SUSTAINING PEACE IN A 21ST CENTURY CHEQUERED GLOBAL ARENA

Iheoha Esther Chinemerem
estheriheoha130@gmail.com
Department of History and International Studies,
Faculty of Arts,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
08056287752
&
Dr. Ezeonwuka, Innocent Franklyn
if.ezeonwuka@unizik.edu.ng
Department of History and International Studies,
Faculty of Arts,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
08033096134

Abstract
Just as time elapses by the 'tik tok' chyme of every second, the world continues to drift nearer doomsday, no thanks to the multiplication of myriads of societal divisive factors. Relatively interconnected and globalised as the case may be, but inherently and inharmoniously strewn in distrust and the eclipse of fraternal confidence, peace remains a mirage. The pursuit of peace has been a long-standing concern of human societies, with various disciplines contributing to the understanding of conflict and its resolution. This research examines the historical and theoretical foundations of peacebuilding, with a particular focus on the intersection of humanities and science. From the Enlightenment thinkers who first posited the idea of a peaceful international order to the modern-day applications of artificial intelligence and data analytics in conflict prediction and prevention, this study traces the evolution of peacebuilding, thought and practice. Through a critical analysis of key texts and concepts in the fields of history, philosophy, literature and science, the study identified how interdisciplinary approaches have shaped the understanding of peace and conflict. This study attempts to highlight the importance of integrating humanities and science in peacebuilding initiatives and demonstrates the potential of this approach to address complex global challenges. By methodically examining the historical and theoretical underpinnings of peacebuilding, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the role of interdisciplinary collaboration in promoting peace and reducing conflict.

Keywords: Enlightenment, data analytics, artificial intelligence, theoretical foundations, conflict prediction.

Introduction

The 21st century has ushered in an era of unprecedented complexity in global affairs, marked by rapid technological advancement, shifting geopolitical power dynamics and intensifying security threats. This intricate landscape has created an environment where sustaining peace is more challenging than ever, necessitating a fundamental transformation in the approach to peace-building and conflict management.

Historically, peace-building and conflict management have been shaped by the post-World War II international order, which ought to prevent the recurrence of large-scale interstate wars through the establishment of international institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and the development of International legal frameworks. The Cold War era further influenced these fields, as ideological rivalries between superpowers often fuelled proxy wars in the Global South, necessitating interventions aimed at conflict resolution and stabilization (Galtung, 1969). However, the limitations of traditional frameworks have become apparent in the face of asymmetric warfare, non-state actors and transnational threats. The rise of asymmetric warfare has enabled non-state actors to challenge traditional state-centric models of conflict resolution, while transnational threats such as terrorism organized crimes and cyber-attacks have underscored the need for more nuanced and collaborative approaches to peacebuilding (Kaldor, 2012).

The liberal peace-building model, which dominated international efforts in the 1990s and early 2000s, has faced criticism for its overly Western-centric approach and failure to tackle deep-seated inequalities. This model, built on democratization, market liberalization and state-building, was often imposed on post-conflict societies without sufficient consideration for local contexts and needs (Paris, 2004).

Critics argue that this approach prioritizes short-term stability over meaningful, long-term transformation, thereby perpetuating the underlying conditions that led to conflict in the first place. The ongoing, intractable conflicts in

regions like the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia highlight the limitations of one-size-fits-all solutions.

These conflicts often involve complex, deeply ingrained issues, such as historical grievances, ethnic and religious divisions and competing interests.
The 21st century has witnessed the emergence of new drivers of conflict and instability. Climate change, for instance, has exacerbated resource scarcity, displacement and competition. The world is becoming increasingly complex and this complexity is contributing to the escalation of violence in fragile states. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of global governance systems, deepening inequalities and undermining social cohesion in many societies.

At the same time, digital technology has transformed the landscape of conflict. Social media platforms have become critical battlegrounds, with various actors using them to spread propaganda, recruit fighters and undermine opponents. This has complicated the task of peacebuilders, who must now navigate the intersection of physical and virtual conflicts.

