained from the research into actionable recommendations and policy guidance. These recommendations should address the ‘what, why, and how’ of implementing AfSol-oriented strategies, with a focus on enhancing local ownership, sustainability, and the overall effectiveness of conflict resolution initiatives.

The research objectives for this working paper are multifaceted and interconnected. They encompass historical, theoretical, and practical dimensions of AfSol-oriented conflict analysis, with the ultimate goal of contributing to a more nuanced and effective approach to addressing conflict and promoting peace in Africa. Through these objectives, this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive and valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in the complex arena of African peace and security.

Methodology and Scope

Methodology and scope are pivotal aspects of any research endeavor, determining the approach taken, data sources, and the boundaries within which the study operates. In this context, analyzing the methodology and scope is crucial for ensuring the research's credibility and relevance.

The choice of methodology is pivotal in ensuring the rigor and credibility of the research. The methodology adopted for this study should align with the research objectives and the nature of the research questions posed.

Qualitative Research: Qualitative research methods, such as content analysis of relevant documents and reports, and thematic analysis, will help capture the nuanced perspectives and experiences related to AfSol in African conflict resolution. This approach allows for the exploration of the historical, theoretical, and policy dimensions of AfSol.

Case Studies: Employing case studies of specific conflicts and peacebuilding efforts in different African regions will offer rich, context-specific insights into the application and outcomes of AfSol. It will also provide comparative perspectives and help identify patterns and lessons.

Within the research topic of *Toward an AfSol-Oriented Approach to Conflict Analysis in Africa's Peace and Security Sphere*, qualitative approaches are instrumental for aligning with AfSol principles of local ownership, cultural sensitivity, and a deep contextual understanding of African conflicts (Dube and Chisale 2023).

Qualitative methods empowered us to navigate the complexity of these conflicts, engage with local actors, and provide nuanced policy recommendations.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process will be systematic and rigorous, involving both primary and secondary sources. Primary data collection, such as surveys will provide fresh perspectives, while secondary data sources, including academic literature, policy documents, and conflict databases, offer a historical and contextual backdrop. Data analysis will be methodical, transparent, and aligned with the chosen methodology. Qualitative data will be analyzed thematically, looking for recurring patterns, emerging themes, and contradictions.

Scope and Limitations

Defining the scope of the research is crucial to maintaining focus and relevance. The study's temporal scope covers the period from 2002 to 2022, a period marked by significant changes in Africa's peace and security landscape. This time frame allows for the analysis of a wide range of conflicts and peacebuilding initiatives within a contemporary context. However, there are inherent limitations in terms of geographic scope and the number of conflicts that can be analyzed comprehensively. We will be transparent about these limitations and acknowledge that the study may not encompass all African conflicts during the specified period. Furthermore, the research scope will extend to multiple African regions, as different regions may present unique challenges and opportunities for AfSol-oriented approaches. A balanced representation of conflicts and initiatives from across the continent ensures a holistic understanding of the topic.

Conceptualization AfSol: evolution of the term 'AfSol'

The alignment and deviation of the AfSol-oriented approach focus on existing theories of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and international relations (Akiba 2020; Sello 2026). The examination of alignment and deviation of the AfSol-oriented approach from existing theories is a critical aspect of this research. It seeks to clarify how AfSol fits within the broader theoretical landscape of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and international relations. This analysis provides valuable insights into the uniqueness and potential contributions of AfSol.

Alignment with Existing Theories

Constructivism: AfSol aligns with constructivist theories, which emphasize the role of identity, norms, and ideas in shaping international relations. AfSol's emphasis on local ownership and agency resonates with constructivist notions of the importance of actors' beliefs and identities in influencing outcomes. The focus on building peace through local perspectives aligns with constructivist principles of social constructivism.

Agency-Centric Theories: The AfSol-oriented approach aligns closely with agency-centric theories that emphasize the active role of local actors in conflict resolution processes. It acknowledges the importance of empowering local communities and

governments to take the lead in addressing conflicts, which is in line with the agency-centric perspective.

Complex Systems Theories: AfSol recognizes the complexity of conflicts and the need for context-specific solutions. This alignment with complex systems theories acknowledges that conflicts are multifaceted and dynamic and that solutions must be adaptable and contextually relevant.

Deviation from Existing Theories

Realism: AfSol deviates from realist theories, which prioritize state-centric interests and power politics. In contrast, AfSol focuses on local and regional actors and emphasizes the importance of non-state actors, indigenous mechanisms, and community-level solutions. This deviation challenges the realist perspective that power and state interests are the primary drivers of international relations.

Liberalism: While liberalism emphasizes international institutions and cooperation among states, AfSol deviates by highlighting the significance of local and regional initiatives. AfSol suggests that solutions to African conflicts should emerge from within the continent rather than relying solely on external institutions and frameworks.

Universalism: AfSol's emphasis on context-specific solutions and the importance of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms challenge the universalist approach to conflict resolution. Universalist theories often seek standardized, one-size-fits-all solutions, whereas AfSol recognizes the need for tailored approaches that respect local cultures and traditions.

Power Imbalances: AfSol's deviation from existing theories also manifests in its focus on addressing power imbalances in international relations. It calls for more equitable partnerships and a reduction in external interference, challenging traditional power structures that have dominated conflict resolution efforts in Africa.

The evolution of the term 'AfSol' highlights the dynamic relationship between the AfSol-oriented approach and established theories of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and international relations. While AfSol aligns with certain theoretical perspectives, such as constructivism and agency-centric theories, it also deviates from others, including realism, liberalism, and universalism (Hofisi, Moroe and Erameh 2025). These alignments and deviations form the basis for a nuanced understanding of how AfSol contributes to the evolving discourse on conflict resolution in Africa's peace and security sphere.

Historical Origins

The historical origins of AfSol are deeply intertwined with the broader historical context of Africa's struggle for independence and self-determination during the mid-20th century. This pivotal period in African history saw the dismantling of colonial rule and the emergence of newly independent nations across the continent. It was during this era that the seeds of AfSol were first sown (Baker 2009).

Colonial Legacy and the Quest for Autonomy

Africa's experience of colonialism, characterized by the exploitation of its resources, suppression of indigenous cultures, and arbitrary borders imposed by colonial powers, left a lasting legacy of social, political and economic challenges. The struggle for

independence from colonial rule was marked by a collective yearning for autonomy and self-governance. African leaders and intellectuals of the time, such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, played pivotal roles in articulating the vision of an Africa in control of its destiny.

Emergence of Pan-Africanism

The rise of Pan-Africanism, a movement that advocated for the unity and solidarity of African nations and peoples, was instrumental in shaping the historical origins of AfSol. Leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and W.E.B. Du Bois, among others, championed Pan-African ideals. They argued that the struggles and aspirations of African nations were interconnected and that Africans should collaborate to achieve common goals. This ideology laid the groundwork for AfSol by emphasizing collective action and African agency.

The historical context also highlighted the limitations of external intervention in addressing African conflicts and challenges. African nations had experienced external interventions during colonial rule, and the post-independence era saw continued interference from superpowers during the Cold War. These interventions often exacerbated conflicts rather than resolving them (Nimbalkar 2026). It became increasingly evident that external actors, while well-intentioned, lacked the deep understanding of African societies and cultures required for effective conflict resolution.

The emergence of the AfSol concept

Amid these historical dynamics, the concept of AfSol began to take shape. African leaders and intellectuals advocated for the idea that Africans should have the primary role in shaping their destinies, including resolving conflicts. AfSol emerged as a response to the need for context-specific, locally-driven solutions to the unique challenges faced by African nations. This concept emphasizes the importance of local ownership, cultural context, and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms (Frimpong 2025).

The historical origins of AfSol are rooted in Africa's struggle for independence, the emergence of Pan-Africanism, and the challenges posed by external interventions. AfSol represents a historical shift in Africa's approach to conflicts, from being subjects of external intervention to becoming architects of their solutions. Understanding these historical origins is crucial for appreciating the evolution and significance of AfSol in the context of African peace and security efforts.

The conceptual development of AfSol represents a journey from a nascent idea rooted in the struggles for independence to a sophisticated framework for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa (Sello 2026). This evolution reflects the collective wisdom of African leaders, scholars, and practitioners who sought more effective and context-specific approaches to address the continent's challenges. The early conceptualization of AfSol was rooted in the notion of local ownership. African leaders recognized that sustainable solutions to conflicts required the active participation of local communities and governments. They advocated for the principle

that Africans should take the lead in shaping their destinies, including resolving conflicts. This foundational idea emphasizes the importance of empowering African nations and communities to be active agents in peace and security efforts (Ujunwa, Okoyeuzu and Kalu 2019).

As AfSol continued to develop conceptually, it increasingly emphasized the significance of cultural context and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. African societies have rich traditions of conflict resolution that predate colonialism, and AfSol recognized the potential of these traditions in mediating and resolving conflicts (Kostelyanets 2023; Ebegebulem 2011). This conceptual shift acknowledged that African conflicts are deeply embedded in local cultural dynamics and that solutions should be tailored to these contexts. One of the core tenets of AfSol's conceptual development is the emphasis on context-specificity. This principle recognizes that conflicts in Africa are diverse, ranging from ethnic disputes to political rivalries, and that each conflict requires a unique approach (Chekol and Beshi 2026; Engel 2023). AfSol rejects the one-size-fits-all model that characterized many external interventions and instead advocates for solutions that are sensitive to the specific factors driving each conflict. Conceptually, AfSol evolved to embrace collaborative and inclusive approaches. It recognized that resolving conflicts often necessitates the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including CSOs, women's groups, youth, and marginalized communities. This conceptual shift emphasized the importance of bringing all relevant actors to the table, as their perspectives and contributions are critical to sustainable peace. The development of AfSol also drew inspiration from Pan-African ideals. The Pan-African movement had long emphasized the unity and solidarity of African nations. AfSol aligned with these principles by advocating for collaborative efforts among African nations in conflict resolution. It echoed the sentiment that African challenges require collective action and cooperation (Hofisi, Moroe and Erameh 2025).

The conceptual development of AfSol reflects a profound shift in how Africa approaches conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It has evolved from a rudimentary idea rooted in the struggle for independence to a sophisticated framework that prioritizes local ownership, cultural context, inclusivity, and context-specificity (Akinola et al. 2017). This evolution represents Africa's determination to develop its solutions to the complex challenges it faces and its recognition of the importance of drawing upon its rich cultural heritage and traditions in the pursuit of peace and security. Understanding this conceptual development is essential for appreciating the depth and significance of AfSol in contemporary African peace and security efforts.

Theoretical and Philosophical Underpinnings

Pan-Africanism and AfSol

The connection between Pan-Africanism and AfSol is profound, as both share a common thread of African unity, self-determination, and self-reliance. Pan-Africanism, a movement that emerged during the colonial era, aimed to foster solidarity among African nations and peoples and to promote their collective interests. AfSol, on the other hand, represents the contemporary manifestation of this Pan-African spirit,

particularly in the context of conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Dube and Chisale 2023). At its core, Pan-Africanism champions the ideals of unity and self-determination. It asserts that African nations and peoples share a common history, cultural heritage, and destiny. AfSol aligns seamlessly with these ideals by advocating for African nations to take the lead in resolving their conflicts and challenges. This shared emphasis on unity and self-determination underscores the symbiotic relationship between Pan-Africanism and AfSol.

Pan-Africanism emerged during a period when African nations were still under colonial rule, and it played a pivotal role in the struggle for independence. Leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and Patrice Lumumba promoted Pan-African ideals as they sought to liberate their nations from colonial oppression (Amaglo-Mensah and Nesterova 2025). The principles of Pan-Africanism resonated with the desire for autonomy and self-governance, laying the groundwork for AfSol's historical roots. AfSol can be seen as a contemporary manifestation of Pan-Africanism's principles in the realm of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. While Pan-Africanism addressed the broader struggle for independence and sovereignty, AfSol focuses on the specific challenges of peace and security on the continent. It emphasizes the need for African-led initiatives, local ownership, and culturally grounded solutions to conflicts. Both Pan-Africanism and AfSol emphasize collaborative efforts among African nations (Amoah 2025). Pan-Africanism encouraged African nations to work together to achieve common goals and overcome shared challenges. AfSol extends this collaborative spirit to the realm of conflict resolution, advocating for regional and continental organizations like the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to take active roles in mediating and resolving conflicts. The historical struggles faced by African nations, including colonialism and external interference, have forged a spirit of resilience and determination. Pan-Africanism and AfSol both reflect this resilience by emphasizing Africa's capacity to address its challenges and find solutions, even in the face of complex conflicts (Abrahamsen 2013).

The relationship between Pan-Africanism and AfSol is deeply rooted in the shared ideals of unity, self-determination, and the belief in Africa's ability to shape its destiny. While Pan-Africanism addressed the broader context of colonialism and independence, AfSol represents the contemporary application of these principles to the specific challenges of conflict resolution and peacebuilding on the continent. This symbiotic relationship underscores the enduring influence of Pan-Africanism in shaping Africa's approach to addressing its peace and security challenges through AfSol-oriented initiatives (Mdhluhi 2025).

Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

The integration of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms into AfSol represents a synergistic approach that recognizes the wisdom embedded in African traditions and the need for context-specific solutions to conflicts on the continent. Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms have deep historical roots in Africa, and their incorporation into the AfSol framework underscores the importance of drawing upon local knowledge and practices to address contemporary challenges. Indigenous conflict resolution

mechanisms are deeply intertwined with African cultures and traditions. These mechanisms have been passed down through generations, reflecting the values, customs, and worldviews of African communities. By incorporating these mechanisms into AfSol, there is a commitment to preserving and honoring Africa's rich cultural heritage. This recognition of cultural diversity and the importance of cultural preservation align closely with AfSol's emphasis on respecting the cultural context of conflict resolution. One of the fundamental principles of AfSol is the recognition that conflicts in Africa are diverse and context-specific.

Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms exemplify this principle by offering tailored solutions that are uniquely suited to the specific dynamics of each conflict (Khadiagala 2021). These mechanisms take into account factors such as local norms, values, and social structures, ensuring that conflict resolution efforts resonate with the communities affected by the conflicts. Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms often involve the active participation of community leaders, elders, and other stakeholders (Fabo 2026). This inclusive approach aligns with AfSol's emphasis on involving all relevant actors in conflict resolution processes. By valuing the input and involvement of local communities, AfSol recognizes the importance of ensuring that those most affected by conflicts have a say in the solutions devised. While indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are deeply rooted in tradition, they can also complement modern conflict resolution approaches. AfSol advocates for a holistic approach that integrates both traditional and contemporary methods. Indigenous mechanisms can offer valuable insights and alternative approaches to conflict resolution, enhancing the effectiveness of modern interventions (Mlambo, Aniche and Masuku 2024). It is important to acknowledge that the integration of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms into AfSol is not without challenges. Modern conflicts often present complexities that traditional mechanisms alone may not fully address. Therefore, there is a need for adaptation and innovation to ensure that indigenous approaches remain relevant in the face of evolving conflict dynamics (Cho 2025). The integration of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms into the AfSol framework represents recognition of the cultural richness, diversity, and resilience of African societies. This approach acknowledges that Africa's traditions hold valuable insights into the resolution of conflicts on the continent. By combining the wisdom of indigenous mechanisms with contemporary conflict resolution strategies, AfSol fosters a holistic, context-specific, and culturally grounded approach to peace and security in Africa.

International Perspectives on AfSol

The concept of AfSol has gained recognition and attention on the international stage, reflecting a changing paradigm in how the global community perceives Africa's role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. International perspectives on AfSol encompass a spectrum of views, ranging from support and partnership to cautious engagement and skepticism. Many international actors, including regional organizations, NGOs, and foreign governments, have expressed support for AfSol. They recognize the value of African-led initiatives in addressing conflicts on the continent. The AU, for instance, has made AfSol a central pillar of its peace and security architecture. Supportive international perspectives view AfSol as a means to enhance local ownership, cultural

relevance, and sustainability in conflict resolution efforts. Some international actors approach AfSol with cautious engagement. While they acknowledge the importance of African agencies in conflict resolution, they may have concerns about capacity gaps, resource constraints, or the potential for political manipulation at the local level (Abegunrin 2009). These perspectives often call for responsible and informed international involvement that complements AfSol efforts without overshadowing them.

A minority of international perspectives express skepticism about AfSol. These views may stem from concerns about the effectiveness of African-led approaches, doubts about the capacity of regional organizations, or suspicions of potential power struggles among African nations. Skeptical perspectives underscore the importance of careful monitoring, evaluation, and accountability in AfSol initiatives to ensure their success. The evolving international perspectives on AfSol highlight the need for a balanced approach to partnerships (Apuuli 2020). AfSol does not advocate for isolationism or exclusion of international actors; rather, it encourages collaborative efforts that prioritize African leadership and local context. The challenge lies in striking the right balance between international support and African ownership, ensuring that external actors complement, rather than dominate, AfSol-oriented processes. International perspectives on AfSol have also opened up opportunities for constructive dialogue and partnerships. The concept has provided a platform for international organizations and African stakeholders to engage in discussions about the role of external actors in African conflicts. This dialogue can lead to innovative solutions that bridge the gap between global and local perspectives on peace and security (Chekol and Beshi 2026).

International perspectives that express concerns or skepticism can serve as valuable critiques that inform the refinement of AfSol approaches. These critiques may prompt discussions on issues such as governance, accountability, and resource allocation in conflict resolution efforts (Akiba 2020; Sello 2026). By addressing these challenges transparently, AfSol-oriented initiatives can build credibility and resilience.

International perspectives on AfSol reflect a shifting paradigm in the global approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa. While there is a spectrum of views, ranging from support to skepticism, AfSol has catalyzed important conversations about African agency, local context, and international partnerships. Balancing these perspectives and harnessing them constructively is crucial for the continued development and effectiveness of AfSol-oriented approaches in Africa's peace and security sphere (Amaglo-Mensah and Nesterova 2025).

Convergence and Divergence with Existing Frameworks

AfSol exhibits notable points of convergence with several existing frameworks for conflict resolution and peacebuilding:

- **UN Framework:** AfSol aligns with the core principles of the UN framework, which include conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction. However, AfSol emphasizes local ownership and context-specificity, which dovetail with the UN's commitment to supporting nationally driven peace processes and respecting the sovereignty of states.

- **Human Security Paradigm:** AfSol's emphasis on addressing the root causes of conflicts, including human rights abuses, economic disparities, and social inequalities, aligns closely with the human security paradigm. Both stress the need to prioritize the well-being and protection of individuals and communities affected by conflicts.
- **Conflict Sensitivity Approach:** AfSol integrates elements of the conflict sensitivity approach, which seeks to understand how interventions impact conflict dynamics. AfSol's emphasis on context-specificity and the importance of avoiding harm to local communities aligns with the conflict sensitivity framework's goals of minimizing unintended negative consequences.
- **Local Ownership Principles:** AfSol strongly converges with the principles of local ownership, as endorsed by many international organizations. It recognizes the central role of local actors, including governments, civil society, and communities, in shaping conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.

Divergence from Existing Frameworks

Despite its convergences, AfSol also exhibits clear points of divergence from existing frameworks:

- **Traditional Peacekeeping Models:** AfSol diverges significantly from traditional peacekeeping models, which often involve the deployment of external military forces. AfSol prioritizes non-military, context-specific approaches and advocates for the reduction of external military interventions in favor of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms.
- **Universalist Approaches:** AfSol challenges universalist approaches to conflict resolution that aim to apply standardized solutions to diverse conflicts. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing the unique characteristics and context-specific drivers of African conflicts, thus diverging from one-size-fits-all models.
- **State-Centric Approaches:** Many existing frameworks prioritize state-centric approaches to conflict resolution. AfSol, while acknowledging the role of states, places greater emphasis on the agency of non-state actors, local communities, and traditional authorities, thereby diverging from the state-centric perspective.
- **External Interventionism:** AfSol challenges the historical and contemporary tendency of external actors to intervene heavily in African conflicts. While existing frameworks often involve significant external military and financial contributions, AfSol advocates for a more balanced approach that respects African ownership and reduces external interference.
- **Emphasis on Indigenous Mechanisms:** Perhaps the most significant divergence is AfSol's emphasis on indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. While existing frameworks recognize the importance of mediation and dialogue, AfSol uniquely prioritizes the incorporation of traditional and community-based methods as central components of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

AfSol demonstrates both convergence and divergence with existing frameworks for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. While it shares core principles with many established approaches, such as the UN framework and the human security paradigm,

its emphasis on local ownership, context-specificity, and indigenous mechanisms sets it apart as a distinct and evolving concept (Jeong 2008). These points of convergence and divergence reflect AfSol's ambition to provide a tailored, African-centric approach to addressing the complexities of conflicts in Africa's peace and security sphere.

Comparison with Western Approaches

AfSol represents a significant departure from traditional Western approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This shift is rooted in recognition of the unique historical, cultural, and contextual factors that shape conflicts in Africa and a growing awareness of the limitations of Western-centric models (Dube and Chisale 2023).

Emphasis on Local Ownership and Agency

One of the key distinctions between AfSol and Western approaches lies in the emphasis on local ownership and agency. AfSol places the agency for conflict resolution squarely in the hands of African nations, communities, and individuals. This contrasts with many Western approaches, which have historically featured significant external intervention and decision-making. AfSol challenges the perception that outsiders are better equipped to resolve African conflicts, asserting that local actors are best positioned to understand and address the root causes of these conflicts (Oshota and Wahab 2022; Rasool, Chen and Kashif 2026).

Cultural Sensitivity and Context-Specificity

AfSol's commitment to cultural sensitivity and context-specificity sets it apart from Western models. African conflicts are deeply embedded in local cultures and histories, making them inherently unique. AfSol recognizes the importance of respecting and drawing upon these cultural nuances in conflict resolution. In contrast, Western approaches have sometimes been criticized for imposing universal solutions that do not adequately consider local contexts, leading to unintended consequences (Núñez 2024; Onyango Ouma 2026).

Inclusivity and Indigenous Mechanisms

AfSol places a strong emphasis on inclusivity, involving a wide range of stakeholders, including traditional leaders, women, youth, and marginalized groups, in conflict resolution efforts (Dygas 2025). This mirrors the belief that diverse perspectives and voices must be heard and integrated into the process. Furthermore, AfSol advocates for the incorporation of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, recognizing the value of traditional methods in resolving conflicts. Western approaches have historically been more state-centric and have not consistently prioritized these inclusive and indigenous elements.

Reduced External Intervention and Neocolonialism

A significant divergence between AfSol and Western approaches is the call for reduced external intervention in African conflicts. AfSol questions the neocolonial undertones that have sometimes characterized Western interventions, where external actors are

seen as imposing their will on African nations. AfSol advocates for more balanced power dynamics in which African nations assert their sovereignty and autonomy.

Complexity vs. Simplification

Western approaches have sometimes been criticized for oversimplifying complex conflicts, reducing them to binary narratives of good vs. evil or democracy vs. authoritarianism. AfSol recognizes the multifaceted nature of African conflicts, emphasizing their complexity and the need for multifaceted solutions (Cho 2025). This acknowledgment of complexity is crucial for understanding the intricate dynamics of African conflicts and tailoring responses accordingly.

The comparison between AfSol and Western approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding reflects a paradigmatic shift in how Africa is engaging with its peace and security challenges. AfSol's emphasis on local ownership, cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and a reduced external interventionist stance represents a distinctive approach that aligns with Africa's evolving agency and aspirations. While Western models have made valuable contributions, AfSol represents a growing recognition that African solutions must be rooted in African contexts and perspectives (Amoah 2025).

Synergies with Regional Initiatives

AfSol is inherently cooperative and synergistic with regional initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa (Amaglo-Mensah and Nesterova 2025). These regional efforts, often led by regional organizations, governments, and other stakeholders, share common goals with AfSol, and together they form a multifaceted approach to addressing the complex peace and security challenges on the continent.

Strengthening Regional Organizations

AfSol synergizes with the efforts of regional organizations such as the AU and the ECOWAS. These organizations have increasingly embraced AfSol principles, recognizing the importance of local ownership, context-specificity, and African agency in conflict resolution. AfSol strengthens these regional organizations by reinforcing their legitimacy and their role as key mediators and peacekeepers in African conflicts (Abrahamsen 2013).

Complementary Roles

AfSol and regional initiatives often play complementary roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Regional initiatives provide the institutional and logistical framework for addressing conflicts within specific geographic areas (Dube and Chisale 2023). AfSol complements these efforts by emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding, local buy-in, and indigenous mechanisms. The combination of regional structures and AfSol-oriented approaches offers a comprehensive strategy that draws on the strengths of both.

Conflict prevention, mediation and capacity building

Regional initiatives frequently focus on conflict prevention and early warning systems to avert crises before they escalate. AfSol aligns with these objectives by emphasizing the importance of addressing root causes and preventing conflicts from arising in the first place. Additionally, AfSol complements regional mediation efforts by incorporating traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and fostering inclusive dialogues. Both AfSol and regional initiatives recognize the importance of building the capacity of African nations and organizations to address conflicts independently (Brewer 2011). AfSol emphasizes the need to empower local actors, while regional initiatives often invest in strengthening the capabilities of regional organizations and governments. This dual approach enhances Africa's self-reliance in managing peace and security challenges.

Transnational Conflicts and Comprehensive Solutions

In cases of transnational conflicts that span multiple countries, regional initiatives are particularly valuable (Fabo 2026). AfSol can support these efforts by facilitating cross-border dialogues and promoting collaboration among affected communities. Together, they address the intricate dynamics of conflicts that transcend national boundaries.

The synergies between AfSol and regional initiatives underscore the quest for comprehensive solutions to Africa's peace and security challenges. They recognize that conflicts are multidimensional and require multifaceted responses. Regional initiatives provide the structured framework, while AfSol contributes the depth of local understanding, cultural sensitivity, and community engagement necessary for sustainable peace (Adams et al. 2015).

AfSol's synergies with regional initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding reflect a cooperative and integrated approach to addressing Africa's peace and security challenges. These initiatives reinforce one another, combining regional structures and local ownership to enhance the effectiveness and resilience of efforts to promote peace on the continent. The collaboration between AfSol and regional initiatives represents a powerful strategy for fostering peace and stability in Africa (Ojajorotu and Adeleke 2018).

Critiques and Challenges

While AfSol represents a significant shift in how Africa approaches conflict resolution and peacebuilding, it is not without its critiques and challenges. These critiques often revolve around practical implementation, resource constraints, and the need for balance between African ownership and international cooperation (Dygas 2025).

Resource Constraints and Capacity Building

One of the primary challenges facing AfSol initiatives is the issue of resource constraints. Many African nations and regional organizations lack the financial, logistical, and human resources needed to effectively implement AfSol-oriented approaches (Frimpong 2025). This challenge underscores the need for capacity-

building efforts that strengthen African institutions and empower local actors to take on larger roles in conflict resolution.

Balancing External Support

Critiques of AfSol sometimes revolve around the delicate balance between African ownership and external support. While AfSol emphasizes African agency, it also recognizes the importance of international partnerships and cooperation (Amoah 2025). Critics argue that finding the right equilibrium is challenging, as excessive external involvement can undermine the principles of AfSol, while too little support can hinder conflict resolution efforts.

Conflict Complexity and Multifaceted Approaches

African conflicts are often characterized by their complexity, involving a myriad of socio-political, economic, and cultural factors. Critics suggest that AfSol's focus on local ownership and cultural sensitivity may not always provide the depth of analysis and resources required to address such multifaceted challenges comprehensively (Addison, 2001). This critique underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of when and how to apply AfSol principles.

Inclusivity and Gender Equality

While AfSol emphasizes inclusivity, some critics argue that it may not go far enough in promoting gender equality and the active participation of women in conflict resolution efforts. Gender disparities persist in many African societies, and addressing them effectively requires deliberate actions and policies to ensure women's voices are heard and their needs are addressed (Hofisi, Moroe and Erameh 2025).

Interactions with Existing Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

AfSol's integration of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms raises questions about how these methods interact with formal, Western-oriented conflict resolution processes. Critics argue that the coexistence of these two approaches can be challenging, as they may have differing timelines, values, and power dynamics (Vhumbunu 2024). Harmonizing these approaches without compromising AfSol's core principles presents a significant challenge.

External Skepticism and Support

AfSol's emphasis on African ownership and self-reliance has faced skepticism from some external actors who are accustomed to taking a more prominent role in African conflicts. These skeptics question Africa's capacity to lead and may be hesitant to fully embrace AfSol-oriented initiatives (Abegunrin 2009). Building trust and credibility in AfSol approaches within the international community is an ongoing challenge. AfSol represents a transformative approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa, but it is not immune to critiques and challenges. These critiques often revolve around the practical aspects of implementation, the need for resource mobilization and

capacity building, and the balance between African ownership and international cooperation. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of the complex realities of African conflicts and a commitment to adapt AfSol principles to effectively navigate the path toward sustainable peace and security on the continent (Sauti and Makaripe 2024).