At the heart of this challenge is the need to address the root causes of conflict, such as inequality, injustice and social exclusion. Peacebuilders must also develop new strategies to counter the spread of misinformation and the exploitation of social media platforms by extremist groups. To tackle the complex challenges of conflict and peacebuilding, one needs a deeper understanding of how technology, conflict and society intersect. This requires a fresh approach to peacebuilding and conflict management, one that focuses on prevention rather than reaction. By addressing the root causes of conflict before they escalate into violence, one can create more sustainable peace. The integration of data analytics and artificial intelligence into peacebuilding is a game-changer, enabling one to better predict and prevent conflicts.

For instance, machine learning algorithms can analyze satellite images to detect early warning signs of displacement or resource scarcity, allowing for proactive interventions before need-driven violence breaks out. These technological advancements offer a powerful tool to complement traditional peacebuilding approaches, rooted in empirical observation and rational analysis.

The growing recognition of the interconnectedness of global challenges necessitates a more holistic and collaborative approach, involving not only States and International Organizations but also civil societies, private sectors and local communities. The challenges of sustaining peace in the 21st century is compounded by the erosion of multilateralism and the resurgence of selfish nationalism in the various parts of the world. The declining commitment to international cooperation, exemplified by the withdrawal of key states from global agreements and institutions, has undermined the collective capacity to address transnational threats. At the same time, the rise of populist and authoritarian regimes has largely led to the suppression of dissent, the erosion of democratic norms and the exacerbation of social divisions, promoting and creating divisiveness. One is kept aghast when in the 21st-century world, many Western governments who pose as the apostles of "democracy" and "freedom" openly suppress the outbursts and clamour of the majority of their citizens. Taken that there is no morality in international politics, but there is no need to doubt the welcome common sense on the superiority of fairness and social justice in all spheres of human endeavour. On the other hand, agreed that there's no perfection with the human folk, coupled with his tendency to resort to extreme ties in a bid to achieve personal interests, the importance and need for cautionary re-evaluation over time, guided by constructive dialogue have not only endeared peaceful and respectful co-existence, but a healthy referral.

Conceptual Base
Peace-building and conflict management are two interrelated yet distinct concepts that form the cornerstone of efforts to address violence and promote sustainable peace. While peace-building sets the stage for long-term stability, conflict management focuses on containing and resolving ongoing disputes.

Peace-Building
Peace-building is a multidimensional process aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict, fostering reconciliation and establishing sustainable peace in post-conflict societies. Unlike conflict resolution which focuses on ending immediate violence, peace-building emphasizes long-term structural and cultural transformation to prevent relapse into conflict. The term gained prominence in the 1990s through the work of scholar practitioners like Johan Galtung and was institutionalized by the United Nations in documents such as An Agenda for Peace (1992), which defined peace-building as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, para. 21).

The modern concept of peace-building emerged in the post WW II war era, shaped by the failures of traditional state-centric approaches to address intrastate conflicts fuelled by ethnic, religious and resource based grievances. Early peace-building efforts, such as UN missions in Namibia (1989-1990) and El Salvador (1991-1995), focused on disarmament, democratization and elections. However, the 1994 Rwanda genocide and the collapse of the Dayton Peace Accord in Bosnia exposed the limitations of this narrow, technocratic approaches. This led to a paradigm shift towards holistic peace-building, which integrates security, development and justice (Barnett et al., 2007).