Theoretical foundations of AfSol-oriented conflict analysis

Defining Key Variables in AfSol-Oriented Analysis

An AfSol-oriented analysis in the context of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa requires a meticulous examination of key variables that shape the efficacy and applicability of AfSol principles (Abrahamsen 2013). These variables serve as the analytical foundation for understanding the complexities of African conflicts and the practical implications of AfSol-oriented approaches.

Local Agency and Ownership

Local agency and ownership stand as foundational pillars within the AfSol-oriented analysis of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa (Nimbalkar 2026). These variables underscore the active participation, decision-making authority, and sense of responsibility that African nations, communities, and individuals hold in shaping the trajectory of peace and security efforts on the continent.

Empowerment through Local Agency

Local agency represents the capacity of African nations and communities to act as agents of change in their conflict-resolution processes. It recognizes that the people who are directly affected by conflicts possess invaluable knowledge, experiences, and insights into their root causes and potential solutions (Fabo 2026). AfSol-oriented analysis places a strong emphasis on empowering local actors, whether they are governments, CSOs, traditional leaders, or grassroots activists, to take ownership of peacebuilding efforts.

Defining Ownership in Conflict Resolution

Ownership, within an AfSol-oriented context, extends beyond mere involvement to encompass the authority to make decisions, allocate resources, and set agendas. It implies that African nations and communities are not passive recipients of external solutions but active architects of their peace (Kuperman 2015). Analyzing ownership involves assessing the degree to which local actors have a genuine voice in shaping conflict resolution strategies and policies.

Challenges to Local Ownership

While local ownership is a fundamental principle, it is not without challenges. Many African conflicts involve complex power dynamics, political elites, and external actors who may resist devolving authority to local actors. In some cases, local communities

may lack the capacity or resources to fully engage in conflict resolution. Analyzing these challenges is essential to understanding the practical limitations of local ownership and identifying areas where support and capacity-building are required (Munyao, Manthi and Ndirangu 2025).

Balancing Local and External Interests

Balancing the interests of local actors with external actors is a critical aspect of AfSol-oriented analysis. International organizations and external governments often play substantial roles in African conflicts, providing resources, expertise, and mediation efforts. Analyzing the dynamics of these partnerships and their impact on local ownership helps ensure that external support enhances rather than undermines AfSol principles (Fisher et al. 2013).

Cultural Sensitivity and Local Context

Local agency and ownership are closely intertwined with cultural sensitivity and the recognition of local context. AfSol-oriented analysis acknowledges that African conflicts are deeply embedded in cultural norms, traditions, and histories (Kabia 2009). This variable emphasizes the need for conflict resolution efforts to respect and draw upon these cultural nuances, ensuring that solutions resonate with the communities affected by conflicts.

Indigenous Mechanisms and Inclusive Dialogues

Empowering local actors involves incorporating indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms and fostering inclusive dialogues. These mechanisms, often rooted in tradition, hold cultural legitimacy and are highly relevant to the context of African conflicts (Chekol and Beshi 2026; Engel 2023). Analyzing their integration into AfSol-oriented initiatives assesses the extent to which local agency and ownership are being prioritized.

Local agency and ownership are core variables in an AfSol-oriented analysis, reflecting the fundamental principle that African nations and communities have the primary responsibility and capacity to resolve their conflicts. Empowering local actors, respecting cultural context, and navigating the complexities of external involvement are essential elements of this analysis (Ujunwa, Okoyeuzu and Kalu 2019). It underscores the importance of African ownership as a driving force for sustainable peace and security in Africa.

Contextual Dynamics

Contextual dynamics constitute a critical variable in an AfSol-oriented analysis of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa (Rushton 2024). These dynamics encompass the unique and multifaceted factors that shape the nature of conflicts on the continent and influence the application of AfSol principles in different settings. African conflicts are characterized by multifaceted causes and drivers, often rooted in historical legacies, political grievances, economic disparities, identity issues, and resource

competition. AfSol-oriented analysis recognizes that each conflict is shaped by a unique set of contextual dynamics. Understanding these dynamics requires a thorough examination of the root causes and drivers specific to a particular conflict, as well as their evolving nature over time. Africa's vast geographic diversity results in significant regional variations in conflict dynamics (Addison 2001). Contextual factors such as geography, climate, and access to resources can influence the nature of conflicts. Regional dynamics also play a role, with conflicts often spilling across borders. AfSol-oriented analysis involves considering how regional factors and neighboring states impact the resolution of conflicts (Cho 2025). The array of actors and stakeholders involved in African conflicts adds complexity to the contextual dynamics. These actors range from national governments, rebel groups, and militias to civil society organizations, traditional leaders, and international mediators. Understanding their interests, motivations, and roles within the conflict landscape is crucial for effective AfSol-oriented analysis.

The impact of conflicts on humanitarian and development dimensions is a significant contextual dynamic. Displacement, food insecurity, health crises, and infrastructure damage are common consequences of conflicts in Africa (Amoah 2025). AfSol-oriented analysis includes an assessment of the humanitarian and development challenges specific to each conflict, as addressing these issues is essential for sustainable peace. Contextual dynamics also encompass historical legacies and cultural factors that influence conflict resolution processes. Historical grievances, colonial histories, and cultural norms can either hinder or facilitate reconciliation efforts. AfSol-oriented analysis delves into how historical and cultural context shapes the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of conflict parties and affected communities (Hammed 2015).

The political and governance context plays a central role in African conflicts. Issues related to governance, state legitimacy, corruption, and power struggles often contribute to conflicts. AfSol-oriented analysis involves an examination of the political and governance structures within which conflicts emerge and evolve. Resource scarcity, including competition over land, water, minerals, and other natural resources, is a frequent driver of conflicts in Africa (May et al. 2021). Contextual dynamics related to resource availability and accesses are integral to understanding the root causes of conflicts. AfSol-oriented analysis explores the role of resource dynamics in shaping conflict and peace processes.

Contextual dynamics represent a central variable in AfSol-oriented analysis, reflecting the recognition that African conflicts are inherently complex and context-specific. Analyzing these dynamics allows for a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities presented by each conflict, guiding the application of AfSol principles in ways that are tailored to the specific context (Oshota and Wahab 2022; Rasool, Chen and Kashif 2026). Navigating the multifaceted contextual dynamics is essential for advancing sustainable peace and security in Africa.

Regional and International Involvement

Regional and international involvement is a pivotal variable in an AfSol-oriented analysis of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa (Kabia 2009). This variable

encompasses the roles, strategies, and impact of both regional African organizations and the international community in addressing conflicts on the continent.

Regional Organizations and Initiatives

Regional organizations such as the AU, the ECOWAS, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) play significant roles in conflict resolution efforts. AfSol-oriented analysis acknowledges the importance of regional organizations as key actors in African peace and security. It assesses their capacity, effectiveness, and alignment with AfSol principles. Additionally, the analysis examines regional initiatives, such as peacekeeping missions and mediation efforts, to understand their impact on conflict resolution processes (Anyang' Nyong'o 1998; Ceesay and Asmorowati 2026).

Balancing Regional Interests

One of the challenges within the variable of regional involvement is the need to balance regional interests with the principles of AfSol. Regional organizations often have agendas and interests that may not always align perfectly with AfSol's emphasis on local ownership and agency. AfSol-oriented analysis delves into the complexities of harmonizing regional objectives with AfSol principles and identifies areas where collaboration can be strengthened.

International Actors and Partnerships

International actors, including foreign governments, international organizations, and NGOs, are integral to African conflicts due to their resource contributions, diplomatic interventions, and mediation efforts. The AfSol-oriented analysis examines the extent to which these external actors align with AfSol principles. It assesses their impact on local agency, inclusivity, and the balance between external support and African ownership (Jackson 2001).

Sovereignty and Neocolonialism

An important consideration within this variable is the sovereignty of African nations and the risk of neocolonialism. AfSol principles emphasize African agency and ownership, but external involvement can sometimes raise questions about the extent to which African nations have control over their affairs (Sauti and Makaripe 2024). AfSol-oriented analysis critically examines the dynamics of sovereignty and neocolonialism within the context of regional and international involvement.

Balancing Local and External Expertise

Effective conflict resolution often requires a balance between local and external expertise. AfSol-oriented analysis explores how international actors contribute their expertise while respecting local knowledge and traditions (Addison 2001). This involves assessing the extent to which external actors collaborate with local

communities, incorporate indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, and empower local actors in decision-making processes.

Funding and Resources

Financial and logistical resources provided by international actors are crucial for supporting conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives in Africa. AfSol-oriented analysis evaluates the allocation of resources and their alignment with AfSol principles. It assesses whether funds are directed toward local capacity-building, community engagement, and sustainable solutions rather than reinforcing dependency on external assistance (Vhumbunu 2024).

Regional and international involvement constitutes a complex variable in AfSol-oriented analysis, reflecting the interconnectedness of African conflicts with the global stage. Analyzing this variable allows for a comprehensive understanding of the roles and impacts of regional and international actors in conflict resolution processes (Uzoigwe and Nwokolo 2025; Dosch and Becker 2025). Navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by external involvement is essential for advancing the principles of AfSol and achieving sustainable peace and security in Africa.

Analytical Processes and Methodologies

Qualitative vs. Quantitative Approaches

In the context of analyzing conflicts within Africa's peace and security sphere, the choice between qualitative and quantitative approaches carries significant implications for the alignment with AfSol principles. AfSol emphasizes local ownership, cultural sensitivity, and a nuanced understanding of conflict dynamics. Qualitative approaches align closely with these principles by offering in-depth insights into local contexts, perspectives, and the complexity of African conflicts (Dygas 2025). By employing qualitative methods such as content analysis, we have delved into the intricacies of each conflict, considering historical legacies, cultural factors, and local voices. This aligns with AfSol's emphasis on recognizing the agency of African nations and communities in shaping conflict resolution efforts.

Qualitative approaches are well-suited for capturing the local context, which is often crucial in AfSol-oriented analysis. This inclusivity aligns with AfSol's commitment to involving all segments of society in conflict resolution processes. Qualitative methods have enabled us to understand the historical, cultural, and social dynamics that underpin conflicts, providing a nuanced and context-specific understanding.

African conflicts are renowned for their complexity, involving a multitude of interconnected factors and dimensions (Vhumbunu 2024). Qualitative approaches excel at unpacking this complexity by offering a platform for exploring the multifaceted causes, drivers, and consequences of conflicts. We navigated the intricate web of political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics that shape conflicts, which is essential for an AfSol-oriented analysis. This aligns with AfSol's emphasis on recognizing and addressing the root causes of conflicts rather than applying one-size-fits-all solutions.

Case Studies and Comparative Analysis

Case Study: South Sudan's Independence and Ongoing Conflict (2011-2022)

Context: South Sudan's journey to independence in 2011 was celebrated globally, but the country has since experienced protracted conflict. A case study could investigate the role of external actors, regional dynamics, and local agencies in the conflict and explore how an AfSol-oriented approach could contribute to peace.

Case Study: The Niger Delta Conflict in Nigeria (2002-2022)

Context: The Niger Delta region in Nigeria has been marked by conflict over resource control and environmental degradation. A case study could focus on the impact of oil exploration, community-based peace initiatives, and the role of traditional leaders in conflict resolution.

Comparative Analysis: Peace Processes in East Africa (Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda)

Context: East Africa has witnessed diverse conflict scenarios over the past two decades. A comparative analysis could examine the varying approaches to peace processes, including international mediation, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, and the role of regional organizations like the Intergovernmental Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Comparative Analysis: Women's Participation in Peacebuilding Across African Conflicts

Context: Women's participation in peace processes and decision-making has gained recognition as a key element of successful conflict resolution. A comparative analysis could assess the degree to which women have been included in peace efforts in different African conflicts, exploring both successes and challenges. These case studies and comparative analyses would contribute to a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics in Africa's peace and security sphere, while also providing insights into how AfSol-oriented approaches can be applied to address complex challenges and promote sustainable peace on the continent.

Assessing Conflict Dynamics through an AfSol Lens

In the context of conflict analysis within Africa's peace and security sphere, assessing conflict dynamics through an AfSol lens represents a comprehensive and contextually sensitive approach (Adem 2004). This method aligns seamlessly with the core principles of AfSol, which emphasize the importance of local agency, context-specificity, and inclusivity in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts (Kostelyanets 2023; Ebegbulem 2011).

Holistic Understanding of Conflict Dynamics

AfSol-oriented analysis recognizes that conflicts are multifaceted and interconnected phenomena. Assessing conflict dynamics through an AfSol lens involves moving

beyond simplistic categorizations and examining the complex web of factors contributing to conflicts. This includes exploring political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions and their interplay. It also necessitates a nuanced understanding of how these dynamics evolve, as conflicts are rarely static.

Local Agency and Ownership

Central to the AfSol lens is the recognition of local agency and ownership in conflict resolution efforts. Assessing conflict dynamics through this perspective means prioritizing the voices, experiences, and perspectives of those directly impacted by conflicts. This includes engaging with local communities, CSOs, and traditional leaders to understand their priorities, grievances, and aspirations. It also means involving them in the decision-making processes that shape peace and security initiatives.

Inclusivity and Diverse Perspectives

AfSol principles emphasize inclusivity, and assessing conflict dynamics through an AfSol lens requires taking into account diverse perspectives. This involves recognizing the role of women, youth, marginalized groups, and civil society actors in shaping conflict dynamics and contributing to peace efforts. It also entails understanding how different identity markers, such as ethnicity, religion, and gender, intersect with conflict dynamics.

Local Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:

An AfSol lens places a strong emphasis on the utilization of indigenous and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. Assessing conflict dynamics through this perspective involves exploring how local communities address disputes and maintain social cohesion. This includes understanding the role of customary law, community elders, and local councils in managing conflicts and promoting reconciliation. It also means acknowledging the potential synergies between these local mechanisms and formal conflict resolution processes.

Challenges and Opportunities for AfSol Implementation:

Assessing conflict dynamics through an AfSol lens also involves identifying challenges and opportunities for implementing AfSol principles in practice. This includes recognizing the limitations of external interventions, the potential for neocolonial dynamics, and the complexities of navigating power imbalances. It also means identifying entry points for enhancing local ownership, building capacity at the community level, and ensuring that external actors align their strategies with local priorities.

The Role of Regional and International Actors

Finally, assessing conflict dynamics through an AfSol lens requires a critical examination of the roles played by regional and international actors (Ceesay and Asmorowati 2026). This involves assessing the impact of regional organizations, foreign governments, and international organizations on conflict dynamics. It also

entails scrutinizing the extent to which their interventions align with AfSol principles, such as supporting local agencies and context-specific solutions.

Assessing conflict dynamics through an AfSol lens offers a holistic and inclusive perspective that aligns with the principles of African-led Solutions (Fabo 2026). This approach recognizes the complexity of conflicts, prioritizes local agency and ownership, and seeks to integrate indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms into formal peace efforts. It also acknowledges the challenges and opportunities in implementing AfSol principles and the role of external actors. By adopting this lens, conflict analysis can contribute to more effective and sustainable peace and security strategies in Africa's diverse and dynamic context (Núñez 2024; Onyango Ouma 2026).

Policy implications of AfSol-oriented conflict analysis

Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice

The pursuit of effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa's peace and security sphere relies on a successful synthesis of theoretical frameworks and practical implementation (Ujunwa, Okoyeuzu and Kalu 2019). Bridging the gap between theory and practice is a pivotal aspect of the research topic, as it addresses the challenge of translating academic insights and policy recommendations into tangible actions that can address the complex conflicts that have marked the continent.

Theoretical Foundations

In the context of AfSol-oriented conflict analysis, theoretical frameworks serve as the intellectual underpinning for understanding the root causes, dynamics, and potential solutions to conflicts (Oshota and Wahab 2022; Rasool, Chen and Kashif 2026). These frameworks may draw from various disciplines such as political science, sociology, anthropology, and international relations. They offer essential perspectives on the complexities of conflicts in Africa and provide researchers with the conceptual tools needed to analyze and interpret data (Hammed 2015).

Practical Realities

While theories provide the groundwork, practical realities on the ground shape the dynamics of conflicts in Africa. Local political, social, and economic conditions, as well as the actions of various actors, influence the trajectory of conflicts and peacebuilding efforts. These practical realities can sometimes deviate significantly from theoretical models, necessitating a pragmatic and adaptable approach.

Challenges in Bridging the Gap

Bridging the gap between theory and practice in AfSol-oriented conflict analysis involves addressing several challenges:

Contextual Specificity: Theories often provide general principles, but the specificity of each African conflict requires tailored approaches. Researchers must adapt theories to the unique historical, cultural, and political contexts of individual conflicts.

Local Ownership: AfSol principles stress the importance of local ownership and agency. Bridging the gap requires empowering local actors to take the lead in implementing conflict resolution strategies based on theoretical insights.

Inclusivity: Bridging the gap necessitates ensuring that diverse voices, including those of women, youth, and marginalized groups, are heard and included in the design and implementation of peace initiatives.

Practical Constraints: Researchers must acknowledge the practical constraints of resources, political will, and external pressures that can affect the feasibility of applying theoretical solutions.

Strategies for Bridging the Gap

Participatory Research: Engaging directly with local communities and stakeholders during the research phase ensures that theoretical insights align with practical needs and realities.

Adaptive Approaches: Flexibility is key in bridging the gap. Researchers and practitioners should be willing to adapt strategies based on changing circumstances and feedback from local actors.

Evidence-Based Policy: Researchers can play a crucial role in translating theoretical findings into actionable policy recommendations that resonate with policymakers and practitioners.

Capacity Building: Building the capacity of local actors to understand and apply theoretical concepts can promote self-reliance and enhance the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Continuous monitoring and evaluation of peace initiatives allow for adjustments based on real-world outcomes, ensuring that theory and practice remain aligned.

Bridging the gap between theory and practice in AfSol-oriented conflict analysis is essential for realizing the principles of AfSol in addressing complex conflicts in Africa's peace and security sphere (Baker 2009). It involves a dynamic process of adapting theoretical frameworks to local contexts, empowering local actors, and navigating practical challenges. Successful bridging of this gap can lead to more effective, context-specific, and sustainable peace and security strategies that address the complex dynamics of African conflicts (Ceesay and Asmorowati 2026).

Lessons from AfSol-Oriented Analysis

AfSol-oriented analysis, grounded in principles of AfSol, offers a rich source of lessons that can significantly inform and enhance peace and security strategies in Africa's complex and diverse landscape. These lessons provide a roadmap for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers seeking to navigate the intricate web of conflicts that have characterized the continent over the past two decades (Fabo 2026).

Context-Specific Solutions

One of the paramount lessons from AfSol-oriented analysis is the imperative of context-specific solutions. Africa's myriad conflicts are deeply rooted in historical,

cultural, political, and socioeconomic contexts that vary greatly from one region to another. AfSol-oriented analysis underscores that effective peace and security strategies must be tailored to the unique dynamics of each conflict. Cookie-cutter approaches are inadequate; instead, solutions should emerge from an in-depth understanding of the specific challenges and opportunities presented by each context (Vhumbunu 2024).

Local Ownership and Agency

AfSol principles emphasize the central role of local ownership and agency in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Lessons from AfSol-oriented analysis stress that sustainable peace and security solutions must empower local actors, including communities, CSOs, and traditional leaders. When local stakeholders are engaged as active partners in the process, they become invested in the success of peace initiatives, which enhances the prospects of long-term stability (Adams et al. 2015).

Inclusivity and Diverse Perspectives

AfSol-oriented analysis highlights the importance of inclusivity, recognizing that peace and security efforts must incorporate diverse perspectives, including those of women, youth, and marginalized groups. These voices, often marginalized in traditional conflict resolution processes, offer unique insights and are vital to the development of comprehensive and enduring solutions (Frimpong 2025). The lesson here is that policies and strategies should be designed with a keen awareness of the gender, ethnic, religious, and generational dynamics within each context.

Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Many African societies have well-established indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, which AfSol-oriented analysis champions as valuable resources for peace. Lessons drawn from such analysis underscore the need to recognize, respect, and integrate these local mechanisms into formal conflict resolution processes. Indigenous approaches, often rooted in cultural norms and traditions, can offer efficient, locally acceptable, and sustainable solutions (Vhumbunu 2024).

Balancing External and Local Actors

AfSol-oriented analysis recognizes the role of external actors, including regional organizations, international bodies, and foreign governments, in supporting peace and security efforts in Africa. Lessons from this perspective emphasize the importance of a delicate balance. External actors should provide valuable resources, expertise, and mediation when needed but must do so while respecting the autonomy and agency of local actors (Mlambo, Aniche and Masuku 2024). Overreliance on external intervention can sometimes undermine AfSol principles.

Adaptive Strategies

Lastly, AfSol-oriented analysis highlights the need for adaptive strategies. Conflict dynamics can change rapidly, and lessons from AfSol-oriented analysis stress the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation. Policymakers and practitioners should be ready to adjust their strategies based on real-world outcomes and changing circumstances. Flexibility and openness to learning from both successes and failures are crucial.

AfSol-oriented analysis provides invaluable lessons for shaping effective peace and security strategies in Africa's dynamic landscape (Kanzian and Runggaldier SJ 2007). These lessons underscore the necessity of context-specific, locally owned, and inclusive approaches, alongside the integration of indigenous mechanisms and a balanced engagement with external actors. Embracing these lessons not only aligns with the principles of AfSol but also offers the potential for more sustainable, locally resonant, and effective peace and security initiatives on the continent (Akiba 2020; Sello 2026).

Case Studies of Successful AfSol Interventions

AfSol-oriented analysis has yielded numerous case studies that offer valuable insights into successful peace and security interventions across Africa. These case studies illuminate the practical application of AfSol principles and provide tangible evidence that locally driven solutions can yield sustainable peace outcomes. For this purpose, the following cases are important to consider: 1) The Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan (2005); 2) The Arusha Accords in Burundi (2000); 3) The Transformation of Mozambique (1992); 4) The M23 Rebellion in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2013); 5) The Algiers Peace Agreement in Mali (2015); 6) The Peace Agreement in Liberia (2003); 7) The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (2018).

1) The Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan (2005)

The Sudanese Civil War, one of Africa's longest conflicts, came to an end with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, leading to the eventual secession of South Sudan in 2011. The CPA involved a wide array of stakeholders, including rebel groups, government officials, and civil society actors. This inclusivity was instrumental in addressing the multifaceted nature of the conflict.

The CPA recognized the right to self-determination for South Sudan, exemplifying the AfSol principle of local ownership.

The CPA included mechanisms for resolving post-independence issues, demonstrating the need for adaptive strategies in peace agreements.

2) The Arusha Accords in Burundi (2000)

The Arusha Accords played a key role in ending the civil war in Burundi, a complex ethnic conflict, thereby facilitating the development of power-sharing mechanisms that included various ethnic groups. They emphasized the importance of inclusive governance structures and recognized the role of traditional dispute resolution

mechanisms, harmonizing them with formal justice systems. Importantly, international mediators facilitated the negotiations, emphasizing a balance between local ownership and external participation.

3) The Transformation of Mozambique (1992)

The civil war in Mozambique ended with the Rome General Peace Accords in 1992, and the Mozambican case highlights the effectiveness of dialogue as a means of conflict resolution, consistent with AfSol principles.

The successful reintegration of former combatants and post-conflict reconstruction efforts were crucial in preventing a relapse into violence. Crucially, local reconciliation initiatives and community-led peacebuilding played a significant role in consolidating peace.

4) The M23 Rebellion in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2013)

The M23 Rebellion in the DRC ended with a peace agreement in 2013, as the participation of regional actors, particularly the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), played a decisive role in resolving the conflict.

The peace agreement demonstrated the importance of balancing external support with local organizations to ensure long-term stability, addressing not only security issues but also the political, social, and economic aspects of the conflict.

5) The Algiers Peace Agreement in Mali (2015)

The conflict in Mali arose from a complex interplay of ethnic tensions, jihadist extremism, and governance challenges. The Algiers Peace Agreement sought to address these challenges and emphasized the importance of decentralized governance and local decision-making, consistent with AfSol's principles of local ownership.

The process involved multiple stakeholders, including armed groups, regional actors, and local communities, reflecting AfSol's commitment to inclusiveness. In this sense, recognizing the cultural and religious dimensions of the conflict was integral to the successful negotiations and implementation of the agreement.

6) The Peace Agreement in Liberia (2003)

The Liberian civil war, characterized by significant violence and instability, ended with a comprehensive peace agreement. In this context, women's participation in the peace process and the inclusion of gender-sensitive provisions in the agreement underscored the importance of gender inclusiveness.

The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission contributed to addressing past human rights violations and fostered reconciliation. Importantly, a change in leadership and the holding of democratic elections played a significant role, both of which constituted lasting steps toward ensuring political stability.

7) The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (2018)

The ongoing conflict in South Sudan has led to significant humanitarian crises. The 2018 peace agreement aimed to end the violence and restore stability, focusing on

power-sharing mechanisms and the importance of decentralized governance, reflecting AfSol principles. Efforts to engage local communities and traditional leaders in reconciliation processes were vital to building sustainable peace. Ensuring humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas was crucial to addressing the conflict's severe humanitarian consequences.

These examples of successful AfSol interventions highlight the viability and effectiveness of AfSol in resolving complex conflicts. They underscore the importance of inclusiveness, local ownership, adaptive strategies, and the integration of local mechanisms (Ojakorotu and Adeleke 2018). While each example has its own unique characteristics, taken together they highlight the potential of peace and security initiatives based on AfSol principles to achieve lasting stability in diverse conflict-ridden African contexts. They emphasize the importance of inclusiveness, local governance, gender sensitivity, transitional justice, and adaptive strategies as integral components of successful AfSol interventions. Taken together, these examples confirm the potential of African-led solutions to resolve complex conflicts on the continent. These examples serve as reference points for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers seeking to contribute to sustainable peace on the continent (Munyao, Manthi and Ndirangu 2025).

Challenges and Failures: Learning Opportunities

While successful AfSol interventions provide valuable insights, it is equally important to scrutinize the challenges and failures encountered in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. These instances offer critical learning opportunities that can shape future strategies and refine the application of AfSol principles (May et al. 2021).

Understanding the Complexity of Conflict Dynamics

Challenges and failures in AfSol-oriented interventions often highlight the intricate and evolving nature of conflict dynamics (Uzoigwe and Nwokolo 2025). Conflicts in Africa are rarely one-dimensional; they involve a complex interplay of political, economic, social, cultural, and historical factors. Failures can occur when interventions oversimplify these complexities or fail to adapt to evolving situations (Mdhluli 2025). These challenges underscore the need for conflict analysis to continuously evolve and incorporate a deeper understanding of context-specific dynamics.

External Actors and Neocolonialism

One recurrent challenge is the role of external actors, including regional organizations and international powers, in African conflicts. Failures in AfSol interventions often point to instances where external actors exert undue influence or prioritize their interests over those of local populations. Learning from these experiences underscores the importance of ensuring that external engagement aligns with AfSol principles, emphasizing local agency, ownership, and the prevention of neocolonial dynamics.

Fragmentation and Spoilers

Challenges can arise due to the fragmentation of armed groups and the presence of spoilers who seek to undermine peace processes. Failures can occur when mediators and policymakers underestimate the complexity of intra-group dynamics or do not adequately address the interests of spoilers. These challenges emphasize the need for nuanced approaches that engage with all relevant stakeholders and anticipate potential spoilers' actions.

Economic and Resource Factors

Resource-driven conflicts often pose significant challenges in Africa. Failures can result from inadequate management of resource-related grievances or the inability to address the economic drivers of conflicts effectively. Learning from these challenges underscores the importance of incorporating economic dimensions into conflict analysis and addressing resource-related grievances in peacebuilding strategies.

Ethnic and Identity Dynamics

Ethnic and identity-based conflicts remain prevalent on the continent. Challenges and failures may occur when interventions do not adequately consider the complexities of these dynamics. Understanding the intersections of ethnicity, religion, and culture in conflicts is vital to developing effective AfSol-oriented strategies that promote inclusivity and reconciliation.

Conflict Transformation vs. Resolution

In some cases, conflicts may not be fully resolved but rather transformed into less violent forms. While this can be seen as a success in reducing violence, it may not address the underlying causes. Learning opportunities arise from recognizing that some conflicts may require long-term, adaptive approaches rather than immediate resolution. Conflict transformation may be a more realistic goal in certain contexts.

Sustainability and Local Capacity Building

The sustainability of peace remains a significant challenge in AfSol-oriented interventions. Failures often highlight the need for a stronger focus on building local capacity, including strengthening institutions, governance, and security structures. Long-term success hinges on empowering local actors to take ownership of peace processes and maintain stability.

Challenges and failures in AfSol-oriented conflict analysis are not obstacles to progress but rather opportunities for learning and improvement. They illuminate the complexities of African conflicts and emphasize the need for adaptable, context-specific, and inclusive approaches (Sauti and Makaripe 2024). By recognizing these challenges and actively addressing them, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can refine AfSol principles and contribute to more effective, sustainable, and locally resonant peace and security strategies in Africa's diverse and dynamic context (Abrahamsen 2013).