Peace-building is rooted in three key theoretical frameworks:
Positive vs Negative Peace (Galtung, 1969):
> *Johan Galtung's seminal work in 1969 brought to the forefront a critical distinction between two concepts of peace: negative peace and positive peace. This distinction has remained a cornerstone of peace studies and continues to shape our understanding of what it means to achieve lasting peace. Negative peace, in its simplest form, refers to the absence of direct violence. It's the silence that follows a ceasefire, the stillness after a storm. But negative peace is not enough; it's a temporary reprieve, a fragile calm that can easily be shattered. It doesn't address the underlying issues that led to conflict in the first place. On the other hand, positive peace is a more profound and lasting state. It's built on the presence of social justice, equality and harmony. Positive peace is not just the absence of war; it's the presence of a just and equitable society where all individuals can thrive. It's a state where conflicts are addressed through dialogue, empathy and mutual understanding.*

Liberal Peace-building (Paris, 2004):
> *The Liberal Peace-building model, popular in the 1990s, tied peace to the spread of Western-style democracy, free markets and state-building. However, it is argued that this approach had some major flaws. By imposing external norms and values, it disregarded the unique local contexts and cultures of the countries it was applied to. Moreover, it is also said that this model prioritized stability over justice, essentially sweeping underlying issues under the rug in the name of maintaining order. This not only undermined the legitimacy of local institutions but also created an environment where conflict could simmer just below the surface, waiting to erupt again.*

Conflict Transformation (Lederach, 1997):
> *John Paul Lederach's Conflict Transformation approach, marked a significant shift in the way One thinks about resolving conflicts. Lederach believed that true peace can only be achieved by empowering local communities to take ownership of the peace process. He advocated for grassroots, participatory approach that focuses on healing relationships and rebuilding trust from the ground up. This means involving local actors, such as community leaders, NGOs and religious groups, in the peace-building process. Lederach's innovative "Pyramid model" highlights the crucial role that mid-level leaders play in bridging the gap between top-level negotiations and community needs. By connecting the dots between these different levels, the world can create a more inclusive and sustainable peace that truly benefits everyone.*

Peace Support Operations (PSO) (Iwuanyanwu & Ezeonwuka, 2024) have come a long way, adapting to the complexities of modern conflicts. These operations now cover a range of activities, from peacekeeping and conflict prevention to humanitarian assistance, all working together to create lasting peace. Peacekeeping has evolved from simply monitoring ceasefires to complex missions that bring together military, police and civilian teams. For example, the UN's missions in Mali and South Sudan support elections, governance and human rights. Technologies, like drones and data analytics, are also being used to enhance surveillance and understanding of situations. Additionally, there's a growing focus on gender-sensitive approaches, promoting women's participation in peace processes.

These missions are authorized under the United Nations Charter and some, like NATO's intervention in Kosovo and AMISOM in Somalia, even use force to protect civilians or stabilize regions.
Proactive and structural approaches include;
- Early Warning - Effective early warning systems are crucial in preventing conflicts. By leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and partnering with local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), One can enhance One's ability to detect early signs of conflict. For instance, regional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa play a vital role in identifying potential flashpoints and facilitating timely interventions.

- Structural Prevention - Structural prevention involves addressing the root causes of conflict, such as inequality, through initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and governance reforms.
- Tools - Mediation - To promote peace and stability, various tools can be employed. These include mediation, such as the African Union's efforts in Ethiopia, as well as economic sanctions and development aid. Additionally, initiatives like the UN's Peacebuilding Fund provide crucial support for grassroots projects that foster peace and stability at the local level.
- Challenges - One of the major challenges in maintaining peace and stability is the gap in political will, which can lead to delayed responses to emerging crises. A stark example of this is the situation in Syria, where despite having improved data-driven early warning systems, the international community's response was slow to materialize.

Peacekeepers play a vital role in ensuring aid reaches those in need in conflict zones. For instance, the World Food Programme's efforts in Yemen rely heavily on peacekeepers to secure delivery routes.

The "triple nexus" approach is a crucial framework for building long-term resilience. By linking humanitarian, development and peace actors, it enables a more cohesive and sustainable response to crises. However, the politicization of aid and humanitarian supplies as is currently experienced in the latest Israeli war in Gaza can severely undermine neutrality. The impact of sanctions on civilians in Syria equally, is an example of this challenge.