Recommendations for Policymakers and Practitioners

1) What: Developing AfSol-Centric Policy Frameworks

The development of AfSol-centric policy frameworks represents a critical step towards aligning peace and security efforts in Africa with the principles of AfSol. Such frameworks are instrumental in translating AfSol-oriented analysis and lessons into actionable policies and strategies (Fabo 2026). In this analysis, we explore the significance of developing AfSol-centric policy frameworks and the key elements involved.

Local Ownership and Agency. AfSol-centric policy frameworks prioritize the principle of local ownership and agency. They recognize that sustainable peace can only be achieved when local actors are actively engaged in shaping policies and strategies. These frameworks emphasize the need to empower communities, civil society organizations, and traditional leaders to participate in decision-making processes. Local ownership fosters a sense of responsibility and ensures that policies are rooted in the realities and priorities of affected populations.

Contextual Sensitivity. One of the fundamental aspects of AfSol-centric policy frameworks is contextual sensitivity. They acknowledge that each conflict in Africa is unique, and shaped by historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors. These frameworks require policymakers to conduct thorough conflict analysis to understand the specific dynamics of a given context. Contextual sensitivity ensures that policies are tailored to address the root causes and drivers of conflict in a way that resonates with local communities.

Inclusivity. Inclusivity is another cornerstone of AfSol-centric policy frameworks. These frameworks emphasize the importance of including diverse voices in peace and security processes. They highlight the roles of women, youth, and marginalized groups and strive to ensure their meaningful participation. Inclusivity goes beyond token representation; it entails creating spaces for these voices to influence policy decisions and strategies.

Integration of Indigenous Mechanisms. AfSol-centric policy frameworks recognize the value of integrating indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms into formal strategies. They acknowledge that many African societies possess well-established traditional practices for resolving disputes and maintaining peace. Policymakers are encouraged to work in tandem with local leaders and customary institutions to incorporate these mechanisms. This not only respects local traditions but also leverages existing resources for peace.

Balanced External Engagement. External actors, including regional organizations and international partners, play a role in AfSol-centric policy frameworks, but in a balanced manner. These frameworks emphasize that external engagement should complement local efforts rather than overshadow them. Policymakers are tasked with aligning external support with the priorities and strategies identified by local actors. This approach prevents the imposition of external agendas and promotes a more harmonious partnership.

Adaptive Strategies. AfSol-centric policy frameworks recognize the dynamic nature of conflicts in Africa. They emphasize the need for policies and strategies that

are adaptable and responsive to changing circumstances. Policymakers are encouraged to continually assess the effectiveness of interventions and make adjustments based on real-world outcomes. This adaptive approach allows policies to evolve alongside conflict dynamics.

Long-term Sustainability. Sustainability is a core focus of AfSol-centric policy frameworks. They emphasize the importance of policies that go beyond short-term peace agreements and address the long-term structural issues that contribute to conflicts. Policymakers are tasked with building the capacity of local institutions, promoting good governance, and investing in development initiatives that underpin lasting stability.

The development of AfSol-centric policy frameworks represents a pivotal shift in how peace and security are approached in Africa (Addison 2001). These frameworks prioritize local ownership, contextual sensitivity, inclusivity, and the integration of indigenous mechanisms. They promote balanced external engagement, adaptive strategies, and long-term sustainability. By adopting these principles and actively developing AfSol-centric policies, policymakers can contribute to more effective, sustainable, and locally resonant peace and security strategies in Africa's diverse and dynamic context (Dube and Chisale 2023).

2) Why: Advantages and Benefits of AfSol Approaches

AfSol approaches, grounded in principles of AfSol, offer several distinct advantages and benefits that make them crucial in addressing conflicts and promoting peace and security in Africa's diverse landscape (Hofisi, Moroe and Eramah 2025). These approaches prioritize local agency, inclusivity, and context-specificity, yielding tangible benefits that contribute to sustainable peace.

One of the primary advantages of AfSol's approach is the emphasis on local ownership and empowerment. By actively involving local communities, civil society organizations, and traditional leaders in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts, AfSol approaches ensure that policies and strategies are designed and implemented by those who understand the nuances of the conflict's context. This local ownership not only fosters a sense of responsibility but also bolsters the legitimacy of peace processes.

AfSol approaches prioritize contextual sensitivity, recognizing that each conflict in Africa is unique, and shaped by its historical, cultural, and socioeconomic context. By tailoring strategies to specific contexts, AfSol approaches increase their relevance and effectiveness. This adaptability allows policymakers and practitioners to address the root causes and drivers of conflict more precisely (Kadende-Kaiser and Kaiser 2003).

AfSol approaches champion inclusivity, ensuring that a wide range of voices is heard and considered in peace and security processes. This inclusivity extends to women, youth, and marginalized groups, who are often disproportionately affected by conflicts. The benefit is twofold: it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict's dynamics and fosters social cohesion by addressing grievances and promoting reconciliation among diverse communities.

One of the strengths of AfSol's approaches is the integration of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. These mechanisms, deeply rooted in African traditions and

culture, offer efficient and locally acceptable ways to manage disputes and maintain peace. By incorporating indigenous practices into formal strategies, AfSol approaches harness the wisdom and resources of local communities.

AfSol approaches advocate for a balanced external engagement. While recognizing the value of international support, they stress that external actors should complement, not overshadow, local efforts. This balanced approach ensures that external interventions align with local priorities and strategies, preventing the imposition of external agendas and neocolonial dynamics.

AfSol approaches promote adaptive strategies that can evolve alongside changing conflict dynamics. This flexibility allows policymakers and practitioners to respond effectively to unforeseen challenges and seize emerging opportunities. The ability to adjust strategies based on real-world outcomes enhances their relevance and impact.

Ultimately, the central benefit of AfSol's approaches is their potential to foster sustainable peace and development. By prioritizing local ownership, context-specificity, inclusivity, and the integration of indigenous mechanisms, AfSol approaches contribute to long-term stability (Ojakorotu and Adeleke 2018). They empower local actors to address the structural issues that underlie conflicts, promote good governance, and invest in development initiatives that create the conditions for lasting peace.

AfSol approaches offer distinct advantages and benefits that position them as a vital framework for addressing conflicts and advancing peace and security in Africa. These approaches prioritize local agency, context-specificity, inclusivity, and the integration of indigenous mechanisms (Adem 2004). They promote balanced external engagement, adaptive strategies, and, ultimately, sustainable peace and development. By embracing AfSol principles, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can contribute to more effective, locally resonant, and enduring peace and security strategies in Africa's diverse and dynamic context (Brewer 2011).

3) How: Implementing AfSol-Oriented Strategies

The successful implementation of AfSol-oriented strategies is essential for translating the principles of AfSol into tangible actions that can effectively address conflicts and promote peace and security in Africa (Kuperman 2015). Here, we explore the 'how' aspect of implementing AfSol-oriented strategies, focusing on key steps and considerations.

At the heart of implementing AfSol-oriented strategies is the active engagement of local stakeholders. This involves local communities, civil society organizations, traditional leaders, and grassroots movements. The first step is to create spaces for meaningful participation where these stakeholders can contribute to decision-making processes. Policymakers and practitioners must listen to the voices of those directly affected by the conflict and respect their agency in shaping solutions.

Implementing AfSol-oriented strategies begins with a comprehensive understanding of the conflict's context. Policymakers and practitioners must conduct thorough conflict analysis that delves into the historical, cultural, political, and socioeconomic factors driving the conflict. This analysis informs the development of tailored strategies that address the specific root causes and dynamics of the conflict.

AfSol-oriented strategies prioritize inclusivity. This means involving a diverse range of actors, including women, youth, and marginalized groups, in the development of policies and strategies. Inclusive policy development ensures that the perspectives and needs of all segments of society are considered, leading to more comprehensive and effective solutions.

Implementing AfSol-oriented strategies involves integrating indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms into formal approaches. This requires collaboration with local leaders and customary institutions to ensure that traditional practices are respected and harmonized with formal justice systems. Indigenous mechanisms offer efficient and locally accepted ways to manage disputes and maintain peace.

While external support can be valuable, it must be balanced in AfSol-oriented strategies. Policymakers and practitioners should ensure that external engagement complements local efforts rather than overshadowing them. This involves aligning external support with local priorities and strategies and avoiding the imposition of external agendas.

AfSol-oriented strategies should be adaptive and flexible. Conflict dynamics can change rapidly, requiring adjustments to strategies. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential to track progress and make informed decisions about adapting interventions. Flexibility allows strategies to remain relevant and responsive to emerging challenges.

Implementing AfSol-oriented strategies involves building the capacity of local actors, institutions, and communities. This includes training local leaders in conflict resolution, governance, and peacebuilding. Capacity building empowers local actors to take ownership of peace processes and ensures the sustainability of interventions.

AfSol-oriented strategies prioritize long-term sustainability. Policymakers and practitioners should focus on addressing the underlying structural issues that fuel conflicts, promoting good governance, and investing in development initiatives that create the conditions for lasting peace. Short-term gains must be aligned with a broader, sustainable vision.

A crucial aspect of implementing AfSol-oriented strategies is a robust system of monitoring, evaluation, and learning. This involves regularly assessing the impact of interventions and using data-driven insights to make informed decisions. Learning from both successes and failures is essential for refining strategies and adapting to evolving conflict dynamics.

Implementing AfSol-oriented strategies requires a holistic and participatory approach that engages local stakeholders, prioritizes context-specific analysis, and integrates indigenous mechanisms (Ceesay and Asmorowati 2026). It emphasizes inclusive policy development, balanced external support, adaptive implementation, capacity building, and a long-term focus on sustainability. By following these steps and considerations, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can effectively translate AfSol principles into practical actions that contribute to sustainable peace and security in Africa's dynamic and diverse context (Oshota and Wahab 2022; Rasool, Chen and Kashif 2026).

The successful implementation of AfSol-oriented approaches in conflict analysis, peace, and security efforts in Africa is not without its challenges (Dygas 2025).

Overcoming these obstacles and building partnerships is crucial to advancing the principles of AfSol and realizing sustainable peace. In this analysis, we explore the key obstacles and strategies for overcoming them.

Sustaining AfSol-oriented initiatives, which prioritize AfSol in conflict analysis and peace and security efforts, hinges significantly on securing adequate funding and mobilizing essential resources. This critical aspect of AfSol-oriented strategies ensures that initiatives have the financial means and resources necessary for effective implementation (May et al. 2021). In this analysis, we explore the challenges and strategies associated with funding and resource mobilization in AfSol-oriented approaches.

Challenges in Funding and Resource Mobilization

One of the key challenges in funding AfSol-oriented initiatives is the competition for resources within Africa. Governments and organizations often allocate resources to a wide range of development and security priorities, making it challenging to secure dedicated funding for AfSol projects (Abrahamsen 2013).

Many African countries face limitations in their domestic resource mobilization capacities. Economic constraints, low revenue collection, and other financial challenges can restrict the availability of resources for peace and security initiatives.

Some AfSol-oriented initiatives heavily rely on international donors for funding. Overreliance on external funding can lead to a lack of sustainability and autonomy, as external donors may impose their agendas and priorities.

Conflict analysis and peacebuilding efforts in Africa often involve complex and protracted conflict dynamics. This complexity can make it challenging to accurately estimate the resources required and secure long-term funding commitments.

Resource allocation within countries or organizations may not always align with AfSol principles. Bureaucratic processes and decision-making structures can hinder the prioritization of AfSol-oriented strategies.

Advocacy efforts aimed at policymakers, donors, and the public can raise awareness about the importance of AfSol-oriented initiatives. Highlighting the potential for sustainable peace and security can garner support and secure funding commitments (Amaglo-Mensah and Nesterova 2025).

Encouraging African governments to prioritize funding for peace and security initiatives is crucial. This can be achieved through fiscal reforms, improved revenue collection, and the allocation of a portion of national budgets to AfSol projects.

Reducing dependence on a single funding source, such as external donors, is essential. AfSol initiatives should explore diverse funding sources, including partnerships with private sector entities, philanthropic organizations, and regional financing mechanisms.

Seeking grants from international donors and forging partnerships with organizations and institutions that share AfSol's objectives can provide the necessary financial resources. Grants can be used to kick-start initiatives and leverage further funding.

Enhancing the financial management and grant-writing skills of local organizations and institutions involved in AfSol initiatives can improve their ability to secure funding and manage resources effectively.

Transparent and accountable budgeting practices are essential. Clear and well-documented budgets can instill confidence in donors and funders, making them more likely to commit resources.

Conflict Analysis for Resource Estimation: Conducting in-depth conflict analysis to estimate resource needs accurately is critical. Accurate resource estimation helps in securing the right amount of funding and resources for AfSol-oriented projects.

Demonstrating the impact and effectiveness of AfSol initiatives through monitoring and evaluation is crucial for maintaining donor trust and securing ongoing funding.

Funding and resource mobilization represent pivotal components in sustaining AfSol-oriented initiatives for conflict analysis, peace, and security in Africa. Challenges such as competing priorities, limited domestic resources, and donor dependence must be addressed through strategic advocacy, diversified funding sources, and improved financial management. By employing these strategies, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can ensure the continuity and success of AfSol-oriented approaches, contributing to lasting peace and security on the continent (Munyao, Manthi and Ndirangu 2025).

Benefits, Importance of Building Trust and Cooperation

Strengthening trust and collaboration among stakeholders is a cornerstone of successful AfSol-oriented approaches in conflict analysis, peacebuilding, and security efforts in Africa. These approaches prioritize AfSol and local ownership, making trust and collaboration essential for achieving sustainable peace. In this analysis, we explore the challenges, benefits, and strategies associated with building trust and fostering collaboration in AfSol-oriented initiatives (Smith and Mabera 2024).

Historical legacies of conflict, colonialism, and power imbalances can lead to deep-seated mistrust among different actors involved in peace and security efforts. Overcoming historical mistrust requires time, patience, and dialogue (Fisher et al. 2013). Stakeholders often have varying interests and priorities in conflict-affected regions. Competition for resources, influence, and control can hinder collaboration and trust-building efforts.

Failure to include all stakeholders, including marginalized groups, in peace processes can undermine trust and cooperation. Exclusion can perpetuate grievances and deepen divisions.

Effective communication is essential for building trust and cooperation. Language barriers, poor information sharing, and misunderstandings can hinder cooperation and understanding.

Conflict zones can be fraught with security risks that can discourage participants from joint efforts due to concerns for their own safety and the safety of their citizens. In this sense, building trust and cooperation ensures that a wide range of voices and perspectives are included in peace and security processes. Such inclusiveness promotes representation and fosters a sense of ownership among stakeholders (Brewer 2011).

This is why trust is a fundamental component of successful conflict resolution, and joint efforts based on trust are more likely to lead to mutually acceptable solutions and long-term peace. On the one hand, trust between partners enhances resource mobilization, with donors and sponsors more likely to support initiatives that demonstrate close cooperation and a unified approach. On the other hand, trust and cooperation contribute to the sustainability of peace and security efforts. When local actors, civil society, and international partners collaborate effectively, initiatives are more likely to be sustainable and adapt to changing circumstances.

Strengthening trust and cooperation can also play a significant role in preventing conflicts before they escalate, and early warning systems and joint conflict prevention strategies are based on trust and cooperation among participants (Kabia 2009).

Engage in inclusive dialogue that brings together all relevant stakeholders, including marginalized groups. Create spaces for open and honest discussions to address grievances and build understanding.

Promote conflict transformation rather than mere resolution. Collaborative efforts should focus on addressing the underlying causes and drivers of conflict to foster sustainable peace.

Utilize impartial mediators and facilitators who can bridge divides and help build trust among conflicting parties. These mediators should be trusted by all sides and have a deep understanding of local dynamics.

Build the capacity of local organizations and institutions to actively participate in peace and security efforts. This empowerment fosters a sense of ownership and strengthens collaboration.

Maintain transparency in decision-making processes, resource allocation, and the implementation of initiatives. Transparency builds trust and confidence among partners.

Conduct comprehensive conflict analysis to understand the root causes and dynamics of conflicts. This analysis forms the basis for collaborative strategies that address specific context-related challenges.

Implement security measures to mitigate risks associated with collaborative efforts in conflict zones. Ensure the safety and protection of participants and partners.

Building trust and collaboration is an ongoing process. Continuously engage with stakeholders, communicate progress, and adapt strategies based on feedback and changing circumstances.

Building trust and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders is integral to the success of AfSol-oriented approaches in conflict analysis, peacebuilding, and security efforts in Africa (Akinola et al. 2017). While challenges such as historical mistrust and competing interests may exist, the benefits of inclusivity, conflict resolution, resource mobilization, sustainability, and conflict prevention make these efforts indispensable (Chekol and Beshi 2026; Engel 2023). By employing strategies that promote dialogue, transparency, capacity building, and security measures, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can strengthen AfSol-oriented partnerships and contribute to lasting peace and security on the continent.

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms serve as the backbone of AfSol-oriented approaches in addressing conflicts and promoting peace and security in Africa. These mechanisms play a pivotal role in assessing the impact, effectiveness, and sustainability of initiatives that prioritize AfSol. In essence, they are the eyes and ears of the implementation process, helping stakeholders navigate the complex terrain of conflict analysis and peacebuilding (Kostelyanets 2023; Ebegbulem 2011). One of the primary reasons for the importance of M&E mechanisms is their role in accountability. By establishing clear benchmarks and indicators, M&E mechanisms ensure transparency in the implementation of AfSol-oriented initiatives (Cho 2025). They serve as a means of tracking progress and ensuring that stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society, and local communities, uphold their commitments and responsibilities. This accountability fosters trust and confidence among stakeholders, as they can see tangible evidence of the impact of their efforts.

Another crucial aspect of M&E mechanisms is their capacity for adaptive management. Conflict dynamics are often fluid and unpredictable, requiring flexibility in strategies and interventions. M&E mechanisms provide a continuous feedback loop, offering insights into what works and what doesn't. When inefficiencies or challenges are identified, stakeholders can make informed, data-driven decisions to adjust their approaches in real time. This adaptability is essential for staying relevant and effective in dynamic conflict environments (Apuuli 2020). Moreover, M&E mechanisms facilitate a culture of learning and improvement. AfSol-oriented initiatives, like any complex endeavor, will experience both successes and setbacks. M&E allows stakeholders to analyze these experiences systematically, learning from their mistakes and building on their achievements. Over time, this iterative process leads to more effective strategies and a deeper understanding of the intricacies of conflict dynamics.

Data generated by M&E mechanisms also play a critical role in evidence-based decision-making. Policymakers and practitioners can rely on empirical data and facts rather than assumptions or intuition when shaping their strategies. This evidence-based approach enhances the precision and effectiveness of interventions, ensuring that resources are allocated where they will have the most significant impact. While the benefits of M&E mechanisms in AfSol-oriented approaches are evident, challenges do exist (Kostelyanets 2023; Ebegbulem 2011). Resource constraints, such as limited funding and human resources, can hinder the establishment and operation of robust M&E systems. In conflict-affected areas, data collection may be particularly challenging due to security risks and restricted access. Complex conflict dynamics further complicate the design of M&E frameworks, as they must capture the ever-evolving nature of conflicts. Additionally, cultural sensitivity is paramount in data collection to navigate local customs and traditions respectfully (Adams et al. 2015).

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are indispensable components of AfSol-oriented approaches in conflict analysis, peacebuilding, and security efforts in Africa (Vhumbunu 2024). Their significance lies in ensuring accountability, enabling adaptive management, promoting a culture of learning, facilitating evidence-based decision-making, and enhancing the overall effectiveness of initiatives. While challenges may persist, strategies that prioritize clear indicators, diverse data collection methods,

capacity building, cultural sensitivity, regular reporting, and adaptive management can help stakeholders overcome these hurdles and contribute to lasting peace and security on the continent (Chekol and Beshi 2026).

Conclusion and discussion

In this article, I have examined in detail the multifaceted AfSol landscape and its implications for the analysis of conflict, peacebuilding, and security efforts in Africa. To conclude this comprehensive analysis, it is necessary to summarize the key findings of this important topic.

One fundamental finding is the evolution of the term “African-led Solutions” and its significance within the African context. We traced its historical origins, conceptual development, and its emergence as a unique approach to addressing conflicts on the continent. AfSol represents a departure from traditional top-down approaches and places local ownership, inclusivity, and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms at the forefront of peace and security efforts (Abegunrin 2009). Additionally, our analysis revealed the critical role of AfSol in bridging the gap between theory and practice. AfSol-oriented approaches align closely with existing theoretical frameworks while emphasizing the need for context-specific analysis and the inclusion of local actors (Fabo 2026). This convergence with existing theories and frameworks highlights the complementarity of AfSol with established peacebuilding paradigms. Moreover, our examination of AfSol’s synergies with regional initiatives underscored the importance of collaboration among African states and regional organizations. AfSol aligns with the AU’s Agenda 2063 and other regional strategies, emphasizing the need for cohesive and coordinated efforts to address conflicts on the continent effectively. However, it is essential to acknowledge that AfSol-oriented approaches are not without their critiques and challenges. We identified some of the primary concerns, including the potential for external interference, resistance to change within existing power structures, and the need for robust conflict analysis to inform AfSol strategies (Ujunwa, Okoyeuzu and Kalu 2019). These critiques and challenges offer valuable insights into the complexities of implementing AfSol-oriented approaches. In the realm of policy development, our analysis revealed the importance of defining key variables in AfSol-oriented analysis. Local agency and ownership emerged as key variables that drive the effectiveness of AfSol’s approaches. The active engagement of local stakeholders and their empowerment in decision-making processes are pivotal for sustainable peace and security outcomes (Vhumbunu 2024).

Contextual dynamics also play a significant role in AfSol-oriented analysis. The unique social, political, cultural, and economic factors of each conflict context necessitate context-specific strategies that address the root causes and dynamics of conflicts effectively. Furthermore, regional and international involvement should be approached with caution, ensuring that external actors align their agendas with local priorities and strategies. In the domain of case studies and comparative analysis, our findings highlighted the importance of leveraging both approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of conflict dynamics and the effectiveness of AfSol interventions (Dube and Chisale 2023). Comparative analysis allows for the identification of best practices and lessons learned that can inform future initiatives.

Finally, our examination of AfSol-oriented policy frameworks and lessons learned underscored the need for practical recommendations that policymakers and practitioners can readily implement. Successful AfSol interventions were identified through case studies, highlighting the importance of adaptive management, local ownership, and inclusive processes (Amaglo-Mensah and Nesterova 2025).

This paper has shed light on the evolution, theoretical foundations, policy implications, and practical applications of AfSol-oriented approaches to conflict analysis in Africa's peace and security sphere. By recapping these key findings, we offer a comprehensive overview of the insights gained from our exploration of this vital topic, with the hope that they will inform and contribute to more effective and locally resonant peace and security strategies on the African continent. As we look to the future of conflict resolution in Africa, it becomes increasingly clear that embracing AfSol is not merely an option but a necessity. Our analysis of AfSol-oriented approaches throughout this working paper has highlighted their potential to transform conflict resolution on the continent. To move forward effectively, it is essential to consider how AfSol can be integrated into African conflict resolution strategies, policies, and practices (Jeong 2008).

First and foremost, the way forward involves a deep commitment to AfSol principles. Local ownership, inclusivity, and the empowerment of local actors should be at the core of all conflict resolution efforts (Munyao, Manthi and Ndirangu 2025). This means recognizing the value of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, traditional leadership structures, and community-based initiatives. Policymakers, international organizations, and practitioners must actively engage with and support these local actors, valuing their insights and contributions. Moreover, the integration of AfSol should be reflected in the development of policy frameworks and guidelines. African governments and regional organizations need to formulate and implement policies that prioritize AfSol-oriented approaches. This includes allocating resources for capacity-building, conflict analysis, and peacebuilding initiatives that actively involve local communities. These policies should also emphasize transparency, accountability, and the protection of human rights.

Collaboration is another key aspect of the way forward (Abrahamsen 2013). African states, regional organizations, civil society, and international partners should work in harmony to implement AfSol approaches effectively. Regional initiatives should align with the AU's Agenda 2063, ensuring that efforts are coordinated and coherent. This collaboration also extends to partnerships with international actors, where external support should complement and not override AfSol strategies.

Incorporating AfSol into conflict resolution practices requires a shift in mindset. Practitioners, researchers, and policymakers should be open to learning from local communities and adapting strategies accordingly. This may involve unconventional approaches, such as incorporating traditional conflict resolution mechanisms into formal processes or leveraging local knowledge and expertise to inform intervention strategies. Openness to innovation and a willingness to break from traditional top-down models is vital.

Education and awareness are essential components of the way forward. Building an understanding of AfSol principles and their effectiveness among both local

communities and international actors is crucial. Educational programs and awareness campaigns can help dispel misconceptions, promote cultural sensitivity, and foster support for AfSol-oriented approaches (Núñez 2024; Onyango Ouma 2026).

Finally, the way forward demands a commitment to continuous monitoring and evaluation. M&E mechanisms should be integrated into every stage of conflict resolution initiatives, ensuring that interventions remain adaptive, effective, and accountable. Regular assessments should be conducted to measure the impact of AfSol strategies and guide necessary adjustments.

In conclusion, embracing AfSol in African conflict resolution is a path that holds great promise for lasting peace and security on the continent (Cho 2025). The way forward involves a comprehensive commitment to AfSol principles, the development of supportive policies, collaboration among stakeholders, a shift in mindset towards inclusivity and innovation, educational efforts, and a dedication to monitoring and evaluation. By collectively working towards these objectives, Africa can harness the potential of AfSol and pave the way for more sustainable and locally resonant conflict resolution practices.

In closing, this working paper has provided a comprehensive analysis of “Toward an AfSol-Oriented Approach to Conflict Analysis in Africa’s Peace and Security Sphere (2002-2022).” Throughout our exploration, we have delved into the evolution of the term ‘AfSol’, its theoretical and practical implications, policy recommendations, and the way forward for integrating AfSol into African conflict resolution efforts (Mdhluli 2025). As we conclude, it is imperative to reflect on the significance of this research and consider the future directions it points toward.

First and foremost, our analysis underscores the critical importance of embracing AfSol in addressing conflicts on the African continent. AfSol-oriented approaches represent a paradigm shift that prioritizes local ownership, inclusivity, and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. This shift has the potential to transform the landscape of conflict resolution by ensuring that solutions are contextually relevant, sustainable, and reflective of the aspirations and needs of local communities (Adams et al. 2015).

The future directions that emerge from this research are multifaceted. They require concerted efforts from African governments, regional organizations, international partners, civil society, researchers, and practitioners. These directions encompass:

- **Policy Implementation:** African states and regional organizations should take concrete steps to implement policies and frameworks that promote AfSol-oriented approaches. This involves allocating resources, building capacity, and fostering an environment conducive to local agency and ownership.
- **Capacity Building:** Investing in capacity building at the local level is essential. Empowering communities, civil society organizations, and local leaders to actively engage in conflict resolution processes is a cornerstone of AfSol’s success.
- **Research and Knowledge Sharing:** Researchers and academics have a crucial role in furthering our understanding of AfSol. Future research should focus on documenting best practices, conducting in-depth case studies, and sharing knowledge to inform evidence-based decision-making.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Advocacy efforts should continue to raise awareness

about the merits of AfSol and its potential to transform conflict resolution in Africa. Advocates can engage with policymakers, international partners, and local communities to garner support.

- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Building strong collaborations among African states, regional organizations, civil society, and international actors is vital. Partnerships should be grounded in mutual respect, shared objectives, and a commitment to AfSol principles.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The integration of robust M&E mechanisms into conflict resolution initiatives should be a priority. These mechanisms ensure that interventions remain adaptive, effective, and accountable.
- **Education and Training:** Educational programs and training initiatives should be developed to equip practitioners and policymakers with the knowledge and skills needed to implement AfSol-oriented approaches effectively.
- **Innovation and Experimentation:** Embracing innovation and experimentation in conflict resolution is essential. This may involve piloting new approaches, incorporating traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, and adapting strategies to fit the specific context of each conflict.

In the years to come, the successful integration of AfSol into African conflict resolution practices has the potential to yield transformative results. It holds the promise of not only mitigating conflicts but also building resilient societies, fostering social cohesion, and promoting sustainable development. The road ahead may be challenging, but the principles of AfSol offer a beacon of hope for a more peaceful and prosperous Africa.

In conclusion, I would like to add that this article is a scholarly call to action. The future of conflict resolution in Africa lies in adopting AfSol-oriented approaches, learning from the experiences of local communities, and working together to build a continent where peace and security reign. This is a future where the voices of Africa's diverse peoples are heard, valued, and empowered to support their quest for lasting peace.

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Ethics Statement

The author confirms that this study was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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STRATEGIC DIVERSIFICATION OF CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN AFRICA: THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHINA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article examines the strategic diversification of China's foreign policy in Africa and its operationalization in Nigeria, the continent's largest economy and most populous market. It asks how China converts economic engagement - trade, investment, infrastructure, and development assistance - into longer-term political and normative influence, and treats soft power and public diplomacy as analytical instruments rather than descriptive labels. Drawing on a qualitative case study and descriptive data from authoritative sources (SAIS-CARI, UNCTAD, the World Bank, FOCAC documents, and Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics), the article argues that China's leverage rests on a diversified, bundled model in which infrastructure finance, market access, technical standards, and cultural and digital cooperation are deployed jointly and reinforced through FOCAC and the Belt and Road Initiative. The findings show deepening but asymmetric ties: a persistent Nigerian trade deficit and hydrocarbon-concentrated exports alongside Chinese dominance of manufactured imports and infrastructure contracts. The article contributes a disaggregated, instrument-level account that distinguishes the continental, Sub-Saharan, and bilateral levels of China's African engagement.