Conflict Management

Conflict management is a systematic approach to addressing disputes between individuals, groups or nations with the goal of minimizing escalation and fostering constructive dialogue. Unlike conflict resolution, which seeks to eliminate the root causes of conflict, moving onwards to redefine relationships and systems, conflict management prioritizes containment, de-escalation and pragmatic solutions. This concept acknowledges that conflict is an inevitable part of human interaction, but argues that its destructive potential can be mitigated through strategic interventions. The field draws from diverse disciplines, including psychology, political science, history and sociology and employs frameworks such as negotiations, mediations and arbitrations to navigate misunderstandings and disagreements.

The evolution of conflict management can be traced through historical shifts in global politics. During the cold war for instance, superpowers like the United States and the Soviet Union relied on deterrence and proxy wars to manage ideological rivalries, reflecting a realpolitik approach that prioritize power dynamics over dialogues (Kennedy, 1987).

Theoretical foundations of conflict management are rooted in Game Theory, negotiation strategies and cultural studies. Thomas Schelling's The Strategy of Conflict (1960) revolutionized the field by framing conflicts as strategic interactions where parties weigh costs and benefits to avoid mutually destructive outcomes. His concept of the "focal point"- a natural coordination solution remains influential in designing ceasefires and peace agreements, emphasizing mutual gains and objective criteria over adversarial bargaining. These theories highlights the importance of empathy, communication and creativity in managing disputes.

Recent scholarship emphasizes decolonial and intersectional approaches to peacebuilding. "Decolonizing Peace: Transitional Justice and Reconciliation in Non-Western Societies" (2023) by Elisa Randazzo critiques Western-centric models, arguing that liberal frameworks often side-line indigenous justice systems (e.g., gacaca courts in Rwanda). Randazzo advocates for hybrid mechanisms that blend local traditions with formal institutions. Similarly, "Feminist Peacebuilding in an Era of Violence" (2022) by Laura McLeod examines how gender hierarchies perpetuate conflict, drawing on case studies from Colombia and Northern Ireland. McLeod highlights the role of grassroots women's movements in challenging militarized masculinities and redefining security. Both works stress the need to centre marginalized voices in peace processes.

Technology and environmental crises are reshaping conflict management. In "Digital Peace: How Tech Shapes War and Reconciliation" (2023), Lisa Schirch analyses the dual-edged role of digital tools, from AI-driven early warning systems to the weaponization of social media (e.g., Myanmar's Rohingya crisis). Schirch calls for ethical frameworks to govern tech in peace work. Complementing this, "Climate Conflicts: The Geopolitics of a Warming World" (2024) by Tobias Ide links climate change to resource wars and displacement, proposing "environmental peacebuilding" strategies (e.g., transboundary water-sharing in the Nile Basin). These works reflect growing urgency to address 21st-century drivers of violence.

Critical perspectives on systemic inequities dominate newer debates. "Peacebuilding in the Global South: Agency and Survival" (2024) by Siba Grovogui challenges the myth of "failed states", arguing that Global South conflicts

are shaped by colonial legacies and extractive global capitalism. Grovogui urges reparative justice over paternalistic intervention. Meanwhile, "The Business of Peace: Corporate Power and Conflict Resolution" (2023) by Rebecca Richards exposes how multinational corporations co-opt peacebuilding for profit (e.g., oil firms in South Sudan), advocating for binding regulations to curb exploitative practices. Together, these texts demand structural overhauls to address root causes of violence, moving beyond technical fixes.

Reflections
The Global Arena is characterized by paradoxical forces, growing interdependence through globalization and resurgent nationalism that prioritizes state sovereignty over collective action. This tension has profoundly impacted peace-building and conflict management, exposing systematic flaws in International Institutions, while amplifying the role of national egoism in derailing multilateral efforts. Contemporary conflicts are increasingly characterized by non-state actors, proxy forces and cyber warfare. The recent Ukraine war has highlighted the challenges of navigating complex geopolitical landscapes and the limitations of traditional diplomatic approaches, in a world marred by the eclipse of fraternal confidence.

International Organizations such as the United Nations (UN), The European Union (EU), The African Union (AU) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) were established and designed to fairly uphold collective security and human rights, to promote peace, stability and cooperation among nations.

The United Nations, in particular, perhaps 'a high sounding nothing' has been criticized for its inability to prevent or resolve conflicts in a timely and effective manner. The Organization's bureaucratic structure, funding constraints and Veto power wielded by permanent members of the Security Council have limited its ability to respond to emerging crises. The United Nations' inability to halt atrocities in Gaza, Syria, Yemen and Myanmar underscores systematic flaws. Despite deploying peacekeepers in South Sudan (UNMISS), civilian massacres persisted due to weak mandates and under-resourced missions (Autesserre, 2014). The Security Council's veto system dominated by the P5 (US, Russia, China, France, UK), prioritizes geopolitical interest over human security. For example, Russia and China repeatedly blocked resolutions on Syria, enabling Assad's regime to weaponize starvation and chemical attacks. The United States' persistent use of its veto power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to block resolutions addressing Israeli actions in Palestine—including those condemning violence, settlements, or human rights violations—has been a defining feature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades. This pattern reflects geopolitical alliances, domestic politics and broader strategic interests, but it has drawn widespread criticism for undermining international law, perpetuating impunity and exacerbating humanitarian suffering.

Since 1972, the US has cast over "44 vetoes" to shield Israel from UNSC resolutions, more than all other permanent Security Council members combined. Notable examples include:
- 1980: Blocking a resolution condemning Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem.
- 2006: Vetoing a resolution demanding Israel halt military operations in Gaza.
- 2011: Blocking a resolution condemning Israeli settlements as illegal (the US was the sole dissenter among 14 Security Council members).
- 2023: Vetoing a ceasefire resolution during Israel's military campaign in Gaza following Hamas' October 7 attacks, despite overwhelming global calls to halt civilian casualties.

These vetoes often align with escalations of violence, such as Israel's wars in Gaza (2008-2009, 2014, 2021, 2023) and have shielded Israel from accountability for actions deemed violations of international law, including:
- Expansion of settlements in occupied territories (illegal under Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention).
- Use of disproportionate force in densely populated areas.
- Restrictions on humanitarian aid and collective punishment of Palestinians.
- Annals of history cannot overlook the trending 2024/2025 landmark Israeli plausible genocide on Gaza, actively backed by the bipartisan US government.

US and Israel
The continued controversial US support for Israel could be gleaned from the following pedestal:
Israel is a vital US ally in the Middle East, serving as a democratic stronghold in a region prone to turmoil. Their partnership has its roots in the Cold War era, with cooperation against Soviet influence, as well as shared intelligence efforts, particularly in counterterrorism and military collaboration. The US provides significant financial support to Israel, with an annual aid package of $3.8 billion. This assistance enables Israel to acquire essential military capabilities, ensuring its ability to defend itself. In return, the US benefits from having a reliable

regional partner for military, security and intelligence cooperation. Their strategic alliance is built on a foundation of shared democratic values and common interests. The US and Israel engage in various joint endeavours, including military exercises, technological cooperation and trade agreements.

Bipartisan support for Israel in Congress is driven by various factors. Lobbying groups like AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) play a significant role in shaping this support, as they effectively advocate for pro-Israel policies . Evangelical Christian voters also contribute to this dynamic, as many believe that supporting Israel is a moral and biblical imperative. This widespread support makes criticism of Israel politically challenging, as lawmakers risk alienating key constituencies and facing backlash from influential lobbying groups. Consequently, presidents from both parties have historically maintained strong support for Israel to avoid jeopardizing their relationships with these critical constituencies.

US policymakers view Israel as a crucial partner in countering regional rivals, particularly Iran, Hezbollah and other actors deemed hostile to US interests. This strategic alliance is rooted in a shared concern about the threats posed by these actors to regional stability and US national security. Israel's proximity to these hostile actors and its military capabilities make it an invaluable partner for the US. US administrations frame Israel's policies as acts of "self-defence", even when international bodies like the UN or ICC (International Criminal Court) document potential war crimes.