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Introduction

China's deepening engagement with Africa raises a central question for the study of contemporary statecraft: how does a rising power convert economic engagement - trade, investment, infrastructure, and development finance - into durable political and normative influence? This article pursues that question through the case of Nigeria, where the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is anchored in transport and communications infrastructure and in access to strategic mineral and hydrocarbon resources. The presence and activities of Chinese companies in Nigeria, particularly in the energy, mining, and construction sectors, have contributed to the intensification of bilateral cooperation (Duan, Ivanov and Werner 2025). Furthermore, Nigeria is a huge market for Chinese products that the country is not yet able to produce. This factor also plays a significant role in the development of bilateral cooperation. In this regard, countries influencing global politics and economic development should not underestimate the importance of the African continent and its individual countries in international economic relations (Carmody, Taylor and Zajontz 2022). This conclusion reinforces the relevance of this study, which helps uncover the current state of Chinese-Nigerian trade and economic relations. This requires expanding knowledge of trade and economic cooperation between the two countries, as well as assessing its current status and development trends (Ajah and Onuoha 2025).

In recent years, China-Nigeria relations have attracted growing scholarly and policy attention because they reflect broader shifts in Africa-China engagement under the BRI. Beyond trade, the BRI now encompasses infrastructure development, industrial cooperation, technology transfer, public diplomacy and strategic partnership. For Nigeria, BRI-related projects offer opportunities to address infrastructure deficits, support structural transformation and improve regional connectivity; for China, Nigeria provides access to one of Africa's largest economies and a gateway to West African markets. At the same time, this engagement raises debates about development outcomes, state agency and the long-term sustainability of bilateral cooperation (Duggan, Gottwald and Bersick 2024; Li and Lu 2024; Cabestan 2023; Chiyemura, Gambino and Zajontz 2023; Edeh 2024).

The purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the current state of trade and economic relations between China and Nigeria and to develop proposals aimed at strengthening mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation, taking into account the specifics of economic development and resource availability of each country, as well as emerging global geopolitical trends, and, more centrally, to explain the instruments through which China converts economic engagement into political and normative influence.

This objective of the study determined the solution of the following tasks: 1) to identify China's economic and political interests in Africa in terms of public diplomacy and soft power; 2) to prove that the alignment of economic development strategies between China and Nigeria contributes to the strengthening of bilateral cooperation; 3)

to assess trade and investment cooperation between China and Nigeria and consider possible areas of cooperation within the framework of infrastructure projects; 4) to determine priority areas of cooperation in the field of digital economy, transport and infrastructure projects (Idrees, Bashir, Zurkallaini et al. 2024; Hussain 2026; Guest 2026).

More specifically, the study addresses three questions: through which instruments and in which sectors does China translate economic engagement in Nigeria into political and normative influence; how asymmetric is the current structure of China-Nigeria trade, investment, and infrastructure cooperation; and what policy options can help Nigeria rebalance the relationship? Its central argument is that China's influence rests less on aggregate trade volumes than on a diversified, bundled model that combines infrastructure finance, market access, technical standards, and cultural and digital cooperation, reinforced by public-diplomacy instruments.

This study substantiates the feasibility of further developing trade and economic cooperation between the two largest developing economies, in which China serves not only as an economic but also a strategic ally of Nigeria. Based on the existing theoretical foundation and a comprehensive analysis of potential development options for further trade and economic cooperation between China and Nigeria, sound proposals were formulated for the prospects for developing bilateral cooperation in infrastructure and innovation, taking into account the specific characteristics of Chinese and Nigerian relations (Gbadebo 2025; Yin, Abu Hassan and Kamaruzzaman 2025; Idrees et al. 2024).

Methodologically, the article is a qualitative case study supported by a descriptive analysis of secondary data on trade, investment, and aid. Given well-documented gaps and divergences in FDI and bilateral-trade statistics (for example, between Chinese customs and Nigerian sources), the figures reported below are treated as indicative rather than exact, and the analysis does not test causal claims. Nigeria is selected as a representative, high-salience case: it is Africa's largest economy and most populous market, a leading recipient of Chinese infrastructure finance, and a major hydrocarbon exporter, which renders the mechanisms of China's diversified engagement unusually visible. The analysis draws on secondary trade, investment, aid and project-level data (SAIS-CARI, UNCTAD, the World Bank, Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics, FOCAC documents and AidData) and deliberately distinguishes three levels of analysis: the continental, the Sub-Saharan, and the bilateral China-Nigeria level - so as not to conflate aggregate trends with the specific dynamics of the Nigerian case.

The relevance of this study is also determined by China's intensive development of its geopolitical projects in Southern Africa. A particular role in this is played by the BRI, which was integrated in 2018 at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Isingizwe and Cirella 2023; dos Santos Junior 2025; Emupenne and Small 2024). In this sense, the multi-vector nature of the development of the African direction in China's foreign policy has consistently attracted the attention of the academic community, since China's historical interaction with the countries of Southern Africa represents a partnership based not only on equality and mutual respect, but also on regional dominance in the form of a unique strategy of

diversifying cooperation with African countries. Clearly, these countries need more than just political support and the transfer of state-building experience; above all, they need economic assistance. Cooperation between African countries and a developed economic power that is successfully addressing domestic challenges offers African countries the opportunity to gain new experience in interacting with a developed power in new venues, formats, and principles (Zhang 2022; Cabestan 2023; Duggan et al. 2024; Li and Lu 2024; Ndofor, Jones and Li 2025; Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2026). This can contribute to state building, economic sovereignty, and the resolution of key humanitarian challenges such as hunger, poverty, epidemic diseases, low literacy, and environmental issues.

China's economic diversification strategies as a factor in strengthening cooperation

By pursuing a differentiated foreign policy, China is strategically increasing its influence in Africa by expanding trade and economic cooperation with African countries, including Nigeria, and intensifying humanitarian exchanges and socioeconomic development assistance. This policy is well received in the region; for example, the Nigerian government endorses and supports the BRI, considering it an important foundation for achieving mutual benefit and win-win results, as well as the joint development of Africa and China. Therefore, African countries and China have a common interest in developing mutually beneficial cooperation. Initially, China's globalization strategy was based on an export-oriented model. China leveraged its advantages, namely cheap labor and attractive conditions for foreign investors, to become the 'world's factory' (Zhang 2014; Mees 2016). This allowed the country to rapidly increase foreign trade and accelerate economic development. However, after the 2008 global financial crisis, China realized it needed to rethink its economic strategy. The low-cost export model no longer ensured sustainable growth, and the country needed a new globalization strategy.

Modern China is pursuing a dual strategy: developing the domestic market, creating domestic demand by stimulating consumption and technological innovation, and global expansion through the BRI, which allows Chinese companies to invest in overseas projects and create transnational supply chains. As part of the BRI, Chinese companies are building large-scale infrastructure projects that are then integrated into the global trading system.

The African continent occupies a key place in China's foreign policy strategy amid the transformation of the global order. A complex set of internal challenges, such as demographic growth, weak government institutions, political instability, infrastructure shortages, and continued dependence on commodity exports, make African states vulnerable yet strategically important partners in the context of global interaction (Naz 2025). These factors motivate China's objective interest in increasing its economic, diplomatic, and humanitarian presence in Africa.

China is building its policy in sub-Saharan Africa as a strategy of selective, deep engagement, where the choice of countries and instruments is subordinated to the goals of ensuring resource and market security, creating trade and data corridors, and institutionalizing the long-term presence of Chinese companies and fintech platforms,

as seen in Nigeria (Cabestan 2023; China Africa Research Initiative 2025b; Duggan, Gottwald and Bersick 2024). This deliberately secures a credit support mechanism in exchange for the reconfiguration of energy, road, and port infrastructure, converting this into long-term commitments to buy back produced oil and reduce the logistics costs of exports to Chinese processing clusters. This is why China is focusing on increasing port and road capacity and telecommunications connectivity, using special economic zones and digital governance to expand its own production and trade chains, thereby maintaining a sustainable portfolio in energy, construction, and niche ICT projects (Pradt 2016; Danner 2018).

China's current intervention policy is based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which have become the foundation of its foreign policy steps to strengthen soft power in Nigeria. These include mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes, equality and mutual benefit, and the policy of peaceful coexistence (Bert 2003; van Eekelen 2016). These principles reflect China's aspiration to build a stable and peaceful international environment based on respect for national interests, equality of all parties, and the renunciation of the use of force as a means of resolving disputes. They have laid the foundation for an independent and balanced foreign policy aimed at developing stable and mutually beneficial international relations.

By the beginning of the 21st century, China had firmly established itself as a leading player in global politics. China had reached a new level of international influence, becoming one of the world's leading economic and political forces. Rapid economic growth, expanding foreign economic ties, active participation in international organizations, and the widespread use of soft power tools contributed to China's emergence as a key player in global politics. Amidst the transformation of the global political architecture, China formulated a foreign policy strategy known as the concept of peaceful rise, based on the idea of achieving great power status not through confrontation or coercion, but through the gradual and non-violent strengthening of its international position (Hu 2025; Li and Lu 2024; Mulugeta 2025; Razzaq 2025)). This concept emphasized economic diplomacy, the development of trade and investment cooperation, the deepening of multilateral cooperation, and the fostering of a positive international image of China as a responsible and constructive participant in global processes. Implementing this approach allowed China to minimize foreign policy risks, strengthen the trust of its partners, and ensure a sustainable presence in key regions of the world. China has become the largest investor in developing countries, and its diplomatic strategy has included not only bilateral relations but also participation in multilateral formats (Bijian 2005; Hussain 2026; Guest 2026).

One of the central pillars of China's modern foreign policy strategy is the BRI, officially unveiled by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. It aims to shape a new architecture for global economic interaction by creating a vast network of transport, energy, trade, and digital infrastructure connecting China with Asia, Europe, Africa, and other regions. Investment projects are being implemented in dozens of countries as part of the initiative, including the construction of railways and highways, ports, logistics centers, industrial and energy facilities. The BRI serves not only as an instrument of economic influence but also as a means of strengthening political ties and

expanding China's strategic presence. Alongside the economic dimension, China's foreign policy is gradually strengthening its military and military-political component. This is clearly demonstrated by the construction of China's first overseas military support base in Djibouti, in the strategically important Horn of Africa, on the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which guards the southern approaches to the Red Sea and the maritime route to the Suez Canal. The base provides logistical support and an operational presence for the Chinese Navy beyond its borders, consistent with the broader objective of protecting Chinese interests in international trade zones and ensuring the security of maritime communications. The development of the fleet and the expansion of military cooperation with a number of countries demonstrate that China's foreign policy is increasingly combining economic, diplomatic, and military instruments within the framework of a comprehensive global strategy (Razzaq 2025).

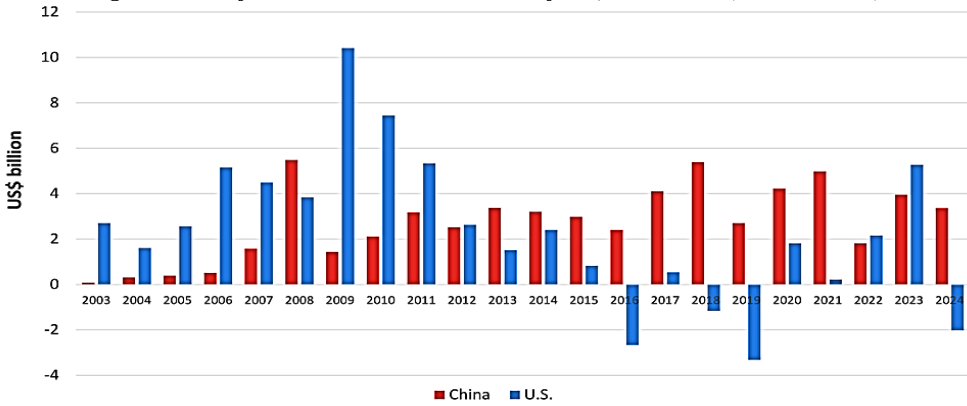
China's rapid growth in international influence in recent years has been accompanied by a number of challenges and conflicts affecting key areas of its foreign policy (Ndofor, Jones and Li 2025). One of the key factors fueling tensions in Chinese-American relations has been the trade and economic standoff that has unfolded since 2018 (Milliken 2025; Udeogu 2025.).

An analysis of trade and investment cooperation between China and Nigeria revealed that Nigeria is of economic interest to China primarily as the holder of vast hydrocarbon and other raw material reserves, as well as a capacious consumer market in which Chinese goods are in demand. At the same time, for Nigeria, as for most African countries, developing trade with China is crucial for integrating into China's value chains. Despite the differences in China's and Nigeria's foreign trade structures, trade relations play a key role in maintaining economic stability in both countries. Over the years of cooperation, bilateral trade volumes have increased, demonstrating Nigeria's integration into China's value chains.

The strengthening of China-Nigeria cooperation is also driven by the partial alignment between Nigeria's development priorities and China's external economic strategy. Nigeria seeks to address infrastructure deficits, accelerate industrialization, diversify beyond crude oil exports and improve regional connectivity. These objectives correspond to China's emphasis on infrastructure-led development, industrial cooperation and trade facilitation. Chinese-financed and Chinese-built projects in railways, ports, energy, telecommunications and special economic zones may enhance Nigeria's productive capacity and connectivity, while also expanding opportunities for Chinese firms, standards and exports (Ajah and Onuoha 2025; Gbadebo 2025; Li and Lu 2024; Edeh 2024; Duggan et al. 2024; Idrees et al. 2024).

China is less dependent on Nigerian exports, as evidenced by its export structure to Nigeria, which has changed little in recent years, and by the growing trade deficit. Mineral raw materials continue to account for the majority of Nigeria's exports. At the same time, China has added mechanical, human, and investment capital to its list of exports to Nigeria. This approach by China continues its unabated trend of dominance in many sectors of Nigeria's relatively less developed economy and the persistence of a trade imbalance.

Figure 1. FDI from China and the U.S. in Africa, 2003-2024 (in US dollars)

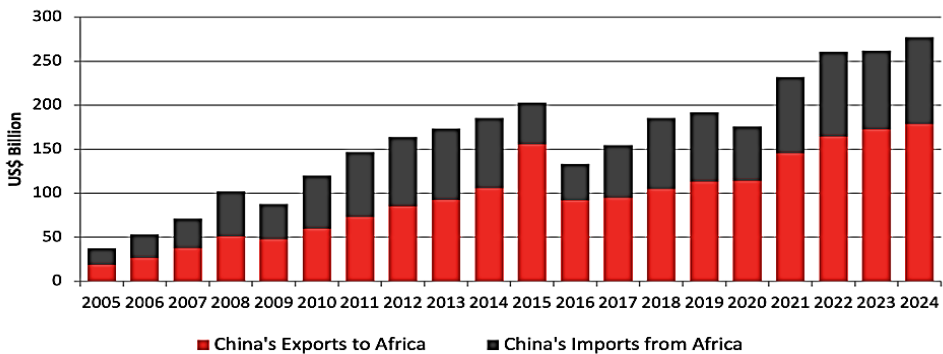


Source: China Africa Research Initiative 2025a

Figure 1 shows that the comparative FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) flows of China and the U.S. to Africa are dynamic, as their year-on-year values fluctuate considerably rather than following a steady upward trend. US flows, in fact, exceeded China's in several years (for example, 2009-2011); in 2024, however, China's flows to Africa remained positive (about US\$3.4 billion), while US flows turned negative.

Figure 1 suggests that Chinese FDI in Africa has become more consistent over time, while U.S. flows have been more volatile, including several years of negative net flows. Although U.S. investment exceeded Chinese flows in some earlier years, China's sustained presence after the mid-2010s reflects its long-term infrastructure, industrial and connectivity strategy in Africa. This pattern supports the article's argument that China's influence is not based only on trade volumes, but also on persistent investment, infrastructure finance and institutionalized economic engagement.

Figure 2. China-Africa Trade, 1992-2024 (in US dollars)



Source: China Africa Research Initiative 2025b

Figure 2 shows trade between China and Africa for the period 1992–2024, with trade growing since 2021. While Africa’s exports to China grew by 7% in 2024, China’s exports to Africa (Africa’s imports from China) rose by about 3.5% (Ecofin Agency 2025). Clearly, significant opportunities are opening up for Chinese investors in Nigeria, largely because investors from the US and other countries are wary of investing in the Nigerian economy, citing political instability, terrorist threats, corruption, and other negative factors. Therefore, for Chinese companies seeking to diversify their supply chains—for example, in the automotive, electronics, energy, medical equipment, and other sectors—and to establish trade and economic relations with Nigerian suppliers or clients, investing in the construction of facilities in these sectors and the creation of related infrastructure, particularly in transport and logistics, remains a viable option.

More recent data confirm the deepening of these ties. According to Chinese customs figures, China-Africa trade reached a record US\$348 billion in 2025 (up 17.7%), with Chinese exports of about US\$225 billion against roughly US\$123 billion of imports from Africa (China–Global South Project 2026); Nigeria’s imports from China rose by about 37% to around US\$13 billion, widening its bilateral deficit to a record (Finance in Africa 2026). In a further significant shift, on 1 May 2026, China extended zero-tariff treatment to all 53 African countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations, the first such unilateral and comprehensive measure by a major economy (State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2026), building on the duty-free access granted to African least-developed countries from December 2024 (FOCAC 2024).

Figure 2 illustrates the rapid expansion of China-Africa trade between 2005 and 2024, with Chinese exports to Africa consistently exceeding imports from Africa. This pattern points to a persistent structural asymmetry: African countries supply energy, minerals and agricultural commodities, while China exports manufactured goods, machinery, transport equipment and consumer products. The post-2021 recovery and record trade levels in 2024 reinforce the article’s argument that China’s African engagement combines market expansion with infrastructure, investment and connectivity strategies.

China’s current foreign policy is a combination of pragmatic economic cooperation, diplomacy, and military capability. China seeks to cement its status as a leading global power through a comprehensive approach that includes infrastructure projects, scientific and technological development, and cultural influence. Africa holds a special place in this strategy, as China implements large-scale investment programs, shaping a new model of cooperation with developing countries. China pursues an active international policy, balancing economic interests with strengthening its geopolitical influence, striving to maintain stability both domestically and internationally (Writer 2023; Kopyński and Carmody 2023; Zhang 2022). For example, in Niger, China is developing transport links to uranium and oil assets and promoting irrigation and electrification, cementing a minimal social consensus around Chinese projects. In Nigeria, China is leveraging its market scale to deploy railways and metros, modernize power grids, develop oil and gas projects, and build telecom and fintech platforms, creating synergies between government contracts and private demand for Chinese

technology. This allows China to promote digital government, ICT campuses, and industrial parks, and support agricultural processing to cement demand for Chinese software and hardware solutions. This is why Chinese public diplomacy is successfully linking road and bridge projects with industrial platforms, while simultaneously expanding cultural and educational exchanges and enhancing institutional acceptance (Frimpong 2025a; Liu and Ding 2024).

Thus, China's engagement with Niger demonstrates a high degree of differentiation and strategic selectivity. China relies on a pragmatic approach, driven by economic feasibility, the political climate, and the potential of partner countries to implement their own global initiatives. This engagement reflects the evolution of soft power and public diplomacy in China's foreign policy strategy amid the emergence of a multipolar world and intensifying competition for influence on the African continent.

China's dynamic policy model as a soft power instrument

China's diversification initiatives and strategies for expanding into the African continent differ from similar projects in other countries, primarily the U.S. and the EU. China's diversification strategy in Africa aims to create a positive image of the country and strengthen its financial presence there. This is accomplished by providing affordable loans to countries across the continent in exchange for contracts awarded to Chinese corporations. For Nigeria and other African countries, engagement with China has become part of a historical and strategic course aimed at strengthening political independence and accelerating economic development. Even during decolonization, China was perceived as an ally in the struggle for liberation from colonial rule. Beijing supported national liberation movements both diplomatically and through humanitarian aid.

Beijing has built engagement with sub-Saharan Africa as a targeted state-corporate strategy, institutionalized through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) (Kyirewiah and Xiaolong 2022). It serves as a focal point for China to scale up its export infrastructure model, standardize access rules for Chinese companies, and strengthen long-term resource supply and industrial sales channels (King 2025; Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2026). In this logic, portfolios in energy, transport, industrial cooperation, healthcare, education, and digital technologies act not only as instruments of soft power but also as mechanisms to reduce transaction costs for Chinese value chains, hedge commodity and logistics risks, and promote technical standards and payment solutions in China.

Under its new policy model, China is building multilayered cooperation with Sub-Saharan African states, utilizing its full range of economic, diplomatic, humanitarian, and military instruments (Ename Minko 2025). The highest priority is infrastructure investment, encompassing the construction of ports, highways, energy facilities, and industrial clusters. These initiatives simultaneously address two objectives: promoting the internal development of the region's countries and ensuring China's sustainable, direct access to strategically important natural resources, including oil, non-ferrous and rare-earth metals, and agricultural products. From Beijing's perspective, particularly with regard to Sub-Saharan Africa, the partnership is a viable tool for implementing China's foreign economic strategy: through the rapid deployment of infrastructure and

industrial packages and the standardization of financing procedures through development banks and state-owned companies, China gains access to expanding markets, a resource base, and regional logistics hubs (Mjenga 2024). Diagnosing structural deficiencies—namely, infrastructure gaps, insufficient production capacity, and limited integration into global value chains—Beijing is pursuing policies aimed at reducing transaction costs and increasing connectivity, with an emphasis on the principles of non-interference and mutual benefit to mitigate political risks and formalize long-term contracts. In practical terms, this is reflected in the targeted mobilization of Chinese contractors and equipment suppliers in Nigeria, where China is promoting comprehensive programs to modernize transport corridors, expand energy capacity, and establish industrial zones, simultaneously seeking to expand the presence of Chinese technological standards and sustain demand for Chinese goods and services. As a result, China's presence is being constructed as an end-to-end political and economic instrument that not only supports partners' internal transformations but also institutionalizes predictable supply channels, markets, and regulatory compatibility for China, thereby strengthening China's strategic position in the region (Yigit 2024; Zhu, Zhou and Brockman 2026).

Deepening cooperation with sub-Saharan African countries is positioning China as a functional alternative. China offers project-oriented, less politically sensitive financing based on principles of non-interference, mutual benefit, and rapid capital mobilization. Beijing thus converts infrastructure and industrial packages into expanded markets, access to resource bases, and the promotion of its own technical standards. For countries with a history of international isolation, including Zimbabwe, Sudan, Chad, and the Central African Republic, a more flexible configuration of lending and investment instruments is applied: export and consumer credits, resource-backed schemes, and debt restructuring agreements according to agreed-upon schedules (Li et al. 2022; Ename Minko 2024; Mulugeta 2025). This architecture reduces sanctions and reputational risks for China, strengthens long-term relationships, and gradually integrates partners into Chinese logistics and production chains. From China's perspective, sub-Saharan African countries' interest in the Chinese experience is viewed as a resource for their foreign development policy: China is purposefully promoting its own narrative of transitioning from dependence to sustainable growth through domestic consolidation, institutional reform, and industrialization, packaging it with tools for South-South cooperation, poverty reduction programs, technology transfers, and personnel training. Facing reputational costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, isolated xenophobic incidents, and harsh domestic governance measures, Beijing is strengthening public diplomacy and policy exchange channels, expanding scholarships, technical assistance, agricultural demonstration centers, digital solutions for public administration, and scientific and technological cooperation platforms. China is thus creating a set of adaptable practices for its African partners to combat poverty, modernize infrastructure, and advance technological development, while simultaneously cementing its own standards, brands, and educational trajectories as the foundation for long-term political and economic influence.

From Beijing's perspective, its policy toward sub-Saharan Africa prioritizes developing human capital and digital infrastructure as key factors in institutional

convergence and the sustainable integration of partners into China's expanding production, logistics, and information systems (Jiang 2020; Yang 2026). China is systematically scaling up educational exchanges, training and retraining programs, and technical cooperation, integrating them with digital transformation projects, e-governance, and the development of payment and communications solutions. This integration creates conditions for accelerated technology transfer, localization of competencies, and growth in endogenous employment, while simultaneously generating stable demand for equipment, software, and services from Chinese companies. This results in regulatory compatibility and standardization linkages, whereby national practices in data management, connectivity, and service infrastructure are reproducible in configurations compatible with Chinese technical and organizational standards (Züfle, von Carlowitz and Büechl 2024).

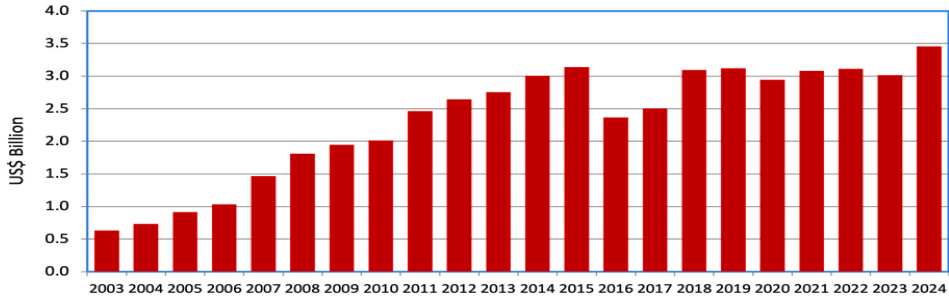
Cultural and Humanitarian Dialogue as a Factor in Long-Term Political and Economic Cooperation

The humanitarian and cultural framework of this policy aims to reproduce cognitive and normative effects that ensure the long-term legitimization of China's presence. The expansion of the Confucius Institute network, the provision of academic scholarships, the promotion of media platforms, and the support of bilingual educational tracks create a layer of managerial and entrepreneurial elites familiar with the Chinese language, economic management practices, and technological ecosystems. This configuration strengthens mutual trust, increases transactional predictability, and creates channels for the circulation of personnel and experts between African institutions and Chinese organizations. Taken together, educational, entrepreneurial, and digital initiatives serve as complementary tools alongside infrastructure and investment projects, ensuring ecosystem-based alignment of partners with Chinese standards and transforming cultural and humanitarian dialogue into a resource for long-term political and economic cooperation. From Beijing's perspective, the political and diplomatic dimension of engagement with sub-Saharan African countries constitutes an independent foreign policy direction, focused on building sustainable coalitions to advance Chinese priorities within global institutions (Khan 2025; You and Hu 2026).

The Nigerian government's national economic development strategies cannot be implemented without the support and financial assistance of other countries, particularly China, as well as international organizations. In this regard, potential areas of cooperation were discussed to facilitate the development of several national industries and strengthen existing ties between China and Nigeria. Cooperation in the mining industry requires diversification of the sector, a technological leap forward, diversified collaborations, and the development of alternative partnerships, investment in research and development, the establishment of research centers and training centers, and the creation of a 'Made in Nigeria' brand for mineral exports. Implementing these proposed strategies requires a combination of factors, including attracting significant capital and constructing critical infrastructure. Equally important is training the local population, as a skilled workforce capable of employing modern technologies is essential. Fulfilling these conditions will facilitate the production of high-quality

products at competitive prices and, consequently, the development of local and regional markets.

Figure 3. Foreign aid, 2003-2024



Source: China Africa Research Initiative 2025c

Figure 3 shows that China's foreign aid increased from 2003 to 2015, followed by a decline. However, since 2018, China's global foreign aid has recovered, reaching a new peak in 2024. In this context, China plays a significant role in supporting Nigeria's food security by providing investment, new technologies, and resources to develop the agricultural sector and maintain it. China has proposed and continues to propose a number of promising areas that will contribute to the development of Nigerian agriculture and strengthen existing ties between the two countries. Key areas include: developing Nigeria's agricultural sector and strengthening food security by leveraging China's experience and advanced Chinese technologies designed to increase agricultural productivity; training the Nigerian population in new technologies for processing agricultural raw materials, seed selection, and other fields at established agricultural centers; and establishing stable, sustainable supply chains and facilitating Nigerian companies' entry into the Chinese market (Adegbite 2026; Oben, Daga and Zhakanova 2026).

China is deliberately institutionalizing its political coordination agenda through the FOAC public-diplomacy track, bilateral cooperation commissions, interparliamentary formats, and mechanisms for ongoing consultations ahead of key sessions of the UN General Assembly and specialized agencies. This architecture ensures coordinated votes on key resolutions, expands the window for co-authorship of texts and amendments, and strengthens China's ability to shape norms and procedures on issues of development, digital sovereignty, development rights, and global economic governance reform (Ben-Enukora, Okoye and Adeyeye 2025). Support for the one-China principle, in this context, serves not only as a marker of recognition of China's territorial integrity but also as an indicator of partners' readiness for long-term mutual political loyalty. On this basis, Beijing builds reciprocal packages comprising diplomatic support for African initiatives, coordination of positions within Global South groups, and prioritization of access to project financing and technical assistance.

In the public diplomacy dimension, China complements coalition work by developing personnel and expert channels, including advanced training programs for

African diplomats, thematic seminars on multilateral procedures, and joint analytical platforms. This enhances delegations' procedural competence and fosters sustainable compatibility of negotiation practices. As a result, the political-diplomatic component of cooperation serves as an influence multiplier for China, consolidating a supportive periphery for Chinese initiatives while simultaneously creating a replicable resource of political capital for African partners in the global governance architecture. Beijing complements the educational, digital, and infrastructural vectors of the political-diplomatic component, focusing on the coalition assembly of African states' positions in key multilateral formats. At the level of framework coordination, China uses FOCAC as a platform for preliminary agreement on approaches to reforming global institutions, where guidelines for African representation in the UN Security Council are established and parameters for joint voting in relevant committees are agreed upon.

At the network mobilization level, China is intensifying its interactions to aggregate developing countries' demands for the transformation of the financial and political architecture, as well as to advance related priorities such as digital sovereignty, scientific and technological exchange, and inclusive development. Support for strengthening the African Union's standing in leading economic forums serves as a procedural tool to increase the continent's weight. Taken together, this configuration allows China to synchronize material incentives with normative and procedural support, forming a stable coalition of African countries capable of strengthening the reform agenda and simultaneously expanding the legitimacy of Chinese initiatives in the global governance system (You and Hu 2026). At the same time, from Beijing's perspective, increasing the military-political component is a logical extension of the economic and infrastructure agenda, as the security of maritime and land corridors is seen as essential to predictable supplies, asset protection, and mitigating operational risks. To this end, China is institutionalizing defense dialogue formats, concluding status-of-force agreements, developing joint training and equipment maintenance programs, and supporting the participation of its units in UN peacekeeping missions, thereby enhancing procedural compatibility and strengthening trust in Chinese security practices (Chen 2025; Frimpong 2025a). For states with limited military budgets, the appeal of such schemes is determined not only by the price of supplies but also by the linkage with training, technical assistance, and the ability to integrate communications and surveillance systems into national security systems. The result is a complex matrix of interactions, in which investments in logistics and energy are supported by the protection of key facilities, anti-piracy and search-and-rescue operations, humanitarian missions, and officer training programs (Montenegro and Alves 2024). Security itself is treated as a public good, creating corollary benefits for regional partners while simultaneously entrenching China's strategic presence. This configuration lowers barriers to entry for Chinese companies in sensitive markets, expands the window for standardizing communications and surveillance equipment, facilitates coordination with law enforcement and border agencies, and enhances the political resilience of bilateral relations in the face of external pressure. At the same time, Beijing strives to maintain a balance of non-interference and practical support, minimizing involvement in internal conflicts and positioning its actions as a contribution to collective security, thereby maintaining the legitimacy of its presence and mitigating reputational risks in

the eyes of African societies and international institutions (Dagold and Stimers 2024; Frimpong 2025b).

Continuing this logic for African states themselves involves seeking mechanisms to rebalance the benefits and costs of investment, employment, debt, and data sovereignty. Governments are strengthening localization requirements, introducing quotas for the share of national personnel in management, insisting on technology transfer, and tightening environmental and social assessment procedures for projects. In the debt sphere, the demand for transparency is growing: countries are promoting portfolio audits, disclosure of loan agreement terms, and debt sustainability assessments based on regional and multilateral methodologies, and are seeking to restructure and recalculate service schedules linked to export revenue and balance of payments indicators. In the social sphere, labor safety standards and non-discriminatory hiring practices are becoming more prominent, accompanied by strengthened inspections, institutionalized collective bargaining, and the obligation of contractors to comply with national labor codes and labor safety indicators. At the same time, a strategy to diversify partnerships is being developed to reduce dependence on a single source of funding and technology. Governments are combining Chinese infrastructure with resources from multilateral development banks and private capital, leveraging competition among contractors to improve prices and conditions, and building regional value chains to enhance the multiplier effect of infrastructure investments. In the digital realm, there is growing attention to data management, cybersecurity, and interoperability of standards, resulting in the development of regulatory frameworks for data localization, personal information protection, and sovereign control over critical platforms. Taken together, these measures aim to institutionalize corrections to asymmetries, strengthen the social license for projects, and transform interactions with Beijing into a more equitable exchange, in which long-term benefits consistently outweigh transaction risks.

Conclusion and discussion

China's policy in African countries, including Nigeria, is integrated into China's own strategic socioeconomic development plans and the implementation of its global projects, which fundamentally distinguishes its initiatives and strategies for promoting itself on the African continent from similar projects of the U.S. and the EU. China's strategy in Africa is aimed at building a positive image and strengthening its financial presence there. This is accomplished by providing affordable loans to African countries in exchange for contracts with Chinese corporations. Furthermore, China's diplomatic presence in these countries is of paramount importance. By pursuing a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of its partners, China has primarily pursued its own national interests, which include ensuring security and achieving global leadership status, influencing all global processes. At the same time, African countries have supported Chinese initiatives, considering them an important component of their economic development.

Positioning the creation of a China-Africa community with a shared future in the new era as its ultimate goal, China is becoming a key partner for countries in the region. Thanks to China's abundant mineral and human resources, untapped economic

potential, technological know-how, and financial resources, trade and economic cooperation between China and African countries has a long-term future, thereby providing impetus for sustainable development. While pursuing policies to secure the support of African partners, including Nigeria, China must balance maintaining its economic growth with advancing its initiatives and strategies. From the perspective of Chinese public diplomacy, integrating sub-Saharan African countries into its foreign policy orbit is viewed as a systemic project designed to simultaneously address supply security, expand markets, and entrench China's regulatory and technical standards in key sectors of the global economy.

The policy is built on the institutional framework of FOCAC, where economic packages are combined with diplomatic coordination, humanitarian programs, and security components. This design ensures predictable access to raw materials and infrastructure assets for China, stable demand for equipment, ICT, and engineering and construction services, and political support within multilateral institutions. At the same time, a perimeter of standardization compatibility is being established across the digital, energy, and transportation spheres, reducing transaction costs for Chinese companies and strengthening the network effects of Chinese platforms.

Going forward, Beijing will deepen the 'investment plus institutional coordination' link in areas that yield the greatest strategic impact. Priorities will include green industrialization and critical minerals for battery and renewable energy, modernization of port and rail corridors, localization of services and operational management, and the promotion of cashless payments and yuan settlements. Chinese companies are expected to expand their participation in projects related to the digital transformation of public administration, telecom networks, cybersecurity, and satellite navigation, thereby enhancing technological connectivity with the Chinese ecosystem. Diplomatically, China will continue to build coalitions at the UN, BRICS, and the Group of 77, supporting African demands for global governance reform and thereby increasing its own negotiating power. Taken together, this approach allows China to evolve from an external investor to a long-term political and economic partner, thereby improving the manageability of external risks, scaling up exports of technologies and services, and strengthening China's normative power in the emerging multipolar world.

The legal framework for China's cooperation with sub-Saharan African countries comprises several key categories: the White Papers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, the FOCAC Cooperation Plans, the FOCAC declarations, and the PRC's five-year plans.

This FOCAC serves as an institutional platform for intensifying trade and investment cooperation. Its key mechanism is to consolidate African countries' aggregate demand for capital goods, engineering services, and maintenance services originating in China. At the same time, the forum optimizes project risk allocation through comprehensive financial instruments. These include blended financing schemes, export credit and insurance products, and co-financing transactions with international multilateral development banks.

This policy promotes linking contracts to settlements in Chinese yuan, strengthens the role of Chinese financial institutions, and fosters the development of a market for guarantees and refinancing instruments, thereby reducing dependence on the dollar and

foreign exchange costs. The regularity of three-year cycles creates a predictable schedule for the approval of packaged initiatives, allows for the synchronization of the African track with China's five-year plans and domestic industrial policy, and prioritizes sectors based on the budget capacity and debt sustainability of partner countries. Politically, FOCAC strengthens Beijing's negotiating position in international organizations by institutionalizing African elites within the narrative of a community with a shared future, enhancing the legitimacy of its long-term presence, and serving as a reputation-management tool in response to criticism of debt and environmental risks. Taken together, this transforms FOCAC into a converter of China's strategic priorities into manageable project portfolios, ensuring the reproducibility of results from cycle to cycle and increasing China's soft power in the region.

To put the magnitude of this mechanism in perspective, at the most recent FOCAC summit, held in Beijing in 2024, China pledged RMB 360 billion (approximately US\$51 billion) in financial support to Africa over the following three years. According to the FOCAC Beijing Action Plan (FOCAC 2024), this package comprises RMB 210 billion in credit lines, RMB 80 billion in various forms of assistance, and no less than RMB 70 billion in investment by Chinese companies. The 2024 pledge is lower than the US\$60 billion announced at the 2018 FOCAC Beijing Summit, but higher than the US\$40 billion package announced at the 2021 Dakar Ministerial Conference. Aligning China and Nigeria's economic development strategies could create favorable conditions for strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation, leading both sides to sustainable growth and development. This could be achieved through factors such as:

- Infrastructure projects, as China has significant experience and resources in implementing large-scale infrastructure projects. This could contribute to the development of Nigeria's transport, energy, and communications networks, laying the foundation for accelerated economic growth.
- Complementary economies, such as China and Nigeria, are positioned as the largest economies in their respective regions by a number of parameters. This facilitates effective cooperation between them and the mutual benefit of each side's respective strengths. China is the largest manufacturer and exporter of various industrial goods, while Nigeria is rich in natural resources, with oil and gas being the leading producers.
- New technologies, such as China's leadership in advanced technologies, which it actively applies in manufacturing, energy, agriculture, and other sectors, allow Nigeria to draw on its experience and benefit greatly from such technological transfers with China, increasing the efficiency of its production while simultaneously modernizing various industries;
- Energy cooperation through Chinese investment in the extraction and transportation of energy resources from Nigeria, as well as joint projects to develop renewable and more environmentally friendly energy sources;
- Trade and economic cooperation, whose strengthening can contribute not only to reducing the trade deficit but also to increasing trade turnover by expanding and improving the conditions for its implementation.

It has been determined that China's implementation of infrastructure projects in Nigeria, particularly those related to transport and logistics, not only opens access to the growing Nigerian market for goods and services but also expands China's presence in the African region. This is also beneficial for Nigeria, as the construction and modernization of infrastructure increases mobility and accelerates freight and passenger transport, which in turn stimulates the development of logistics not only within the country but also internationally. Prospects for developing this cooperation may include the construction of modern highways and new airports in Nigeria, which, together with the implementation of railway projects, will improve transport accessibility and increase tourism and business flows. The automotive industry, particularly the construction of auto assembly plants, may be a promising area for the development of the Nigerian economy. Further prospects for bilateral cooperation in this area may include attracting more Chinese automakers to Nigeria. To achieve this goal, various preferential terms and privileges can be introduced to attract foreign companies. While expanding technological cooperation, special attention should be paid to the creation of automotive industry clusters. The creation of specialized zones with the necessary infrastructure to produce both conventional and electric or hybrid vehicles will ensure the sustainable development of the industry. Cooperation between China and Nigeria in this area could support Nigeria's port networks, positively impact trade flows and the development of the blue economy, and attract investment.

China's soft power in Africa has steadily grown over the past several decades. The country has invested heavily in development projects across the continent. One of the primary ways this has been demonstrated is through infrastructure development initiatives: the construction of roads, railways, ports, communications, and other critical infrastructure. China has also invested heavily in the education sector, offering scholarships and exchange programs for African students to study in China. Chinese media have established a strong presence in Africa, providing local audiences with news and entertainment content. This has helped foster a favorable image of China among Africans, fostering mutual understanding.

Analytically, these instruments matter less as expenditure than for their effects: scholarships and Confucius Institutes cultivate elites familiar with Chinese practice, media presence shapes the information environment, and infrastructure fosters reliance on Chinese standards and platforms - together translating attraction into regulatory convergence, predictable elite networks, and market preference.

One of the main forms of soft power between China and African countries is long-term economic cooperation, investment, and the provision of preferential loans. This format not only facilitates regional development but also derives economic benefits for China. Key areas of Chinese investment include the raw materials sector, energy, and urban and transport infrastructure. Active participation in the region's development strengthens China's geopolitical status as a partner and also positively impacts the investment climate in African countries, thereby attracting other foreign investors and shaping the image of a region of opportunity.

This study has limitations. It relies on descriptive secondary data, some of which are incomplete or diverge across sources; it does not test causal claims about influence; and it draws on documentary rather than primary evidence. Future research could

pursue project-level case studies in Nigeria, interview-based evidence on elite socialization and standards adoption, and systematic comparison with other African cases to identify the conditions under which China's diversified engagement yields development gains rather than dependence.

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Ethics Statement

The authors affirm that this research was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Author Ashot Aleksanyan is the Editor-in-Chief of this journal. To ensure an impartial review process, the author was not involved in the editorial handling, peer review, or decision-making process for this manuscript. The review and editorial process was managed by another member of the editorial team in accordance with the journal's policy.

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JOHN RAWLS AND THE PURSUIT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY

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Abstract

This article examines the potential application of John Rawls's theory of justice as fairness to the contemporary sociopolitical situation in Nigeria. With a population of over 235 million people representing diverse ethnic and religious groups, Nigeria faces significant challenges in achieving social justice, including widespread inequality, systemic corruption, ethnic tensions, and inadequate resource allocation. Drawing on a philosophical analysis informed by Rawlsian principles, this article explores how concepts such as the original position, the veil of ignorance, and the difference principle can help Nigeria overcome long-standing problems of governance and equality. Using critical analysis and theoretical application, the study demonstrates that while Rawls's framework has the potential to transform Nigeria, its implementation faces significant practical challenges, including deep-rooted corruption, systems of ethnic patronage, and historical inequalities. This article offers recommendations for adapting Rawls's theory of justice to the Nigerian context, focusing on institutional reforms, equitable resource distribution, and inclusive governance. Combining political philosophy with practical governance strategies, this analysis contributes to ongoing debates about social justice, democratic consolidation, and sustainable development in Africa's most populous country.

Keywords: *John Rawls, social justice, Nigeria, distributive justice, democratic theory, equity, governance, Nigerian democratic society, political transformations.*

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Introduction

Contemporary Nigeria stands at a critical juncture in its developmental trajectory. Despite being Africa's largest economy and most populous nation, Nigeria continues to grapple with pervasive inequality, systemic corruption, and deep-seated ethnic divisions that undermine social cohesion and stability. The philosophical quest for social justice—a society where all citizens have access to basic rights, opportunities, and resources—remains an elusive ideal in the Nigerian context. This article examines how John Rawls' theory of justice, developed in the late 20th century, might provide a framework for addressing Nigeria's persistent challenges of injustice and oppression (Edogiawerie and Ekuase 2021; Yusuf and Shugaba 2024).

The relevance of Rawls' philosophy to Nigeria emerges from the nation's peculiar historical circumstances. As noted by researchers, Nigeria's political structure is characterized by "a lopsided political structure and sentiments of ethnic politics that stand to hurt the existence of a just society" (Orji 2023, 83). These foundational challenges create barriers to establishing a democratic community capable of ensuring Nigeria's political and socio-economic progress. The country's experience with military rule, patrimonial governance, and resource curse has produced a society where institutional arrangements consistently benefit powerful elites at the expense of the general populace (Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 220-229).

This article argues that Rawls' theory of justice offers valuable insights for reimagining Nigeria's social contract, although its application requires contextual adaptation. Rawls' conception of justice as fairness provides a moral framework grounded in principles that rational individuals would choose under conditions of freedom and equality (Okaneme 2020). By situating Rawls' theory within Nigeria's unique socio-political landscape, this analysis contributes to both philosophical discourse and practical policy formulation for social justice.

The methodology employed is qualitative and conceptual, drawing on philosophical analysis and theoretical application. The article examines primary Rawlsian texts alongside secondary literature applying his theory to African contexts. Nigerian case studies and empirical data inform the analysis of whether Rawls' principles—developed primarily within Western philosophical traditions—can meaningfully address justice questions in Nigeria's distinct cultural and political environment.

John Rawls' Theory of Justice

John Rawls' theory of justice, articulated most comprehensively in his seminal work "A Theory of Justice" (1971), represents one of the most influential contributions to political philosophy in the twentieth century. Rawls developed his conception as an alternative to utilitarianism, seeking to establish a more satisfactory foundation for a just society. His theory revolves around several core concepts that provide the framework for justice as fairness.

The relevance of this study stems from the fact that justice is considered one of the most complex categories in social and philosophical thought, affecting various spheres of public life in Nigeria (Richman 2022; Kachembere 2026). Concepts of justice in contemporary Nigerian society serve as a value criterion for analyzing social reality

and addressing issues of changing social relations. Assessing various phenomena in Nigerian society as just or unjust reflects the economic, political, legal, and social conditions that give rise to them. The significance of social justice in Nigerian society is determined by the following key factors: first, the need to theoretically develop a model of a just society against the backdrop of persistent and deepening socioeconomic inequality and the violation of democratic rights and freedoms. Second, it has practical significance, as an analysis of existing and implemented principles of justice may enable the design and implementation of fair and effective social policies in the future. Social and historical practice demonstrates that the concept of social justice is particularly relevant in Nigerian public consciousness during periods of radical social change caused by economic, political, and spiritual crises. Thirdly, there is a need to rethink the spiritual and value orientations of contemporary Nigerian society.

All of the above predetermined the choice of this philosopher and his concepts for study. In this sense, the diversity of factors stimulating the modern development of the rule of law and appeals to it, firstly, gives rise to various forms of the actual rule of law (Smith 2008; Sari 2020). Secondly, when combined with various social and ideological positions, it becomes the source of a diversity of approaches to the problem of the rule of law and interpretations of the concept itself. J. Rawls is one of the leading scholars in the field of justice. His theory of social justice is of great interest and has significant implications for the development and formation of modern society. He sought to demonstrate the importance of justice and how it must function not only as an ideal and theory, but also as a practical reality.

The Original Position and Veil of Ignorance

Rawls introduces a thought experiment he terms the ‘original position’—a hypothetical scenario where rational individuals come together to choose the principles that will govern their society. These individuals operate behind a ‘veil of ignorance’ that prevents them from knowing their specific place in society, class position, natural assets, intelligence, strength, conception of the good, or particular psychological tendencies (Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 221). This veil ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged by natural contingencies or social circumstances, forcing participants to select principles impartially.

The original position generates principles that are fair to all because negotiators must consider every potential social position they might occupy. As Rawls notes, “In justice as fairness, the original position of equality corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional theory of the social contract” (Orji 2023, 65). This conceptual device offers a powerful tool for evaluating social arrangements by asking whether they would be agreed upon by free and equal persons unaware of their particular circumstances.

But most importantly, the meaning of Rawls’s hypothetical contract remains eminently utilitarian. Individuals enter into it in an effort to secure for themselves the greatest guaranteed quantity of primary goods, that is, to maximize their own utility (Plott 1978). One cannot help but notice the considerable haste with which Rawls assumed that individuals would proclaim precisely his two principles. If the rationality strategy were slightly modified, a choice could also be made in favor of utilitarian principles. The maximin strategy employed by Rawls, as follows from the latest

postulates of game theory, is by no means the only acceptable one. Consider a situation in which two people share the same set of natural goods, but one of these individuals is born into worse circumstances than the other (Teays 2025). This situation completely contradicts Rawls's own arguments, because unfair inequality persists. Turning to theory, Rawls argues that people born into different circumstances should have equal access to universal public goods. The theory does not address the question of people's pre-existing natural goods (Mathis and Shannon 2009).

The Two Principles of Justice

Rawls's theory, as discussed, takes on particular significance in contemporary Nigerian society, where social justice can serve as the value-based foundation for sustainable development. At the same time, issues of distribution of material goods and resources and the stability of civilization's development remain pressing and require solutions at both the national and international levels (Roberts-Cady 2025). Rawls's principles of justice acquire new meaning as one of the solutions to the current societal crisis. They can serve as the basis for social reform and consolidation in contemporary Nigerian society, and can also be used to address the challenges of sustainable development in modern society. From the original position, Rawls derives two fundamental principles of justice:

i. The Liberty Principle: "Each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all" (Okaneme 2020, 128). This principle prioritizes basic rights and freedoms—such as freedom of speech, assembly, property rights, and democratic participation—that must be equally distributed and protected.

ii. The Difference Principle: Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: a) "To the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society", b) "Attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity" (Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 221).

These principles are lexically ordered, meaning the liberty principle must be satisfied before considering the difference principle. Rawls' framework thus prioritizes basic liberties while permitting inequalities only when they ultimately benefit the most disadvantaged groups in society.

The Concept of Distributive Justice

Central to Rawls' theory is the notion of distributive justice—how benefits and burdens should be allocated in society. Rawls argues that social primary goods—including rights, liberties, opportunities, income, wealth, and the social bases of self-respect—should be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution benefits the least advantaged (Orji 2025). This conception moves beyond mere material distribution to encompass broader social goods and opportunities.

Rawls later expanded his theory in "Political Liberalism" (1993) to address how justice can be achieved in societies characterized by pluralism—where citizens hold different and often conflicting religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines. He introduces the concept of overlapping consensus whereby people with different

comprehensive doctrines can agree on certain political conceptions of justice (Orji 2023, 84). This aspect holds particular relevance for Nigeria's religious and ethnic diversity.

Nigeria's Context: Historical and Contemporary Challenges to Social Justice

With this theory of justice, Rawls created a philosophical foundation for those committed to the redistribution of resources and the regulation of social and economic relations in modern societies with a market economic system. Rawls's theory of justice differs from other theories of justice primarily in that it offers a clear understanding of the structure of society itself, while also combining individual freedoms with a more careful and just distribution of material, social, and spiritual goods.

To understand the potential application of Rawlsian theory in Nigeria, one must first appreciate the historical context and contemporary realities that shape justice questions in the nation. Nigeria's social justice challenges have deep roots in its colonial history, post-independence political struggles, and ongoing governance failures.

Historical Foundations of Injustice

Nigeria's territorial boundaries were established through colonial demarcation that arbitrarily grouped together over 250 distinct ethnic groups with different languages, cultures, and traditional systems of governance. The British colonial administration implemented divide-and-rule policies that exacerbated ethnic differences and created hierarchical relationships among groups (Obienyem and Nweke 2025, 206). This colonial legacy established patterns of administrative inequality and institutionalized ethnic preferences that persisted after independence in 1960.

The post-independence period witnessed struggles over resource control and political representation, culminating in a devastating civil war (1967-1970) that further entrenched regional and ethnic divisions. Subsequent military rule (1966-1979 and 1983-1999) reinforced authoritarian governance and centralized control over natural resources, particularly oil revenues from the Niger Delta region (Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 223). This centralization created a patronage system where access to political power translated directly to control over economic resources.

Contemporary Landscape of Inequality

Contemporary Nigeria presents a paradox of immense wealth alongside extreme poverty. Despite being Africa's largest oil producer and having the continent's largest GDP, Nigeria has one of the world's highest levels of income inequality. According to various reports, over 40% of Nigerians live below the poverty line, while a small elite controls a disproportionate share of national wealth (Obienyem and Nweke 2025, 206).

This economic inequality maps onto regional and ethnic disparities. The Niger Delta region, despite producing most of Nigeria's oil wealth, suffers from environmental degradation, underdevelopment, and poverty. Northern Nigeria experiences lower literacy rates and higher levels of deprivation compared to the

southern regions. These regional disparities fuel resentment and conflict, complicating efforts to build national cohesion (Obienyem and Nweke 2025, 208).

Institutional Challenges

Nigeria's institutional framework presents significant barriers to social justice. Corruption permeates all levels of government, diverting public resources from development priorities to private enrichment. The World Bank and other institutions have identified corruption as a major obstacle to Nigeria's development, with billions of dollars lost annually through graft, fraud, and embezzlement (Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 224).

The judicial system struggles with inefficiency and partiality, undermining equal protection under the law. Law enforcement agencies often appear to serve the interests of powerful elites rather than providing impartial public service. These institutional weaknesses erode public trust and perpetuate cycles of injustice (Edogiawerie and Ekuase 2021, 51).

Ethno-Religious Dimensions

Nigeria's ethnic and religious diversity presents both a potential strength and a source of conflict. The country is roughly divided between a predominantly Muslim north and mainly Christian south, with indigenous religious traditions also practiced across regions. Ethno-religious conflicts have erupted periodically, often fueled by political manipulation and economic competition (Obienyem and Nweke 2025, 208).

The intersection of ethnic and religious identities with political and economic inequality creates complex justice challenges. As Orji notes, "Politicians frequently manipulate these divisions to gain power, exacerbating instability" (Orji 2025). This manipulation of identity politics distracts from substantive policy issues and undermines the development of a shared national identity grounded in principles of citizenship rather than primordial affiliations.

The application of Rawls' theory to Nigeria's context requires careful translation of philosophical principles into practical governance arrangements. This section examines how Rawls' core concepts might address specific Nigerian justice questions.

The Original Position and Constitutional Design

Rawls' concept of the original position offers a powerful lens for evaluating Nigeria's constitutional framework. The Nigerian constitution establishes a federal system with significant power concentrated at the center—a structure that has been contested since independence. Viewing constitutional arrangements from behind a veil of ignorance—not knowing which region or ethnic group one would belong to—might lead to different distributions of power and resources (Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 224).

A Rawlsian approach to constitutional design would prioritize arrangements that protect minority interests and ensure equitable representation. For instance, behind the veil of ignorance, negotiators might establish stronger mechanisms for revenue sharing to ensure that resource-producing regions receive adequate compensation while recognizing that resources belong to the nation as a whole. They might also institute

more robust power-sharing arrangements to prevent domination by any single ethnic or religious group (Okaneme 2020, 129).

The current concentration of power at the federal level, particularly control over natural resources, might be reconsidered from a Rawlsian perspective. As Yusuf and Shugaba argue, “Rawls’ ideas of equal basic liberties, fair equality of opportunity, and the difference principle can be interpreted and potentially implemented in a nation characterized by significant socioeconomic disparities as well as ethno-religious diversity” (Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 226).

The Liberty Principle and Fundamental Rights

The liberty principle emphasizes equal basic liberties for all citizens. In Nigeria’s context, this would require strengthening protections for democratic participation, freedom of expression, and religious practice. Despite constitutional guarantees, these rights are often compromised in practice (Okaneme 2020, 130). For example, freedom of expression is sometimes constrained by political pressures on media outlets, particularly when reporting on corruption or governance failures. Religious freedom is occasionally undermined by local restrictions on worship or sectarian violence. Democratic participation is compromised by electoral irregularities and violence.

A rigorous application of Rawls’ liberty principle would require addressing these implementation gaps through institutional reforms, independent judiciary, and civic education. It would also necessitate protecting the rights of minority groups who may be vulnerable to majoritarian pressures. As Obienyen and Nweke observe, “A secular framework, which separates religion from politics, is essential for ensuring justice and equal rights for all citizens” (Obienyem and Nweke 2025, 210) in a multi-religious society like Nigeria.

The Difference Principle and Economic Inequality

The difference principle has particular relevance for addressing Nigeria’s extreme economic inequalities. This principle would permit inequalities only if they benefit the least advantaged members of society. Nigeria’s current economic arrangements—where a small elite captures most wealth while nearly half the population lives in poverty—would fail this test dramatically.

Applying the difference principle would require restructuring economic policies to prioritize poverty reduction and human development. This might include:

- Progressive taxation where wealthier individuals and corporations contribute proportionally more to public services;
- Targeted social programs to provide health care, education, and social safety nets for the most vulnerable;
- Regulatory measures to prevent monopolistic practices and ensure fair competition;
- Wage policies that reduce the gap between highest and lowest earners, particularly in public sector;
- Investment priorities focused on basic infrastructure and services in underserved regions (John 2014).

Resource allocation would be particularly important from a Rawlsian perspective. Nigeria's oil wealth presents both an opportunity and a challenge for applying the difference principle. Currently, resource distribution is often skewed toward politically connected regions and individuals. A Rawlsian approach would direct resources toward programmes and initiatives that benefit the most disadvantaged communities, such as those in the Niger Delta region that have experienced environmental degradation from oil extraction.

Fair Equality of Opportunity and Nigerian Society

Rawls' requirement of fair equality of opportunity goes beyond formal equality to address substantive barriers to advancement. In Nigeria, factors such as regional underdevelopment, unequal educational access, and discrimination based on ethnicity or religion create significant obstacles to fair competition (Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 226).

Applying this principle would require proactive measures to level the playing field, such as:

- Investing in education quality across all regions, particularly in disadvantaged areas;
- Implementing merit-based recruitment and promotion in public sector employment;
- Creating programs to support entrepreneurship and economic participation among marginalized groups;
- Addressing historical injustices through targeted development programmes;
- Ensuring that all Nigerians have access to basic infrastructure necessary for participation in social and economic life (Okaneme 2020, 130).

The Nigerian federal character principle - which requires equitable representation of different states in government appointments - represents an existing attempt to address regional imbalances. However, this approach has sometimes been criticized for prioritizing regional representation over merit. A Rawlsian perspective might support the goals of the federal character principle while seeking to implement it in ways that do not compromise institutional competence.

Challenges and Limitations of Applying Rawlsian Theory in Nigeria

While Rawls' theory offers valuable insights for addressing Nigeria's justice challenges, its application faces significant theoretical and practical limitations. These challenges must be honestly assessed to develop a realistic approach to social justice reform.

Cultural and Contextual Limitations

Rawls developed his theory primarily within the Western philosophical tradition, raising questions about its cross-cultural applicability. Some African philosophers have questioned whether Rawls' individualism adequately accounts for communitarian values that emphasize community and interdependence (John 2014). The concept of

personhood in many Nigerian cultures often emphasizes relational identity rather than the autonomous individual presupposed in much liberal theory.

Additionally, Rawls' focus on distributive justice may not fully capture the range of justice issues relevant to Nigeria, including recognition justice (addressing cultural disrespect and stigma) and restorative justice (addressing historical wrongs). The legacy of colonialism and historical injustices creates unique challenges that Rawls' framework may not adequately address (John 2014).

Institutional and Governance Challenges

Implementing Rawlsian principles requires effective institutions capable of impartially administering justice and redistributing resources. Nigeria's institutional weaknesses—including corruption, limited administrative capacity, and political interference—present significant obstacles to implementing any comprehensive theory of justice.

The patronage system characteristic of Nigerian politics directly contradicts Rawlsian principles. Political loyalty is often based on ethnic or religious affiliation rather than a general commitment to justice. State resources are often distributed based on patronage rather than principles of justice. In this sense, strengthening democratic achievements requires addressing a number of problems, such as corruption, resource scarcity, and social barriers.

Pluralism and the Overlapping Consensus

Nigeria's profound diversity tests Rawls' concept of overlapping consensus—the idea that people with different comprehensive doctrines can agree on political conceptions of justice. Deep divisions between religious and ethnic groups sometimes extend to fundamentally different visions of the good society (Obienyem and Nweke 2025, 210). For instance, debates over the role of religious law in secular legal systems reflect different conceptions of justice that may be difficult to reconcile through overlapping consensus. In northern Nigeria, some Muslim communities have advocated for implementation of Sharia law, while secularists and Christians have resisted these efforts (Obienyem and Nweke 2025, 210). Building a shared conception of justice across these divides remains challenging.

Resource Constraints and Prioritization

Rawls' theory assumes a level of economic development that enables redistribution without sacrificing basic infrastructure. Nigeria's development challenges—including limited resources for health, education, and infrastructure—create difficult trade-offs between immediate needs and long-term investments in justice (Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 226).

The difference principle requires prioritizing the least advantaged, but in a context of extreme scarcity, determining what constitutes 'greatest benefit' to the most vulnerable involves complex calculations. Limited administrative capacity also constrains the ability to implement targeted programs effectively (John 2014).

Pathways Toward Rawlsian Justice in Nigeria: Policy Implications and Recommendations

Despite these challenges, Rawls' theory provides valuable guidance for advancing social justice in Nigeria. This section outlines practical policy implications and recommendations derived from a Rawlsian framework.

Institutional Reforms for Fairness

Implementing Rawlsian justice requires creating institutions that impartially apply rules and distribute resources. Key institutional reforms might include:

- **Judicial independence:** Strengthening the autonomy, funding, and professionalism of the judiciary to ensure equal justice under law;
- **Anti-corruption measures:** Enhancing the capacity and independence of anti-corruption agencies, protecting whistleblowers, and promoting transparency in public contracting;
- **Electoral reform:** Ensuring free and fair elections through independent electoral administration, transparent processes, and enforcement of electoral laws;
- **Security sector reform:** Developing professional security forces that protect all citizens equally regardless of ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation (Obienyem and Nweke 2025, 210; Okaneme 2020, 130; Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 226).

These institutional changes would help create what Rawls called the 'basic structure' of society—the fundamental institutions that distribute rights, opportunities, and resources.

Education Policy for Equal Opportunity

Rawls attaches significant importance to the right to education and the establishment of principles of just distribution. He considers the first such principle to be the requirement that every person equally possess basic rights and freedoms. The system of individual rights and freedoms must coincide with universal freedom, and freedom must be maximized; its restriction can only be justified for the sake of its better protection: freedom can be limited only for the sake of freedom. The second principle is the requirement of equality as the equal possession of freedom and the equal distribution of goods (exceptions to this rule are permissible here only for the purpose of leveling out existing inequalities). This principle is concretized as the principle of equal opportunity, aimed at the maximum elimination of inequalities arising or established on the basis of wealth or birth. Every person must have equal opportunities in striving to achieve a certain status in society. Therefore, Rawls characterizes justice as correctness, good faith, impartiality, as a kind of procedural fairness, which is ensured through legal norms consistent with the principle of the rule of just law. The role of the constitution is crucial here, defining the fundamental distributive procedures that are most likely to lead to the creation of a just and stable order. This role of the constitution is supported and strengthened by laws.

Education plays a crucial role in creating fair equality of opportunity. A Rawlsian approach to education policy would include:

- **Equitable funding:** Ensuring that educational resources are distributed to reduce rather than reinforce existing disparities,
- **Curriculum reform:** Developing curricula that promote civic values of equality, tolerance, and respect for diversity,
- **Access initiatives:** Creating programs to support educational access for girls, children from poor families, and those in rural areas,
- **Critical thinking:** Emphasizing philosophical education that enables citizens to engage with questions of justice and fairness (Yusuf and Shugaba 2024, 226).

These provisions justify the need to make efforts to address economic inequality, improve access to education and health care, promote gender equality and ensure fair treatment of different ethnic and religious groups.

Economic Restructuring for Shared Prosperity

In recent decades, the concept of the relationship between legality and justice has undergone a serious rethinking: an attempt has been made to reconcile the moral and legal values of individualism and the principle of equality, personal autonomy and issues of income redistribution.

In the history of state and law, the moral concept of justice has primarily influenced those laws and legal norms aimed at protecting basic individual rights and freedoms, ensuring equality before the law, the right to vote and run for office, the right to a fair trial, freedom of speech, freedom of movement, and so on. It is in these laws and legal norms that the moral concept of justice becomes a real fact of law, i.e., is realized in law. At the same time, fundamental ethical principles (justice and injustice) and law mutually influence each other as regulators of behavior in society. Compliance with established legal norms is more successful in society, the stronger the conviction of all (or the majority) members of society in the justice of the prevailing principles of legality and the rule of law. Applying the difference principle would require significant economic restructuring to ensure that inequalities benefit the least advantaged. Key economic policies might include:

- **Progressive taxation:** Implementing tax policies where higher earners contribute proportionally more to public services,
- **Social protection:** Establishing comprehensive social safety nets, including health insurance, unemployment benefits, and pensions for informal workers,
- **Labor regulations:** Ensuring living wages, safe working conditions, and rights to organize for all workers,
- **Resource governance:** Reforming management of natural resources to ensure transparent and equitable distribution of benefits.

Constitutional and Political Reforms

The modern constitutional regime in Nigeria, as a political, legal, economic, and moral system, is built on universal principles and techniques of state and legal development, embodying centuries of accumulated experience, which has been explored in Western European and Nigerian political and legal scholarship. The result is an understanding

of law as a social institution embodying a number of essential principles, the most important of which are freedom, legality, and justice.

An analysis of historically developed and current Western theories that combine social justice with the principles of the rule of law and civil society is of considerable scientific and practical interest. The advancement of new conceptual ideas in the area of building a rule of law and shaping civil society institutions compels us to turn to history and past experience. Many ideas about law, morality, justice, and legality that preoccupied ancient thinkers, modern legal philosophers, and our own legal scholars must be updated and examined in their substantive form.

Nigeria's constitutional framework may require revision to better reflect Rawlsian principles. Potential reforms include:

- Power redistribution: Reconsidering the federal structure to allocate powers and resources more equitably between different levels of government;
- Bill of Rights expansion: Strengthening constitutional protections for social and economic rights alongside civil and political rights;
- Subsidiarity principle: Decentralizing governance to allow communities greater control over matters that affect them directly;
- Truth and reconciliation processes: Addressing historical injustices through official recognition and reparative measures.

Civic Education and Public Reason

John Rawls's theory of justice provides a powerful moral framework for addressing Nigeria's long-standing problems, such as inequality, corruption, and disunity. Although developed in a different context, Rawls's concepts of the original position, the veil of ignorance, and the two principles of justice offer valuable insights for rethinking the social contract in Nigeria.

Applying Rawls's theory to Nigeria requires both philosophical adaptation and practical implementation strategies. The liberty principle emphasizes the importance of protecting fundamental rights and democratic participation for all Nigerians, regardless of ethnicity or religion. The difference principle provides a moral guide for economic policy, directing resources to benefit the least advantaged members of society. However, implementing Rawls's theory of justice in Nigeria faces significant challenges, including cultural differences, institutional shortcomings, and resource constraints. Overcoming these obstacles requires contextualizing Rawls's ideas within the unique context of Nigeria while preserving their core ethical principles. This analysis suggests that a Rawlsian approach to Nigerian justice would prioritize institutional reforms that ensure impartiality and fairness, educational policies that create genuinely equal opportunity, economic mechanisms that promote the distribution of prosperity, and political reforms that more fairly distribute power. It would also emphasize the importance of civic education and public reason in building consensus among Nigeria's diverse communities.

Ultimately, following Rawls's principles of justice in Nigeria does not mean importing foreign philosophical concepts, but rather engaging in the creative process of adapting universal principles of justice to specific historical and cultural contexts. While the pursuit of social justice in Nigeria is vital to creating a just and equitable

society where all people have the opportunity to thrive, efforts must be made to address economic inequality, improve access to education and healthcare, promote gender equality, and ensure the fair treatment of various ethnic and religious groups.

The pursuit of social justice in Nigeria remains a pressing and necessary task. By engaging with philosophical concepts like those of Rawls, Nigerians can continue to develop their own approaches to justice, drawing on both universal principles and local wisdom. Despite the challenges, the pursuit of a more just society, where no one feels left behind, abandoned, marginalized, or disadvantaged in the distribution of resources, represents a worthy goal for the country's future.

Rawls emphasized the importance of public reason—the use of arguments that all citizens can reasonably be expected to support—in democratic deliberation. Developing public reason in Nigeria will require the following:

- Civic education, which involves incorporating philosophical education about democracy, justice, and citizenship into school and adult education curricula;
- Media literacy, which involves supporting media outlets that promote reasoned dialogue that embraces differences rather than sensationalism or division;
- Intergroup dialogue, which involves creating structured opportunities for exchange between different ethnic and religious communities;
- Leadership development, which involves cultivating a new generation of leaders committed to justice rather than patronage.

As Orji suggests, drawing insights from other divided societies like Rwanda's post-genocide reconciliation might offer valuable lessons for Nigeria (Orji 2025).

Conclusion and discussion

Rawls's philosophical views are considered liberal, as many ideas characteristic of classical liberalism (the idea of natural rights, liberty, equality of opportunity, rationality, and the existence of private property) occupy a central place in the political life of modern Nigeria. The principles of justice he proposed have largely become the foundation of modern constitutional democracy. However, Rawls cannot be classified as a classical liberal, as his theory addresses the problem of distribution, reflected in the second principle of justice, from a perspective close to social democratic thought.

Rawls's theory of justice is a rational model of social equality of fair opportunity, and thus the social contract is viewed in this theory as a model of rational collective choice in Nigerian society. According to Rawls, all social values, freedom and opportunity, income, and wealth should be equally distributed, except in cases where the unequal distribution of any or all values would favor everyone. The exchange between the two principles of justice (the principle of liberties and the principle of differences) is prohibited, since fundamental freedoms—political freedom, freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, and individual freedom—cannot be exchanged for economic well-being. Rawls's principle of differentiation can be used as a system of measures to relieve social tensions and reduce socioeconomic polarization in contemporary Nigeria.

Rawls's principles of justice are universal not only for American-style democracies but for any democratic society. Contemporary Nigerian society, as a civil and just

society, must be defined by a set of institutions that guarantee fundamental human rights.

This theory can be seen as an attempt to affirm liberal values, emphasizing the value of pluralism as the basis for sustainable and stable societal development. The presence of a plurality of moral, religious, and philosophical ideas, resulting in a multitude of conflicting and often incompatible concepts of meaning, values, and goals in life, is a typical feature of the political culture of modern democratic societies. The challenge of policy in such a society is to find a solution to the problem of ensuring the stability of modern democracy.

Rawls's principles of justice, within the framework of sustainable development, acquire new meaning as one way out of the current crisis of Nigerian society.

The theoretical significance of this article lies in the fact that Rawls's theory, as discussed, acquires particular relevance in contemporary Nigerian society, where social justice is the value foundation of sustainable development. The content and conclusions obtained during the study are aimed at a deeper understanding of the principles of justice as a basis for the sustainable socio-economic, political, and spiritual development of modern society, as well as in modeling the future development of society. Using a political and philosophical analysis of social justice as a core concept in Rawls's theory, its interconnection and interdependence with freedom, equality, and the injustices of political transformations in Nigerian society are established. This study attempts to define the significance of Rawls's principles of justice as a value-based foundation for reforming democratic Nigerian society, which will allow for a more detailed exploration of the concept of justice using Rawls's theory as an example. In this sense, the practical significance of this work lies in the fact that Rawls's principles of justice, as a social practice, can serve as the basis for social reform and consolidation of contemporary Nigerian democratic society.

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Ethics Statement

The authors affirm that this research was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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RISKS OF MILITARY CONFRONTATION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN THE CONTEXT OF GEOPOLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

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Abstract

This article examines the key issues surrounding the formation of new military-political platforms in the South Caucasus region, which have influenced the shifting balance of power and the regional security agenda. Key issues discussed include the new military-based cooperation existing in the region and the potential geopolitical implications it may have. One thing is certain: the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and subsequently the 2020 war, is impacting regional military cooperation. Therefore, it is imperative to examine a variety of new scenarios and current dynamics. The South Caucasus remains a strategically important yet volatile region, where military cooperation and security dynamics are shaped by evolving geopolitical developments. This article analyzes the military strategies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, examining their evolving defense strategies, alliances, and regional security interactions using balance-of-power theory and regional security complex theory. This study contributes to an understanding of how small states in contested regions adapt their military strategies in response to emerging geopolitical realities. In this context, regional stability presupposes a joint determination of common threats to national security, the possibilities and limits of joint efforts to achieve certain political goals, and ways to ensure peace and security in the South Caucasus.

Keywords: *South Caucasus, small states, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, security platform, regional security, military balance, military exercises, military partnership, power diversification.*

Introduction

The South Caucasus is strategically important due to its location between Europe and Asia, and it serves as a transit route for energy resources. This attracts interest from various countries, including the U.S., EU, and Iran, complicating the security landscape. South Caucasus plays a crucial role in the transportation of Caspian resources to Western Europe. In particular, the region is of highest importance for the

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European energy security. Additionally, it can be seen as an increasingly attractive transport route between Europe and Asia. The Caucasus is closed to the Middle East. And some of the countries of the region share a border with Iran and Türkiye who are local geopolitical players. This makes the South Caucasus an important transportation hub between West and East as well as between South and North. military component is one of the most important interest and vital core of cooperation for South Caucasus countries, for local and geopolitical players. If we look at the military balance and statistics of the world, we can note that in 2023-2024 it is a year of active wars in the world, and I consider the study of the military component to be relevant, from the point of view of analyzing a number of military cooperations and assessing the situation. General studies, regional and global trends document that, in contrast to previous years, when the emphasis on other components of security gained momentum in the world, currently countries rely heavily on armaments as a major security issue, nowadays military security is dominant and countries do not hide their obvious militarization process, moreover, studies in the process we understand that this is also done in a certain demonstrative way (Öztiğ 2023).

In recent years, a number of new agreements have been signed in the military sphere in the South Caucasus region, a reality of a new military balance has been created. In order to analyze the situation, I separately referred to the military security issues, challenges, and cooperation of the countries of the South Caucasus.

The study is based on Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (2003), as this theory, based on realism, shows how states seek to prevent the excessive dominance of any one actor by forming alliances and adjusting their military capabilities, creating effective military partnerships to protect national and inter-state interests (*Farzayee 2023; Walsh 2020; Buzan 2003*). Given the South Caucasus' complex geopolitical landscape where Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan navigate relations with regional active players Russia, Türkiye, Iran, and Western actors this theory can help analyse how these states balance external pressures through military cooperation with different actors and advancing their own security interests (Amable 2022; Kalbizada and Jafarov 2025).

The RSCT focuses on how regional security dynamics are shaped by interdependent threats and alliances, which has significant implications for evolving military partnerships in the South Caucasus (Sharova and Cohen 2025; Sharova and Cohen 2026).

In this article, we address the following questions: 1) How have military balances and new military cooperation influenced and continue to influence the regional and national security agendas of the South Caucasus? 2) What are the possible future scenarios for the military developments of the South Caucasus countries?

In this context, it is most important to understand the implications of military cooperation and the new military balance for changing relations between the countries of the South Caucasus.

The event analysis approach allows us to examine the current facts within the sequence of events. The next method of our research is scenario analysis, which will provide an opportunity to understand how the The military balance in the South

Caucasus can affect the agenda of security of the South Caucasus, what possible scenarios of development can be awaited at the region.

The study has been conducted concurrently with the unfolding events, primarily aiming to establish an accurate timeline using content and event analysis, and subsequently to forecast their future developments. Therefore, official meetings, documents, agreements, announcements, reports, and speeches were mainly the sources for the study. And some research-analytical materials helped us to study the allows you to assess the military security situation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, which creates the overall security situation in the South Caucasus (Kalbizada and Jafarov 2025; Öztiğ 2023).

New Military rearrangements in South Caucasus countries

In the context of the geopolitical events of 2020-2024, the South Caucasus has become a field of overlapping and opposing interests, where new rearrangements are taking place, as well as new actors and players are appearing and trying to promote their own interests. The military situation in the South Caucasus is changing very quickly, parallel to the military escalations and conflicts taking place in the world, a number of power centers are increasing their military role in the South Caucasus, and new ones are also appearing (Babayev 2020).

Overall, the South Caucasus has witnessed evolving alliances, with Armenia strengthening ties with Western nations and India, while Azerbaijan continues its partnerships with Türkiye and Israel. These shifts reflect broader geopolitical changes and influence the military dynamics within the region. It also continues to expand military cooperation in various directions (Sukiasyan and Davtyan 2025; Omidi 2025).

The three republics in the South Caucasus have taken different paths since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nowadays, the South Caucasus is very divers in political as well as military terms The 44-day war over Nagorno Karabakh in 2020 changed the geopolitical landscape, Russia's war against Ukraine has changed the nature of the caucasian security architecture (Aleksanyan 2025). Moscow's leverage in the region before and since the war in Ukraine obviously has changed. General studies, regional and global trends document that, in contrast to previous years, when the emphasis on other components of security gained momentum in the world, currently countries rely heavily on armaments as a major security issue, nowadays military security is dominant and countries do not hide their obvious militarization process, moreover, studies in the process we understand that this is also done in a certain demonstrative way (Amoris 2026).

In recent years, a number of new agreements have been signed in the military sphere in the South Caucasus region, a reality of a new military balance has been created. In order to analyze the situation, I separately referred to the military security issues, challenges, and cooperation of the countries of the South Caucasus.

Here it is necessary to pay attention to the following:

- In the framework of **the Balance of Power Theory** we need to understand South Caucasus countries and players form alliances and adjust their military strategies to prevent any single power from dominating the region (Avdaliani 2022, 19-25; Meister 2024).

- **Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT):** RSCT proves a viewpoint to analyze how security interests in the South Caucasus are coherent, forming a distinct regional security complex influenced by both internal dynamics and external actors (Stivachtis 2021).

Military diversification processes in Armenia

The 44-day war between Armenia and Azerbaijan changed the balance of power not only in the entire South Caucasus but also in the Black Sea region. Armenia began new military cooperation with France and India. While previously weapons were mainly imported from Russia, Armenia now has new military partners, which can be considered the beginning of a phase of arms diversification. It was precisely this opportunity that made new military cooperation and the process of diversifying Armenia's military arsenals a reality.

Following the ethnic cleansing of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh and the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers, the Armenian government has long been absent from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) (Manukyan 2024).

Amid the deteriorating relationship between Russia and Armenia, new formats for military dialogue and partnership have emerged with China, Georgia, Greece, Cyprus, the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and other countries. One example is the signing of a military pact with India for the purchase of weapons, thereby becoming one of Armenia's main suppliers.

For the last three years, the intensity of the cooperation between India and Armenia has increased at an active pace, strengthened by the establishment of a growing defence and security partnership (Vasilyan 2023; Vasilyan 2026). Given its expanding contribution to Armenia's efforts to promote its defence capacities and its potential to support Armenia's strategic and military growth, India has become a valuable emerging partner for Armenia in foreign policy and military cooperation. 2020-2024 has been quite an important period, especially for Armenia-India military cooperation, as several events, meetings, purchases of military capital, mutual cooperation in various military defensive directions marked this new phase (Melikyan 2024).

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Importantly, India has expressed an explicit desire to partner with Yerevan in the South Caucasus given their aligned strategic interests in the region. By cooperating with India in bilateral and multilateral arrangements, such as Armenia-India-Iran and Armenia-India-France-Greece formats, Armenia gains a strategic partner in a region that otherwise faces Turkish hegemony (Melikyan 2024). If we analyze the geopolitical and regional significance of Armenia-India military cooperation, especially from the perspective of the balance of power theory, we can note that (Lakshminarayanan and Yepremyan 2023).

The cooperation shows a shift in regional arrangements, potentially impacting Russia's and Türkiye's huge influence in the South Caucasus. The cooperation means a message for regional players that Armenia is not isolated and can build alliances beyond traditional partners. From the view of Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT): The South Caucasus is becoming more interconnected with external security dynamics involving India, modifying a shift in regional security standards. While Russia was Armenia's traditional security guarantor, was not active attitude in recent military aggression against Armenia is pushing Yerevan to seek new partners, challenging Russia's influence (Balian 2026).

Armenia and France have been strengthening their military cooperation in recent years, reflecting a deepening strategic partnership. This collaboration encompasses various aspects, including defense agreements, military education, and joint training programs. Armenia and France will continue cooperating in the field of defence. Agreements on military cooperation between Armenia and France were signed in the fall of 2023, after which Armenia received the first batch of defence weapons.

In October 2023, Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan and French Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu signed significant documents to enhance bilateral cooperation. Discussions focused on acquiring defense systems, military education, training programs, and experience exchange, highlighting the commitment to strengthening defense relations (The Armenian Report 2023). However, the partnership has intensified since October 2023. Following contracts signed on October 3, France delivered defensive weapons to Armenia. The partnership between France and Armenia extends to military training as well. However, France's arms sales policy has historically been opportunistic, including in the Caucasus region, which has sometimes complicated the otherwise positive outlook of military cooperation¹.

It is a fact, that France has historically maintained strong ties with Armenia due to historical, cultural, and diaspora-driven connections, By increasing military cooperation, France is asserting itself as a key Western power in the South Caucasus, challenging Russian dominance in the region. On the other hand, Armenian-French military cooperation also fits within the framework of Armenia's Euro-Atlantic cooperation. It is clear, that France's deeper involvement in Armenia could lay the groundwork for stronger EU and NATO engagement in the South Caucasus, an area traditionally under Russian geopolitical influence, it is a clear counterbalance and stems from the interests of the EU (Vasilyan 2023; Vasilyan 2026).

The Armenia-France military partnership is a strategic shift with significant geopolitical ramifications. It represents Armenia's growing independence from Russia, France's increasing assertiveness in the South Caucasus, and a potential realignment of regional power balances. While this cooperation strengthens Armenia's defense posture, it also raises the stakes in an already volatile region.

In summary, from the view of the theory of neorealism, Armenia's to seek aspire of new partners and India's and French strategic partnerships reflect their efforts to

¹ The Prime Minister of the RA. 2026. "Press releases: Armenia and France sign joint declaration on establishing strategic partnership, exchange several documents." May 5, 2026. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2026/05/05/Nikol-Pashinyan-Emmanuel-Macron-Declaration/>.

navigate the structural realities of the international security system (Omidi 2025). However, these actions also contribute to an intensifying security dilemma in the South Caucasus, illustrating the complex interplay of state behaviors in the quest for security (Sharova and Cohen 2025; Sharova and Cohen 2026).

Georgian Security platform

Georgia is mainly seeking a Euro-Atlantic integration to have closer ties with NATO and other western partners. Therefore, Georgia plays an important role in regional connectivity and coordination because of its advanced relationships with Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Armenia. Georgia's military cooperation is characterized by its strong aspirations for NATO integration, partnerships with Western countries, and regional security initiatives (Kalbizada and Jafarov 2025). Here are the key aspects:

It is an important regional military event Türkiye-Georgia-Azerbaijan trilateral military cooperation is considered an active platform of military collaboration in the South Caucasus. The cooperation platform established by these three countries covers very relevant security fields like transport, energy, and military sectors. Even though it seems too early to foresee a proper integration scheme, the mutual interest in safeguarding their trade structures already produces practical implications. Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Georgia have conducted several joint military exercises over the years to enhance interoperability and strengthen regional security cooperation (Balta and Bal 2026; Neset, Aydin, Ergun et al. 2023).

The exercise has been hosted since 2000 on a rotational basis. These exercises underscore the strategic partnership between Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Georgia, aimed at enhancing military readiness and addressing regional security challenges. Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Georgia have conducted several joint military exercises over the years to enhance interoperability and strengthen regional security cooperation. Here are some notable exercises from different years: The exercise has been hosted since 2000 on a rotational basis. These exercises underscore the strategic partnership between Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Georgia, aimed at enhancing military readiness and addressing regional security challenges (Shahbazov 2026).

Analyzing the geopolitical and regional significance of this military platform in the South Caucasus, it can be noted that while Georgia maintains partnerships with NATO and the West, this cooperation demonstrates its ability to manage regional security dynamics without alienating its neighbors. It can also be analyzed that this military platform could become a tool for expanding Turkey's soft power, as, as a regional leader, Türkiye is strengthening its influence in the Caucasus through military cooperation, bolstering its political and military presence. The trilateral Türkiye-Georgia-Azerbaijan military cooperation is a strategic platform that enhances regional security, strengthens military ties, and positions the South Caucasus in the changing geopolitical landscape and agenda. It highlights a redistribution of power, with Türkiye playing a leading role, Azerbaijan strengthening its military advantages, and Georgia ensuring the security of its transit routes while maintaining strategic flexibility.

Between 2020 and 2025, Georgia has undertaken vital military initiatives to enhance its security framework and expand military collaboration. In October 2021, the Government of Georgia approved the "National Cybersecurity Strategy and Action

Plan for 2021-2024.” This strategy outlines four primary objectives: The Strategy was developed inclusively, involving government agencies, civil society, and the private sector, with support from the British Embassy in Tbilisi and UK experts. It aims to build upon previous cybersecurity strategies to strengthen Georgia's resilience against cyber threats.² This was a crucial strategic step for Georgia's security agenda, as well as the best platform for cooperation with the UK.

In November 2019, Georgia and the United States signed a framework agreement to elevate defense and security cooperation. This agreement outlined priorities for the next three years, focusing on enhancing Georgia's defense capabilities and interoperability with partner nations.³ It's safe to say that Georgia has maintained its Euro-Atlantic military orientation in recent years, thereby becoming a crucial platform for the West to maintain a military presence in the South Caucasus. Beyond its own national security, Georgia's military partnerships contribute to broader regional stability. As a vital transit corridor for energy resources and military logistics, Georgia's stability is directly linked to the security of the South Caucasus and the Black Sea region. This underscores its importance not only to Western interests but to the entire global security architecture.

New Security trends and ongoing military partnerships of Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan has significantly modernized its military capabilities, particularly after the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. This includes advancements in drone warfare, artillery, and air defense systems. Azerbaijan maintains a relatively high defense budget compared to its regional neighbors, allowing for continued procurement of modern weaponry, including from Türkiye and Israel (Asgarov 2026; Babayev and Spanger 2020; Freedman 2023). After the 44-day Nagorno-Karabakh war, a new phase began for Azerbaijan in terms of expanding military cooperation, carrying out military exercises, and engaging with various military platforms.

Azerbaijan and Türkiye have significantly strengthened their military cooperation between 2020 and 2025, building upon a basis of shared strategic and regional interests. This collaboration encompasses various dimensions, including joint military exercises, defense industry partnerships, official meetings, military education and formal agreements enhancing their strategic alliance. Strong military ties with Türkiye, including joint exercises and defense collaborations, enhance Azerbaijan's military capabilities (Yemelianova 2023). One of the most important dimensions of Türkiye–Azerbaijan relations is the two countries' military relationship. Over the course of 30 years, many agreements and protocols have been signed between the two countries, which have contributed to the development of their military relations. The founding principle of this military relationship was to meet the officer training needs of the Azerbaijani army. The two states have conducted numerous joint military exercises

² Ministry of Defence of Georgia. 2021. “Cyber Security Strategy 2021-2024.” Accessed April 16, 2026. https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/Cyber_Security/Cyber_Security_Strategy_of_the_Ministry_of_Defence_of_Georgia_2021-2024“.pdf.

³ U.S. Department of State. 2019. “Joint Statement of the U.S.-Georgia Security Working Group.” Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://2021-2025.state.gov/joint-statement-of-the-u-s-georgia-security-working-group/>.

aimed at improving interoperability and readiness. These exercises serve as practical demonstrations of their strategic partnership and mutual commitment to regional security (Hovsepyan and Tonoyan 2024; Shahbazov 2026; Cheterian 2024).

Between 2020 and 2024, Azerbaijan has actively expanded its military partnerships with several countries, notably Pakistan, Israel, and Italy, Serbia, Qatar and so forth, to enhance its defense capabilities and strategic collaborations. We want to mention and analyse this important cases.

- In September 2024, Pakistan signed a contract to supply JF-17 Block III fighter jets to Azerbaijan. This agreement aims to bolster Azerbaijan's air force capabilities. The deal reflects deepening defense cooperations between the two nations (Kumar 2024). There is no doubt that Pakistan will try to make additional inroads into the defense market of Azerbaijan, as it is economically and strategically important for Pakistan to find new means to export aircraft, missile systems, tanks, and other kind of military vehicles. In this, Azerbaijan will be a willing partner (Mumtaz 2023; Dadparvar and Parto 2026).
- Along with all current military cooperation, Israel remains Azerbaijan's main military supplier and loyal partner. Azerbaijan has maintained a loyal defense procurement relationship with Israel, acquiring developed military technology, including drones and air defense systems (Asgarov 2026; Bashirova 2024). This partnership has significantly increased Azerbaijan's military capacities. The two countries have involved in intelligence sharing and technological collaboration, strengthening their strategic alliance in the region and in the world. Israel have supplied nearly 60% of Azerbaijan's major arms imports, underscoring the depth of their defense ties.

Due to the data referred to above, especially as Azerbaijan produces strategic commodities (oil and gas), Israel attached to this country a high strategic value in its foreign policy and sought to deepen relations with it to secure a source of energy and to get closer (Souleimanov, Ehrmann and Aliyev 2014; Cohen and Lev 2023).

- Azerbaijan has also established high-level military cooperation with Italy. Beyond defense, Italy and Azerbaijan have developed a strategic partnership encompassing political, economic, and energy sectors, further solidifying their bilateral relations. These partnerships underscore Azerbaijan's strategic efforts to diversify and strengthen its military alliances and capabilities through international collaboration. Azerbaijan and Italy have significantly enhanced their military cooperation, particularly in the realm of military-technical collaboration. This deep military cooperation with Italy brings Azerbaijan closer to the borders of the European Union.
- Meanwhile, Serbia also appeared among Azerbaijan's military partners. Azerbaijan and Serbia have been actively enhancing their military cooperation in recent years, focusing on strategic collaboration and mutual interests. Key developments include: In February 2024, representatives from the Ministries of Defense of both countries held their inaugural defense consultations in Baku. During these discussions, officials exchanged views on existing military cooperation and explored avenues for further enhancement. The consultations

culminated in the signing of the Bilateral Military Cooperation Plan for 2024, outlining joint activities and initiatives for the year.

Between 2020 and 2024, Azerbaijan has actively expanded its military partnerships and cooperations beyond its traditional allies and partners engaging with several countries to enhance its defense capacities and strategic alliances. Azerbaijan's expanding military partnerships with countries like Türkiye, Israel, Pakistan, Italy, and Serbia between 2020-2024 reflect a strategic shift in its geopolitical positioning. These partnerships serve multiple regional and global purposes, strengthening Azerbaijan's military, political, and economic leverage (Bashirova 2024; Gülseven 2024). Below is an analysis of the geopolitical and regional significance of these new military collaborations: Azerbaijan's actions can be effectively analyzed through the lenses of Balance of Power Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory. Through its military diversification and strategic alliances, Azerbaijan seeks to maintain regional security by balancing power dynamics against Armenia, Russia, and Iran, ensuring its sovereignty and regional hegemony. In the context of RSCT, Azerbaijan's security is increasingly intertwined with external powers, notably Türkiye, Israel, and Pakistan, which has reshaped the South Caucasus security complex (Ismayilov 2013; Gülseven 2024). Azerbaijan's military buildup and strategic partnerships are reshaping the regional security architecture, pushing back against Russian dominance and integrating more closely with NATO-aligned powers, all while attempting to navigate a complex relationship with Iran and Armenia.

Conclusion and discussion

The South Caucasus region, characterized by a shifting security paradigm, is undergoing significant transformations in its military and defense dynamics. This shifting landscape, shaped by regional alliances and global power competition, highlights the complex interplay of security factors in small states and the ongoing transformation of military cooperation in the South Caucasus. The broader geopolitical impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its long-term security implications continue to shape the security calculations of all parties, further underscoring the need for balanced strategies in pursuit of regional stability (Poghosyan and Martirosyan 2013; Babayev and Spanger 2020).

This study, examining the evolving security paradigm and military cooperation in Armenia and analyzing the relevant legal framework, allows for theoretical conclusions and practical recommendations. The study's findings on the transformation of Armenia's military cooperation and its implementation practices allowed for the identification of challenges, trends, and development directions in the current context, as well as the development of concrete proposals for improving military cooperation. These include:

- The South Caucasus is undergoing significant transformations in its military and defense dynamics, with each of the three key countries adapting to the changing geopolitical landscape in accordance with their national interests.
- It remains a fact that the aftermath of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and subsequently the 2020 war, continues to impact the security policies of all three countries, further influencing their military cooperation and strategies. The post-

war situation remains a critical factor determining the regional balance of power not only in the military, but also in the economic, social, cultural, and other spheres.

- The development of military cooperation in the South Caucasus highlights the complex security aspirations of states, illustrating the strategic importance of the region and the complex security challenges faced by small states in disputed regions.
- Given current trends, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia will actively continue to diversify their military partnerships to balance regional and global power. This could lead to further geopolitical fragmentation or, conversely, new security alliances. The South Caucasus will remain a contested space, where global and regional powers—such as Russia, Türkiye, the EU, and the US—will compete for influence, shaping military and defense processes in the region.

Going forward, the South Caucasus will remain a dynamic and strategically competitive region, where military cooperation and geopolitical alliances will continue to develop. Deepening military ties between regional and global players suggest that further security realignments, increased competition, and potential security dilemmas may occur in the coming years. Whether these changes contribute to long-term stability or further regional fragmentation will largely depend on how states structure their military strategies and diplomatic relations in this complex geopolitical environment.

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Ethics Statement

The author confirms that this study was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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RETHINKING THE SHARING OF CHALLENGES IN ALLIED RELATIONS: INDICATORS FOR ASSESSING RELATIONS IN THE DYNAMICS OF ARMENIAN-RUSSIAN MILITARY COOPERATION

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Abstract

This article analyzes the main trends in rethinking challenges in the dynamics of Armenian-Russian military cooperation. In this regard, it comparatively examines how alliances have played a key role throughout the history of international relations, from the Peloponnesian Wars to modern times. As alliances of states formed both for collective defense and to project influence through pooled resources in relation to other alliances and international systems, alliances have continually faced a range of internal and external challenges. These challenges have primarily been related to the level of mutual trust between member states, the degree to which their interests coincide, and the fulfillment—or non-fulfillment—of mutual commitments. This problem has become particularly acute in the 21st century, when formally concluded alliance treaties have not always been fully implemented in practice; that is, alliances created through mutual assistance agreements have not always functioned effectively. In this context, it is crucial to identify, systematize, and analyze the indicators and variables that determine the willingness of bilateral or multilateral state alliances with formally signed treaties to provide mutual support in real-world political and military situations. From this perspective, this article particularly examines and evaluates the structure, nature, and viability of the formal alliance between Armenia and Russia in the new realities of contemporary international relations.

Keywords: *alliance relations, formal strategic cooperation, Armenian-Russian strategic cooperation, formal obligations, 102nd military base, CSTO, international security.*

Introduction

From antiquity to the contemporary stage of globalization, military-political alliances, alongside states, have constituted key actors and subjects in international relations. Functioning primarily as systems of collective security, this institution of international relations has fulfilled a crucial mission in ensuring international security and self-

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defense. As aggregates of different states—often with partially divergent interests—alliances have nonetheless been able to safeguard the vital national interests and security of their members. Alliances based on civilizational commonality have generally proven particularly effective in this regard and continue to do so today.

In this context, it is important not only to examine and analyze the functional role of military–political alliances, but also to focus specifically on the indicators of alliance effectiveness, the correlations that determine when alliances manifest themselves in real political practice, and the circumstances under which they remain merely formal commitments. The study of this issue is of particular importance for the Republic of Armenia, given its alliance relations with the Russian Federation and its problematic political experience in 2022 in connection with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) during the border incidents involving Azerbaijan. From this perspective, it is especially important to identify and articulate the factors that ensure the activation of alliance relations and determine their level of effectiveness.

The various aspects of alliance theory and alliance functioning have been a focal point of scholarly research at different stages of historical development. In particular, during the 1930s and 1940s, and later from the late twentieth century into the twenty-first century, numerous Western—especially American—scholars (Morgenthau 1948; Liska 1962; Fedder 1968; Booth 2021; Snyder 1997), particularly representatives of political realism and neorealism (Walt 1990), conducted systematic studies focusing on national interests, alliances, and alliance relations.

Initially, the primary focus of these studies was descriptive and functional analysis of the conceptual nature and essence of alliances and allied relations. However, with the application of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, scholarly attention shifted toward the behavioral drivers of alliances, their functional role, the factors influencing alliance relations, and the process of moving from formal commitments to practical, real-world actions. The key issue in the study of formal and informal alliances was addressed by scholars such as K. Booth, E. Fedder, J. Liska, S. Walt, (Leeds 2003), and H. Snyder. Based on quantitative analysis (Crescenzi et al. 2012) examined the impact of factors such as the presence of a common threat, political regime type, and cultural similarities between states on alliance relations.

Among researchers studying international alliances, B. A. Leeds paid particular attention to the issue of the maintenance—or failure to maintain—legally binding alliance obligations by states. He identified primary causes of non-fulfillment, including changes in political course and shifts in state leadership. K. T. Gaubatz (1996) argued that alliances between democratic states are more stable and that democratic values and institutions facilitate the fulfillment of obligations within these alliances.

J. V. Downs, D. M. Rocke and P. R. Barsoom (1996) argued that the fulfillment of obligations depends on the characteristics of the provisions contained in alliance treaties, as well as on the type of alliance formed.

D. M. Gibler and J. A. Vasquez (1998), studying alliance types, emphasized that agreements involving the settlement of territorial disputes tend to last longer, with the parties to such agreements being more likely to fulfill their obligations. In this context, it is also important to note Bennett's (1997) article, which identifies at least four main

types of alliance duration and discusses potential factors influencing alliance stability and the fulfillment of each party's commitments.

In the study of alliance relations, we consider both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to be particularly important. From this perspective, both the present research and the proposed applied methodology—namely, the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) (2022) project—are valuable. This study focuses on the comparative analysis of a number of historically formed and currently existing alliances, providing useful data for understanding the dynamics and effectiveness of international alliances.

The Purpose of the Research: The aim of this study is to identify and document the factors, circumstances, and preconditions that affect and condition the fulfillment of mutual obligations in formal alliance relations between states.

Hypothesis: Changes in domestic political orientation reduce the practical implementation of alliance obligations.

Methodology: The research methodology is varied and multifaceted. In the analysis of alliances, methods of conceptual and systems analysis, as well as the historical-comparative method, were applied.

In the section discussing alliance relations, the historical-processual method was used. In the characterization and justification of Armenian–Russian alliance relations, coefficient-based comparative methods, as well as the analogical method, were applied. In presenting inter-state alliance relations, formalist, structural, and event analysis were utilized. The study of alliance relations also employed the chronological research method.

The Conceptual Definition of Alliances and Allied Inter-State Relations: Core Issues and Existing Approaches

Throughout the history of international relations, alliances have traditionally played a crucial role. From antiquity through the Middle Ages and the modern era to the present day, states have formed alliances, interstate unions, and coalitions of various orientations in order to advance their national interests—some of which later evolved into leading international organizations. The well-known Western theorist J. Liska notes in this regard that “it is impossible to speak about international relations without addressing alliances; apart from their names, the two are fused in virtually every respect” (Liska 1962, 3). As in the past, interstate alliances today address a wide range of regional and global challenges for states within the contemporary international system (Liska 1962). However, despite their significant role and their function as a point of departure for the policies of many states, a unified and broadly accepted approach to interpreting and defining the concept of alliance has yet to emerge, particularly in Western academic literature (McGowan and Rood 1975; Bergsmann 2001; Kaplan 2006; Webber 2013; Crawford 2024; Deni 2025).

The concept of an alliance is generally applicable both to groups composed of political parties and forces within a state, to military, political, or economic cooperation among states, and to forms of cooperation among private companies (such as economic conglomerates, producers' associations, and similar entities).

The realist theory of international relations (Gupta 2025), drawing on the approaches of Thucydides, N. Machiavelli and T. Hobbes, proceeds from the assertion that the international system is anarchic in nature, in which states struggle for relative power and dominance. From H. Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* to the works of J. Liska, K. Waltz, and S. Walt, realist scholarship has regarded the concept of the 'balance of power' as the principal mechanism for regulating an anarchic system and establishing security within it. This concept is defined as both the foundation and the primary motivation (and outcome) of alliance formation. By identifying interstate competition and confrontation as the driving force of the anarchic international system, the realist theorist J. Liska argues that "alliances are formed first and foremost against something (the policy or threat posed by a rival state)" (Liska 1962, 285). In other words, according to realists, the primary purpose of alliances is to respond to and counter threats facing a state.

In this context, H. Morgenthau identifies three possible ways for states to respond to rivals within an anarchic system: first, they may increase their own capabilities; second, they may augment their capabilities by adding the power of other states; and third, they may deprive their adversary of the support of other countries. The latter two options result in the formation of military-political alliances (Morgenthau 1948, 197). Continuing the examination of realist approaches to alliance formation, another influential theorist, S. Walt, in his work "The Origins of Alliances" (1990), analyzes historical precedents and argues that alliance formation is primarily driven by efforts to establish a balance of power and to secure victory under conditions of competition in response to a growing threat from one or more states. A state adopts such behavior when it perceives the growing power of another state as a threat. In response to the rival's successes, the state forms a group of countries pursuing similar interests—namely, an alliance. With regard to the balance of power, Walt, agreeing with Morgenthau and Liska, emphasizes that alliance formation aims not only to counter existing threats (such as increases in power or capabilities) but also to balance and offset potential future threats (Walt 1990, 19). Thus, political realists viewed threats within the balance-of-power and alliance framework as encompassing not only a rival state's hostile interests, but also its growing power and economic development, which could potentially lead to expansionist policies in the future. From this perspective, alliance formation serves to counterbalance rising powers and prevent their prospective aggressive ambitions.

At the same time, classical realists sought to specify and classify the threats posed by rival states based on their "power and capabilities, their reach, their capacity to inflict harm, and their intentions." According to them, the balance-of-power system constitutes the principal incentive for the formation of alliances and coalitions. In this regard, proponents of political realism placed particular emphasis on clarifying alliance behavior, as such behavior determines not only the formation of alliances but also their subsequent policies. The study "Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances" by O. R. Holsti, P. T. Hopmann, and J. D. Sullivan examines the relationship between alliance formation and alliance behavior. The authors conclude that "the intensification of a threat significantly contributes to alliance cohesion by enabling it to be better prepared and more capable of responding appropriately to the threat" (Holsti, Hopmann

and Sullivan 1973, 2). This suggests that the nature and magnitude of a threat play a decisive role in determining an alliance's internal cohesion and the adoption of unified behavior.

Issues of alliances, peace, and war have also been addressed by representatives of neorealism, one of the most influential contemporary theories of international relations. State behavior in forming alliances is examined in detail in K. Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979), where he does not limit his analysis solely to balance-of-power theory, arguing that it fails to predict alliance behavior. Although states do ally in the presence of a particular threat, the effectiveness of an alliance depends on how well it is managed and how strong mutual commitments are. Waltz's central argument is that the stronger an alliance's internal cohesion and the greater the alliance leader's capacity to compel members in the face of external threats, the more flexible alliance politics become. According to him, the effectiveness of alliances is directly related to the nature of relations among member states and the homogeneity of their positions. Consequently, in a multipolar world, alliances tend to be less flexible (and less inclined to compromise), since parity among members can shift rapidly under relatively minor influences (Waltz 2001, 122-123). By contrast, a bipolar world enables alliance leaders to exercise greater control over alliance policies, as the contributions of smaller players, while desirable, are not essential for the leader to maintain its power. In this context, researchers Holsti, Hopmann, and Sullivan identify four key indicators as essential preconditions for effective intra-alliance cooperation: ideological homogeneity, regime stability, unity of objectives, and systemic characteristics (Holsti, Hopmann and Sullivan 1973, 84, 143).

Summarizing the predominantly realist theoretical approaches to alliances, their formation, and the provision of security, several intermediate conclusions may be drawn. Political realists argue that alliances formed under conditions of an anarchic international system aim to balance the unequal distribution of power among states. Such asymmetries generate conditions for constant competition and, consequently, persistent conflict. Neorealists, in turn, emphasize the degree of intra-alliance cohesion and alliance behavior in their assessments, deriving these factors from the nature of relations among member states and their shared values and normative orientations.

Formally Institutionalized and De Facto Allied Relations: Alliance Indicators and Their Application to Armenian-Russian Strategic Cooperation

A key issue in the study of alliances concerns their viability—that is, the fulfillment or non-fulfillment by member states of legally codified alliance commitments. At various points in time, this issue has been at the center of scholarly inquiry by researchers such as K. Booth, E. Fedder, J. Liska, H. Snyder, S. Walt, and B. A. Leeds. In particular, B. A. Leeds has noted that alliance commitments are honored in only about 75 percent of cases, adding that the primary reasons for non-compliance are changes in political course or shifts in governing power in one of the allied states (Leeds 2003, 823). Focusing on the correlation between the fulfillment of alliance commitments and domestic political regimes, Gaubatz, for example, concludes that alliances between democratic states tend to be more stable than those involving other types of regimes,

since democratic values and institutions, by their nature, facilitate compliance with alliance obligations (Gaubatz 1996, 127).

Issues of compliance and non-compliance with alliance commitments are determined not only by political orientation and regime type, but also by the nature of alliance treaties and the type of alliance itself. For instance, J. W. Downs, D. M. Rocke, and P. R. Barsoom argue that a higher probability of treaty compliance largely depends on whether states initially include in alliance agreements only those provisions they are realistically capable of implementing, rather than a broader and more ambitious range of obligations (Downs, Rocke and Barsoom 1996, 387-388).

D. M. Gibler and J. A. Vasquez, examining alliance commitments from the perspective of alliance types, note that agreements incorporating the settlement of territorial disputes tend to be more durable and that the parties to such agreements are more likely to fulfill their obligations (Gibler and Vasquez 1998, 791-793).

Questions concerning formal alliances and their viability, as well as the formation and functioning of informal alliances in contemporary international security, are directly linked to the theses outlined above. On the one hand, they encapsulate existing theoretical approaches, research findings, and historical-political patterns; on the other, they reflect and embody the transformations taking place in international security, in the security behavior of alliances and informal groupings, and in the evolving realities faced by small states within their allied relationships.

Under such conditions, there is an emerging perception that, in the contemporary world, the military-political significance of formal alliance commitments is gradually diminishing, while informal alliances are gaining prominence. For example, when the United States launched military operations in Iraq in 2003, it did not receive support from some of its formal NATO allies; similarly, the U.S.-led coalition against the “Islamic State” was formed on an ad hoc basis (Yamao 2025, 27-58; Dadparvar and Parto 2025). Another illustrative example from U.S. practice is the informal alliances between the United States and Israel, as well as between the United States and Taiwan. The growing role and significance of informal allied relations, along with the transformation of traditional approaches to alliances, raise a number of important questions from the perspective of state security. First, this gives rise to the question of what methodologies and analytical tools exist to assess the credibility of formal alliances, enabling more reliable predictions as to whether formal alliance commitments will actually be activated in times of security need. Second, based on such assessments, it becomes possible to analyze and evaluate the necessity of transforming a state’s foreign policy strategy (Weiss and Fernandes 2025).

These considerations make particularly relevant the question of whether the presence or absence of formally institutionalized alliance relations correlates with the actual level of cooperation between states and the stability of those cooperative ties (Smolnikov 2026, 23-37). Global or regional shocks in the international system, shifts in regional power balances, and wars effectively serve as a litmus test for allied relations. Within the framework of the present study, Armenian-Russian strategic allied relations will be examined as a case of formally institutionalized alliance cooperation, while the methodological foundation of the analysis will be the ATOP

(Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944) dataset and analytical framework¹.

1. According to the ATOP methodology, the first variable for assessing alliance relations is the level of military-technical cooperation between the parties, specifically arms transfers and their share in the total volume of weapons supplied to an alliance partner (expressed as a percentage). The inclusion of this indicator among the variables under study is largely conditioned by the fact that many scholars emphasize arms transfers as a key measure of cooperation between allies (for example, Moscow and Yerevan). Moreover, according to K. Krause’s conceptual framework, arms transfers constitute an important aspect of international influence, enhancing states’ bargaining power, structural leverage, and hegemonic potential (Krause 1991, 320). Arms supplies shape the foundations of a state’s security and serve as a core component of alliance relations—namely, the provision of security and military defense. In responding militarily to potential external threats, arms trade or transfer creates conditions for greater synchronization and effectiveness of allied armed forces. The empirical basis for this component is drawn from military-technical reports, in particular the yearbooks of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the Military Balance reports, materials published in the media, and official data (see Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1. List of Military Equipment Deliveries

Country	Year	Type	Quantity (units)	Remarks
France ²	2023 order	- GM 200 and GM 400 Alpha radar systems	3	
		- Short-range Mistral air defense systems	-	
India ³	2022 order	- Bastion armored vehicles	50	
		- Pinaka multiple rocket launch systems	-	
		- Zen air defense systems	-	
2023 order	- Medium-range Akash surface-to-air missile defense systems	-		

¹ Leeds, Brett Ashley. 2026. The Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) project. Rice University. Accessed April 16, 2026. <http://www.atopdata.org>.

² Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). 2023. “24 Bastion-type armored vehicles are being delivered to Armenia, another 26 will be delivered later. Bill in the French Senate.” December 04, 2023. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32712633.html> (In Armenian).

³ Mediamax Media. 2024. “Armenia is diversifying its arms suppliers.” June 24, 2024. Accessed April 16, 2026. https://mediamax.am/am/news/arm_world/55134/ (In Armenian).

Russian Federation	2020 order	- Mi 8 helicopters ⁴	-	
	2022 supply			
	2021	-		Armenia has stated that it paid USD 400 million to the Russian Federation; however, the deliveries were delayed. Between 2011 and 2020, approximately 94% of Armenia’s military equipment supplies originated from the Russian Federation. According to the Secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, this share has declined significantly since 2021, falling to less than 10%

Besides indicators of arms trade, there are two additional key metrics that attest to the level of military-technical relations between states: the number of joint military exercises and the presence of an allied country’s military contingent or military base on a state’s territory (see Table 2).

Table 2. List of military exercises conducted with the participation of the RA

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Name of Exercise</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Scope of Involvement</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
USA	Eagle Partner 2023	September 11-20, 2023	Approximately 85 American and 175	Armenian military personnel participated at the “Zar” training center	-

⁴ CIVILNET. 2024. “What weapons have Armenia and Azerbaijan bought since the 2020 war?” April 1, 2024. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://civilnet.am/en/news/770063>.

				Ministry of Defense of the RA's N training center ⁵	
	Eagle Partner 2024	July 15-24, 2024	The participants included troops from the Armenian Peacekeeping Brigade, the U.S. Army Europe and Africa, and the Kansas National Guard	The training took place at the V. Sargsyan Military Academy in Yerevan ⁶	-
	Eagle Partner 2025	August 12-20, 2025	The participants included the Armenian Peacekeeping Brigade, the U.S. Army Europe and Africa, and the Kansas National Guard ⁷	-	-
	Combined Resolve 2025	2025	The Armed Forces of Armenia's medical unit participated in the joint multinational exercise organized by the United States	Germany – Hohenfels Barracks, Medical Battalion ⁸	-
RF	“West 2021” Military Exercises	November, 2021	Units from Armenia, Russia, and Belarus participated ⁹	-	-

⁵ ARMENPRESS. 2023. “Armenia to host Eagle Partner 2023 joint military exercise with United States.” September 6, 2023. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1118856>.

⁶ ARMENPRESS. 2024. “Joint Armenian-American exercises “Eagle Partner 2024” begin in Armenia.” July 15, 2024. Accessed April 16, 2026. https://armenpress.am/en/article/1195755?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁷ Ministry of Defence of the RA. 2025. “The commencement of the Armenia-U.S. joint exercise “EAGLE PARTNER 2025” was announced.” August, 12, 2025. Accessed April 16, 2026. https://www.mil.am/en/news/12903?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁸ ARMENPRESS. 2025. “Armenia participates in Combined Resolve military exercises with U.S.” February 3, 2025. Accessed April 16, 2026. https://armenpress.am/en/article/1211009?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁹ ARMENPRESS. 2021. “Armenia, Russia hold joint military exercises.” November 25, 2021. Accessed April 16, 2026. https://armenpress.am/en/article/1069143?utm_source=chatgpt.com

	2023	-	-	-	Armenia has refused to conduct military exercises on its territory for CSTO member states ¹⁰
	2024 February	-	-	-	In an interview with <i>France 24</i> , the Prime Minister of Armenia announced the ‘suspension’ of Armenia’s membership in the CSTO ¹¹
					On November 24, 2025, Russian Presidential Assistant Y. Ushakov announced that Armenia’s representatives would not participate in the CSTO summit scheduled in Bishkek. However, they would not oppose the adoption of the agreed-upon documents. Armenia’s Deputy Minister of Foreign

¹⁰ Daily Sabah. 2023. “Armenia cancels military drills with Russia amid tensions.” January 10, 2023. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/africa/traditional-healers-turn-to-ancestral-remedies-as-ebola-spreads-in-drc>.

¹¹ The Prime Minister of the RA. 2024. “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's interview with France 24 TV.” February 23, 2024. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://www.primeminister.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2024/02/23/Nikol-Pashinyan-Interview-France-24/>

					Affairs, Mnatsakan Safaryan, stated in a briefing with journalists that the issue of Armenia's withdrawal from the CSTO is not on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' agenda ¹²
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The legal status and foundations of the military presence of the 102nd Russian military base in the Republic of Armenia were established through a number of bilateral agreements, the most significant of which was the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on the Russian military base on the territory of the Republic of Armenia, signed by the presidents of the two countries in Moscow on March 16, 1995¹³. The agreement stipulated the joint provision of security for Armenia's external borders, while from a strategic perspective its primary objective was to ensure a balance of power for the RF in the South Caucasus and to guarantee its own military-political presence in the region¹⁴.

Structurally, the units of the 102nd Russian Military Base are integrated into the Joint Military Grouping with the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia. This grouping consists of two components and is responsible for safeguarding the Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Iranian borders. In accordance with the agreement of September 30, 1992, the 102nd Military Base ensures the security of the 345-

¹² Sputnik Armenia. 2025 "Armenia will not participate in the upcoming CSTO summit: stated the aide to the President of the RF." November 24, 2025. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://arm.sputniknews.ru/20251124/hajastany-chi-masnaki-hapk-gagatnzhvoghvovin-rd-nakhagahignakan-96176119.html> (In Armenian).

¹³ The MFA of the RF. 1995. "TREATY between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on the Russian military base on the territory of the Republic of Armenia." Accessed April 16, 2026. https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/47983/ (In Russian).

¹⁴ President of Russia. 2011. "Ratification of Protocol No.5 between Russia and Armenia." June 27, 2011. Accessed April 16, 2026. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/11754>; The MFA of the RF. 1992. "TREATY between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on the legal status of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation located on the territory of the Republic of Armenia." August 21, 1992. Accessed April 16, 2026. https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/48796/ (In Russian); The MFA of the RF. 1994. "PROTOCOL between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on the procedure for financing and logistical support of the Border Troops of the Russian Federation located on the territory of the Republic of Armenia." January 25, 1994. Accessed April 16, 2026. https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/international_contracts/2_contract/48151/ (In Russian).

kilometer Armenian–Turkish border and the 45-kilometer Armenian–Iranian border. It also includes border guard units of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of the Russian Federation stationed in Armenia. The FSB border guard contingent comprises four border groups located in Gyumri, Meghri, Armavir, and Zvartnots Airport (the border guard presence at Zvartnots Airport ceased operations in 2024). The total number of FSB border guard personnel amounts to approximately 4,500. Their logistical support and maintenance are provided on an approximately equal basis by the two sides¹⁵.

On August 20, 2010, during the visit of Russian President D. Medvedev to Armenia, the fifth protocol to the March 16, 1995 agreement on the presence of the Russian military base in Armenia was signed between the RA and the RF, extending the duration of the base’s deployment until 2044¹⁶. According to the amendments introduced in Article 3 of the Protocol, in addition to ensuring Russian interests and Armenia’s security through joint forces, the Russian Federation assumed the obligation that “for the achievement of these objectives, the Russian side shall provide assistance to the Republic of Armenia by supplying modern and comparable military (special) equipment”¹⁷: It should be emphasized that Russia’s security guarantees extended exclusively to the internationally recognized territory of the Republic of Armenia.

2. In addition to indicators of military cooperation between states, another important metric is the level of political support that allied countries provide to one another, as reflected in the convergence of their positions within influential international organizations (such as the United Nations and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe). Voting alignment in the UN General Assembly or the PACE constitutes a reliable indicator of mutual support among allies in international forums. Within this framework, the present study examines the outcomes of Armenia’s voting on a number of resolutions concerning the Russian Federation in the UN and the PACE.

In November 2019, the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution proposed by Ukraine entitled “Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.” Sixty-seven states voted in favor of the document, 82 abstained, and 23 voted against. According to TASS, “Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Syria, North Korea, as well as a number of Latin American and African states did not support the draft resolution.”¹⁸

In April 2022, the UN General Assembly voted in favor of suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council. The joint resolution submitted by the EU delegation was supported by 93 countries, opposed by 24, while 58 countries abstained. Armenia did not participate in the vote; Azerbaijan also abstained from participation (Barabanov 2025; Abrahamyan 2025; Epstein and Paylan. 2025).

On April 16, 2025, Armenia voted in favor of the UN General Assembly document entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ President of Russia. 2010. “Joint news conference following Russian-Armenian talks.” August 20, 2010. Accessed April 16, 2026. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/8695>.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ CIVILNET. 2014. “Armenia Votes with Russia Against Ukraine.” March 28, 2014. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://civilnet.am/en/news/390140>.

organizations: cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe,” which contains allegations against Russia. The preamble of the resolution refers to “Russian aggression against Ukraine and Georgia” and also mentions efforts related to “the establishment of a special tribunal on the crime of aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation.” The resolution was adopted with 105 votes in favor, 9 against (including the United States), and 33 abstentions¹⁹.

On February 22, 2022, Armenia was the only member state of the Council of Europe to vote alongside the Russian delegation against the decision to expel Russia from the organization in connection with its invasion of Ukraine. As reported, the proposal submitted by Poland and Ukraine was approved by 42 out of 47 member states²⁰.

3. It is evident that the most important and most visible indicator of military–political alliance relations is allies’ joint participation in military operations, which represents the most comprehensive manifestation of alliance commitments. In this context, the examination of specific cases is particularly important, especially with regard to how joint military participation is articulated in treaties that formally establish alliance relations and, more specifically, under what circumstances the conduct of joint military operations is envisaged.

Notably, joint actions may not be explicitly stipulated in defense alliance agreements (for example, the allied obligations of CSTO member states did not require them to support Russia in Syria or Ukraine); such agreements may not envisage the military provision of a partner’s external security; external assistance to parties in civil wars may be provided informally, and its existence cannot always be reliably verified. According to assessments by several researchers, even after the events related to Crimea in 2014, the Russian Federation’s closest allies adopted a cautious stance regarding the prospects of further cooperation with Moscow (Klein 2019, 28). It is apparent that after 2014, international pressure on Russia in connection with Crimea, Donbas, and Syria could be viewed as a “stress test” of the resilience of relations between Moscow and its allies. The situations surrounding the “special military operation” in Ukraine in 2022 and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war created an ambiguous environment in terms of the predictability and mutual expectations of allied responses. Moreover, in the case of Armenia, the events in Jermuk in 2022 subjected alliance relations to intense scrutiny by Armenian society as well as by political and state elites. This, in turn, altered perceptions of the Russian Federation as an allied partner among segments of Armenian society, particularly affecting emotional components and historically rooted interpretations.

¹⁹ 168 Hours. 2025. “Armenia voted in favor of the UN resolution, which contains accusations against Russia.” April 18, 2025. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://168.am/2025/04/18/2202230.html> (In Armenian).

²⁰ Armenia Today. 2022. “Armenia is the only country that voted against the decision to expel Russia from the Council of Europe.” February 26, 2022. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://armeniatoday.am/hy/world-2/431754/> (In Armenian).

4. Another important and substantive indicator within the selected methodology is the volume of economic cooperation between states²¹, specifically foreign trade—namely, the share of exports and imports within overall trade turnover.

5. In addition to the indicators discussed above, there exists a range of other, no less important auxiliary factors that condition and influence relations between allies. These include, in particular, the presence or absence of geographical proximity, historical and migratory ties between states, and the degree of cultural affinity (Mayer and Zignago 2011). When these indicators are applied to Armenian–Russian relations, it can be noted that the Republic of Armenia does not share a land border with its strategic ally, the Russian Federation, which constitutes a significant structural constraint. There is no direct corridor between Armenia and Russia; Georgia and Azerbaijan are located between them. For example, the road distance from Tavush Province (RA) to the Upper Lars checkpoint (Georgia–Russia border) is approximately 250–300 km, depending on the point of departure, while the route Yerevan–Upper Lars–Russian border is roughly 370–390 km. Turning to historical and political relations, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (Armenian SSR) officially became one of the founding republics of the USSR on December 30, 1922, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was established. Specifically, in December 1920, Soviet power was established in Armenia and the Armenian SSR was formed. In 1922, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan were united within the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR). On December 30, 1922, the TSFSR became one of the founding entities of the USSR, thereby incorporating Armenia into the Soviet Union. In 1936, the TSFSR was dissolved, and the Armenian SSR became a separate Union republic of the USSR. Armenia remained part of the Soviet Union until September 21, 1991, when, following a referendum, it declared independence.

Despite the importance of the aforementioned indicators, which at a general level define and outline both the structure and the depth of allied relations, they nevertheless do not provide a definitive explanation for the causal relationship between formal alliance commitments and their practical implementation. This suggests that certain conditions and circumstances may give rise to problematic situations in the realization of formal alliance relations even in the presence of robust, multidimensional indicators of cooperation.

In our view, the most significant of these factors include differences in the nature of political regimes and principles of power formation among allied states; shifts in the international geopolitical environment; adjustments to allies' foreign policy orientations amid the reconfiguration of the global balance of power; and pronounced asymmetries in the distribution of resources and interests between allies—most notably the dichotomy between the interests and influence of a great power and those of a small state.

²¹ Official Website of Statistical Committee RA. 2026. External trade database. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://armstat.am/am/?nid=160>; Official Website of Statistical Committee RA. 2026. Other statistical databases. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://armstat.am/am/?nid=14>.

Conclusion and discussion

Summarizing the theoretical considerations and empirical observations outlined above, several key conclusions may be drawn:

- Strategic alliance relations are measurable and defined by clear indicators that reflect the quality, depth, scale, and hierarchy of inter-state relations. In the era of *realpolitik*, core interests must substantially converge for alliance obligations to function effectively. Under alternative geopolitical conditions, even the existence of a solid cooperative foundation does not guarantee the practical implementation of alliance commitments.
- The principal test of alliance relations is military assistance, which often depends not only on formal obligations but also on interstate and domestic political contexts, the prevailing balance of power in international relations, the nature of political regimes, and potential transformations in foreign policy orientations.
- Alliance relations between a great power and a small state are inherently problematic, as their respective interest domains are objectively different and cannot be sustained through partial convergence alone. A great power pursues agendas related to the expansion of influence, access to new resources, and broader global engagement, whereas small states are primarily focused on survival and, at best, localized development agendas.
- The dominant principle governing alliance relations is *realpolitik*, shaped by the balance of power and a state's resource potential. This implies that the formal existence of alliances does not guarantee the full and consistent fulfillment of alliance obligations, which may ultimately lead to a reassessment of the alliance relationship itself.
- Armenian–Russian strategic alliance relations represent a classical alliance–partnership format, both in structural and indicator-based terms. However, changes in the international political environment, shifts in political power within Armenia, and transformations in foreign policy priorities have created conditions for reassessing the content and spirit of the alliance component of Armenian–Russian relations. The transformation of perceptions regarding the roles, positions, and mutual expectations of the parties has prompted a recalibration of overlapping interests, accompanied by a more cautious and restrained discourse at the primary level of bilateral interaction.

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Ethics Statement

The author confirms that this study was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Abstract

This book analyzes the life and legacy of the world-renowned Dutch philosopher Benedict Spinoza, taking into account that some of Spinoza's ideas are continually revived to serve as either the subject of criticism or the source material for the creation of new concepts, thus serving philosophy at every stage of its development. Such fruits of philosophical research subsequently serve science as such. Spinoza is one of the thinkers whose work remains noteworthy today, as his understanding of the world represents a complex interweaving of ontological and epistemological ideas, within the context of which a corresponding human figure, with its soul, body, and social being, is precisely defined. In developing this system, the philosopher often addresses questions that are the most problematic for philosophical science, questions that pit researchers from different fields and even scientific disciplines against each other. In addition to the key philosophical problems, Spinoza's theory contains other, less fundamental but no less significant issues. The interpretation of God, the search for the optimal method of cognition—all these aspects of Spinoza's theory—have been subject to both serious criticism and support. In both cases, Spinoza's views stimulate scholars to think.

Keywords: *Young Spinoza, teaching skills, scientific revolution, supernatural, Theological-Political Treatise, democratic republicanism, Bible critique, political theory.*

The teachings of the great and renowned Dutch philosopher Bemedikt Spinoza are subject to varying interpretations, both in general and in specific areas, such as the formation of a finite world by substance, the relationship between soul and body, the essence of Spinoza's geometry, and others. The main difficulty in evaluating his ideas stems from the fact that the conclusions of many studies are sufficiently substantiated, which points to the inconsistency of Spinoza's teaching itself. As a result, scholarly positions enter into an irreconcilable confrontation, which does not lead to a clarification of Spinoza's conception. It is more constructive, in my opinion, to regard

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the various interpretations as hypothetical. Since this approach does not constrain the researcher to strictly adhere to Spinoza's text, it allows for the actualization of the Dutch philosopher's legacy through the creative application of his ideas in philosophical thought of the future.

"Spinoza," Bertrand Russell writes in his *History of Western Philosophy*, "is the noblest and most lovable of the great philosophers; as a natural consequence, he was during his lifetime considered a person of appalling wickedness." (Russell 1945, 569). He adds that he considers Spinoza a greater philosopher than Locke; but as he has had much less influence than the latter, he pays less attention to him.

Russell's elegant formulations show an image of Spinoza that is still dominant today: as an unjustly persecuted secular saint, and as a philosophical loner without many followers. And indeed, in many modern histories of philosophy one finds one variety or other of this image. In the present-day Netherlands, Spinoza is still worshiped as a saint of freedom who stood up against all religious oppression. This present-day saint worship, however, has also produced its critics and iconoclasts. For example, Slavoj Žižek once asked quasi-rhetorically whether it was possible not to love Spinoza – only to proceed to beat him with a Hegelian stick. More recently, authors such as Victor Kal and the Frenchman Henry Mechoulan have argued that Spinoza was not a heroic pioneer of freedom but rather a strongly authoritarian, if not totalitarian thinker (Žižek 2002; Kal 2020; Mechoulan 2023).

But regardless of such disputes, it is clear that Spinoza does not fit well into the existing historiography of modern Western philosophy: according to most textbooks, modern philosophy since Descartes and Locke has been dominated by epistemological questions about the justification of knowledge and the refutation of skepticism on the one hand, and by social contract theories about the origin of societies, justice and freedom on the other. Spinoza certainly does not fit into this pattern. He rejects both the epistemological challenge of skepticism and Descartes's answer to that challenge, the idea of a thinking and therefore existing self, subject or 'I' on which the entire cartesian theory of knowledge is built. Likewise, he rejects the idea of a social contract as the rational basis for a just polity which may be found in his liberal contemporaries Hobbes and Locke (not to mention later thinkers like Rousseau, Kant, Rawls and others).¹

In recent years, Jonathan Israel has launched a frontal attack on the widespread view that Spinoza has had little influence; for him, the Netherlands, and not London, Paris, or Prussia, was the proper birthplace of the real, 'radical' Enlightenment, and Spinoza was the key figure in this development. His *Radical Enlightenment* (2001) argues that there was a clandestine but influential Enlightenment movement in the Netherlands that was more radical than Descartes, Voltaire and Kant, and that it was Spinoza who stood at the beginning of this movement. In other words: Spinoza was much more influential than has long been assumed.

This is indeed a radically new – and, admittedly, still controversial – view of this philosopher and his historical importance. Israel's great achievement has been to force historians and philosophers who regard Spinoza as an amiable loner to take a fresh

¹ *Political Treatise*, III.13-16; in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter 16, however, he appears to assume or endorse contractarianism.

look at the intellectual history of early modern Europe. Philosophers and historians have criticized *Radical Enlightenment* for presenting Spinoza too unambiguously as a materialist, atheist, feminist and anti-colonial, and for trying to reduce the Enlightenment too much to one man. However, the book was warmly received by the general public, especially in the Netherlands: for many Dutch opinion makers, the attacks by Islamic suicide terrorists against the World Trade Center in New York of September 11, 2001 confirmed a fundamental contrast between the enlightened Netherlands and an Islamic world that “had not yet gone through an Enlightenment.” In 2023, newspaper headlines are no longer dominated by the al-Qaeda network but by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza; and public debates no longer focus on Enlightenment and religion, but on gender, diversity, decolonization and slavery. Does Spinoza have anything to say to us about the world of the twenty-first century? According to Israel, he does indeed, if only we correctly understand his life and environment. That is why he has now added a biography of Spinoza to his four breathtakingly lengthy volumes on the Enlightenment: this new book, too, runs to no less than thirteen hundred pages – a size that may put off many potential readers.

One may ask if yet another study of Spinoza’s life is really necessary. After all, several good biographies already exist. In 1999, British philosopher Margaret Gullan-Whur published *Within Reason: A Life of Spinoza*, daringly speculating about Spinoza’s love life and fiercely criticizing his views on women as problematic even for his own time. These criticisms were generally not appreciated by the – usually male – reviewers. This book, however, was soon overshadowed by Steven Nadler’s magisterial *Spinoza: A life* – a wonderfully balanced study, which consistently indicates where the known facts end and the speculations (or mystifications) begin, and which soberly assesses the more problematic aspects of Spinoza’s personality and work. In 2018, Nadler published a new edition of this biography, revised in the light of the most recent discoveries.

Israel recognizes the value of Nadler’s work, but still sees room for a ‘comprehensive and detailed’ biography that looks in greater detail at Spinoza’s historical and cultural context. At the time, one reviewer had complained at the time that Nadler paid too little attention to Spinoza’s ‘intellectual biography,’ and to the authors who had shaped Spinoza or encouraged his criticisms (Beiser and Hidalgo 1999, 4-5). Israel has taken such objections to heart for his own biography, which indeed has an impressive cast of characters. Despite this avalanche of names, titles and facts, however, a striking amount of Israel’s story is still based on guesswork. Where Nadler generally restricts himself to what we can know about Spinoza’s views and environment, Israel freely speculates freely about his feelings and intentions, and on occasion even about his ‘unconscious motives.’ Regularly, he confidently asserts that Spinoza ‘undoubtedly’ thought this or felt that (Israel 2023, 102, 110, 179, 287, 322, 460, 606). Many of those conjectures are entirely plausible; but they are and remain guesswork.

Such speculative remarks are not mere slips of the pen: clearly, Israel is on a mission. According to him, Spinoza is not only the most radical, most subversive, and most influential, but above all also the most *modern* philosopher of the seventeenth century. In fact, he has consistently and tirelessly been trying to sell this image in all

his earlier four bulky volumes on the Enlightenment, and again in this study. Repeatedly, its pages show a barely concealed irritation at fellow historians and philosophers who still do not get it. It should be noted, however, that here and there, Israel has made significant adjustments to his earlier views of Spinoza. Thus, he no longer calls him an atheist as he did in *Radical Enlightenment: Spinoza*, he now acknowledges, did not reject the ‘true religion’ (*vera religio*) but only the authoritarian culture of rabbis and theologians. Unfortunately for present-day debates, however, Israel has also toned down his earlier discussions of colonialism and slavery, although this would certainly have been relevant in light of the early Dutch colonization of North and South America, and of the Sephardic Jewish presence in the Brazilian colony. Likewise, Israel still does not sufficiently recognize that terms such as *philosophy*, *religion* and *democracy* generally mean something very different for Spinoza than they do for us.

Nevertheless, this book has much to offer to patient and persevering readers. Israel makes grateful use of the latest discoveries and insights, such as Leen Spruit’s and Pina Totaro’s text edition (2011) of the so-called ‘Vatican manuscript’ of the *Ethics*, which shows small but significant deviations from the previously known text, and Jeroen van de Ven’s overview (2022) of all publications by Spinoza that appeared in print in the seventeenth century, often clandestinely and under false title. Strikingly, however, Israel (like Nadler) still pays scant attention to the impressive French tradition of commentaries on and philosophical studies of Spinoza, starting with Martial Guérout and Alexandre Matheron, and continued more recently by authors such as Gilles Deleuze, Étienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey. Had he done so, he could have found some important allies.

Spinoza’s exceptional place in early modern philosophy may reflect the exceptional place of the Low Countries in the early modern world.² The Netherlands of the seventeenth century CE formed a distinct polity in early modern Europe: unlike most neighboring states, it was a loosely federated mercantile republic rather than a centralized absolute monarchy; and especially during the so-called ‘stadtholderless period’ (1650-1672), it showed religious pluralism and tolerance unrivalled anywhere else in Western Europe. With its flourishing maritime trade, it was a pioneer of early mercantile capitalism (including, tragically, a leading role in the transatlantic slave trade); and with its stock market, it was a pioneer of the modern financial system. In 1688, the Dutch stadtholder William III played a key role in the so-called ‘Glorious Revolution,’ characterized by Russell as “the most moderate and successful of all revolutions,” which ended a long period of religious conflict and political instability in England, and established early liberalism there as firmly as in the Netherlands (Russell 1945, 604). And in the relatively open society of the early modern Low Countries, philosophers like Descartes and Locke were able to develop, and publish, the radical ideas of works like the *Discourse on Method* and the *Letter Concerning Toleration*.

But what exactly is the importance of the fact that Spinoza lived in the seventeenth-century republic of the Netherlands? Despite its relative decentralization and tolerance, it certainly was no paradise on earth, even apart from the slave trade that dominates

² In fact, a similar point was already made by Negri (1991).

contemporary discussions. It was also plagued by regular uprisings by commoners, and by internal conflicts – between Protestants and Catholics, between Protestants themselves, between Republicans and Orangeists, and so on. Nevertheless, the stadtholderless era in particular was a special, if not unique, experiment in seventeenth-century Europe. While most states were ruled by absolute monarchs and had religious uniformity imposed from above, this merchant republic had a policy of religious pluralism and tolerance. Israel even calls it “Europe's greatest marvel in terms of cultural diversity” and “the world’s then philosophical centre” (p. 5).

A Dutch audience will be happy to read such and similar claims; but it should be noted that Dutch tolerance was far from unlimited. Although the Netherlands did not have an Inquisition, it knew of serious cases of religious persecution. For example, Calvinist theologians had works like Hobbes's *Leviathan* and Lodewijk Meyer's *Philosophia scripturae interpres* banned; and in 1668 Adriaan Koerbagh was arrested because of his book *A light shining in dark places*, and imprisoned in the Amsterdam Rasphuis, where he died a year later.

Spinoza, too, was harshly confronted with the very real limits on religious freedom and freedom of expression on several occasions. According to Israel, he actually made a systematic attempt to seek and transgress such boundaries. Whether he was in fact such a subversive thinker may be debated; but clearly, Spinoza did not always adhere to his own motto *caute*, “be careful!” After his 1656 clash with the rabbis, he published the *Theological-Political Treatise* in 1670, a fierce polemic against the powerful Calvinist theologians; and in 1672, he wanted to stage a public protest against the murder of the De Witt brothers, with a banner on which he had written, in Latin, *ultimi barbarorum* (“the worst of barbarians!”). According to Leibniz, Spinoza was saved from certain death that day by his landlord, who locked him up in his room for his own safety.

Israel is clearly less interested in the chronology of Spinoza's life and experiences than in their philosophical and cultural-historical significance. His first chapters discuss in detail why exactly he was so controversial, what exactly his early posthumous influence was, and what his intellectual backgrounds in the Iberian Jewish community were. It is only after more than a hundred pages that Spinoza's actual life story gets underway. Spinoza was born in 1642 in the Jewish district of Amsterdam, around the corner from where the Rembrandt House still stands today. He grew up in a Sephardic environment in which more Spanish, Portuguese and Hebrew were heard than Dutch. The Jewish quarter was not a ghetto, and Jews in Amsterdam were not required to wear distinctive clothing; but among the Jewish immigrants, the fear of the Inquisition was still very much alive. The temptations of the Dutch gentile environment, and the subsequent arrival of large numbers of Ashkenazim who had fled from Eastern Europe, made the Sephardic community even more closed and conservative. The Sephardic rabbis desperately tried to keep the congregation together, if necessary with harsh measures. With some regularity a *kherem*, a ban or anathema, was pronounced on a straying member.

In 1656, this dubious honor befell Spinoza. Odette Vlessing has argued that Spinoza's anathema was not caused by his philosophical views but by legal and tax-

related haggling; but the text of the kherem points emphatically to Spinoza's "pernicious ideas." In any case, Spinoza was not impressed by the ban. "All the better," was his response, according to legend. Building on this, Israel suggests that Spinoza in fact deliberately provoked a clash with the rabbis and rejected attempts at reconciliation. Reportedly, however, he wrote a Spanish-language *Apologia*; this work has been lost, but parts of it may have ended up in the later *Political-Theological Treatise*.

Around the time of the kherem, Spinoza began the study of Latin, the language in which he would write all his major philosophical writings. His teacher was the ex-Jesuit Franciscus van den Enden, who would later also publish radical pamphlets such as *Vrije Politieke Stellingen* ('Free Political Propositions,' 1665) and *Kort Verhael* ('Short Treatise,' 1662). Early sources mention rumors – or gossip – about an unhappy love that Spinoza is said to have had for Van den Ende's daughter; but unlike Gullan-Whur, Israel does not consider these stories worthy of discussion. Spinoza also had contact at this time with the so-called Collegiants, a liberal Protestant movement that met monthly in classes or 'colleges' in which women were also allowed to participate.

Now the similarities between Spinoza and these contemporaries have long been known and studied; but Israel here as in his earlier works makes the bold statement that Spinoza, and Spinoza alone, is the source of the radical Enlightenment. In other words: according to him, it was not Van den Enden and Koerbagh who helped shape Spinoza's radical ideas, but conversely it was the latter whose ideas triggered the radicalization of his teachers. Spinoza, that is, was not shaped by his teachers, but shaped them.

That is an interesting but debatable statement; oddly, Israel, otherwise rarely at a loss for words, is far too brief here to be convincing. Missing in particular is any discussion of Spinoza's teacher Van den Ende, and in particular of his *Kort verhael*, a pamphlet on the Dutch colonial presence in America. One would have thought that this work is an essential source for comparison with Spinoza's ideas, and an eminently relevant topic for today's world in its own right.

Thus, the main earlier objections to Israel's views of Spinoza remain in place. His needlessly apologetic reading of Spinoza becomes most visible when he tries to justify Spinoza's openly elitist position. For example, Spinoza opens the preface to the *Treatise* with the overtly elitist remark "I do not invite the common people (*vulgus*) to read this book;" according to Israel, however, terms such as *vulgus* and *multitudo* do not refer here, as they usually do, to the commoners or the masses in a sociological sense, but to the 'everyday minds' who – regardless of their social class – follow common opinion rather than reason. Such a reading is rather far-fetched and distorted: here and elsewhere, Spinoza makes it abundantly clear that he has no interest in the lower classes. It was not without reason that he deliberately wrote the *Theological-Political Treatise* in Latin, and fiercely opposed any plans to translate it into Dutch.

Even worse is the fact that Israel simply glosses over Spinoza's ideas about women, only acknowledging in passing that Spinoza mentions an 'automatic' domination of men over women that cannot be philosophically justified. In reality, however, Spinoza specifically and problematically argues that women *naturally* have fewer rights than

men, and that women are incapable of reasonable thinking.³ Worse, this sexism seems to stem directly from his philosophical views. It is undoubtedly a bit facile to dismiss Spinoza as misogynistic by present-day standards; but to simply conceal such problematic views is the other extreme.

In 1670, the *Theological-Political Treatise* was published anonymously, and with a forged publisher and place of publication. The publication led to angry reactions, and not much later to a formal ban. Opponents described the book as ‘plague-bearing’ and ‘forged in hell,’ and its author as ‘the most famous and subtle atheist that hell ever vomited out over the earth.’ Even Spinoza’s potential supporters, such as Remonstrants and Collegians, were troubled by the book. Despite the rapid and drastic repression, Israel argues, it soon gained wide, if clandestine, distribution; according to him, Spinoza’s early influence rests more on this book than on the posthumously published *Ethics*. In this context, he devotes a fascinating discussion, largely based on Van der Ven’s research, to the clandestine French-language editions of the *Treatise*, under flowery titles such as *The Key to the Shrine* or *Curious Considerations of a Disinterested Mind*.

In 1675, Spinoza made another trip to Amsterdam, in an ultimately futile attempt to publish the *Ethics*. The following year, he met the young Leibniz. He had been in poor health for a long time, and in February 1677 he died, not yet 45 years old. Shortly after his death, the *Opera posthuma* was published, again clandestinely. This collection contained, among other things, the *Ethics* and the unfinished *Political Treatise*. Like the *Theological-Political Treatise*, this publication also led to a huge outcry; but by then, Israel argues, ‘Spinozism’ had already begun its triumphal march across much of Europe.

The *Theological-Political Treatise* appears to be addressed to moderate theologians; but according to Israel, Spinoza also sought influence among a more worldly audience. In support of this belief, he interprets the latter’s move to The Hague in 1670 as an attempt to come closer to the centers of power, in the hope of being able to exert real influence on grand pensionary Johan de Witt’s government policy. If true, this would turn Spinoza into a kind of proto-Marx, who not only wanted to understand the world but also to change it, or who at the very least hoped to help shape government policies. Spinoza as an early modern think tank or policy advisor: it is possible, but – once again – mere guesswork, for which not a shred of concrete evidence exists.

This conjecture, however, leads to what is perhaps Israel’s most daring statement in a book already full of daring statements: according to him, Spinoza was simply not an academic philosopher, nor did he want to be one. Accordingly, he argues, the academic study of Spinoza places too much emphasis on the role of reason, and too little on the – individual and collective – good life; and as a result, it may be missing an essential aspect of his work. In support of this argument, he adduces, among other things, a discovery from the recently discovered Vatican manuscript of the *Ethics*, which gives *vitalis* instead of *rationalis* in the appendix to book IV⁴ (Israel 2023, 1208). While all editions from the *Opera posthuma* onwards give “no life is rational without understanding”, the Vatican manuscript reads, according to Dutch translator

³ *Ethics*, book V, prop. 10 schol.; cf. *Political Treatise* XI.4.

⁴ *Ethics*, Book IV, Appendix, point V.

Vermeulen, “no life is vital without understanding,” and according to Israel “no life is a life-giving life” or, “a life worth living, without understanding.” If *vitalis* is indeed Spinoza’s correct term, this does in fact strongly suggest that Spinoza is concerned with philosophy as a (private and public) way of life. With this claim, Israel not only opposes Nadler’s view that the *Ethics* only offers an ‘egocentric’ ethics, and is only supplemented with a social and political component in later treatises: according to him, collective reason as a force for the betterment of society already figures in the *Ethics* as well; but also, and more importantly, he opposes the school tradition that has modern Western philosophy begin with epistemological questions.

Philosophers may object that Israel is really overstepping his boundaries here; but perhaps he is more right here than he thinks. In particular, French thinkers such as Pierre Hadot have argued that premodern philosophy is not an academic discipline but a way of life, and French commentators such as Alexandre Matheron have emphasized the social and political-philosophical dimensions of the *Ethics* (Hadot 2002; Matheron 1969). Israel seems unaware of these French allies; but through this neglect, he does both himself and Spinoza a disservice: if his suggestion that Spinoza was concerned with a way of life rather than with academic metaphysics is anywhere near correct, we need a more radical revision of the received view of Spinoza – and, by extension, of Descartes and others. And indeed, in the *Ethics*, Spinoza characterizes Descartes not primarily as an epistemological or metaphysical innovator, but as a guide to “the right way of living” (*recta vivendi ratio*).⁵

Thus, despite its shortcomings, this biography is a worthy conclusion to Israel’s immense revisionist research project on the Enlightenment, which invites criticism and further research. Israel has done his homework; the ball now lies in the court of the historians of philosophy.

Ethics Statement

The author confirms that this study was conducted in accordance with the Journal’s Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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⁵ *Ethics*, Book III, preface.

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