However, the US vetoes are not left without consequences. Some of which includes:
Repeated vetoes weaken the UNSC's credibility and erode the principle of accountability, setting precedents that powerful states can act with impunity. For example, the US vetoes have stalled efforts to investigate alleged war crimes in Gaza or halt settlement expansion.

By shielding Israel from diplomatic pressure, vetoes reduce incentives for de-escalation. Critics argue this emboldens hard-line Israeli policies, such as the 2023 Gaza siege, which the UN called a "graveyard for children." The US positions itself as a champion of a "rules-based order" but faces accusations of hypocrisy for shielding allies like Israel while supporting sanctions or interventions elsewhere (e.g., Russia in Ukraine). This fuels anti-Western sentiment, particularly in the Global South (Ezeonwuka, 2023)

Blocking resolutions demanding aid access or ceasefire agreements exacerbates civilian suffering. In 2023, US vetoes delayed humanitarian pauses during Israel's bombardment of Gaza, where over 30, 000 Palestinians were killed (per Gaza Health Ministry figures).

The US veto policy reflects a prioritization of geopolitical interests over humanitarian principles, with dire consequences for Palestinians and the legitimacy of international institutions. While domestic and global pressure is mounting, meaningful change would require a radical rethinking of US foreign policy—one that aligns with universal human rights rather than unconditional alliances.

While the African Union mediated peace in Sudan's Darfur region (2007), its reliance on external funding (for example, European Union subsidies) limits autonomy. The 2020 Tigray war in Ethiopia exposed AU's paralysis, as member state prioritized bilateral ties over impartial mediation (De Waal, 2021). The International Criminal Court's focus on African leaders (for example, Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta) while ignoring Western powers' abuses (US torture in Iraq) has branded a tool of neo-colonialism (Clarke, 2019).

The failure of the USA Foreign Policy in preventing and resolving conflicts has also contributed to the challenges facing peace-building and conflict management efforts. The USA's unilateral approach to conflict resolution, its reliance on military power, economic sanctions and its lack of engagement with local stake holders have often exacerbated conflicts rather than resolving them. The many red spots around the globe spanning irritable healthy conflicts, be it in Myanmar, Sudan, Yemen, South China Sea, Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon, African Sahel among others, have all lacked matured peace.

Nations increasingly prioritize sovereignty and self-interest over global cooperation, undermining peacebuilding efforts, hence the following global developments continue to hinder global peace:

US Unilateralism
Unilateralism refers to a nation's pursuit of foreign policy objectives independently, often without the consent or collaboration of other countries or international institutions. For the United States, unilateralism has been a recurring strategy, reflecting its global influence and occasional preference for autonomy over multilateral cooperation. This approach contrasts with multilateralism, which emphasizes alliances and international frameworks.

Post-World War II, the US largely championed multilateral institutions like the United Nations (UN) and North Atlantic Treaty of Organizations (NATO). However, the Cold War's end and the 9/11 attacks catalysed shifts toward unilateralism. The 2002 Bush Doctrine, emphasizing pre-emptive strikes and prioritizing national security, marked a turning point, as did scepticism toward treaties perceived as limiting US sovereignty.

Some key examples include:
- Iraq War (2003): Launched without UN Security Council approval, despite a "coalition of the willing", this exemplified unilateral military action.
- Paris Agreement (2017): The Trump administration withdrew, citing economic concerns, though Biden later re-joined.
- Iran Nuclear Deal: Trump unilaterally exited in 2018, straining relations with European allies.
- Kyoto Protocol and International Criminal Court (ICC): The US rejected both, citing sovereignty and bias concerns.
- Hybrid attacks, regime change, covert USA operations, NGOs and terrorist sponsorships.
- Trade Wars: Trump's tariffs on China and allies highlighted economic unilateralism. Such tariffs under his second tenure, appears dangerously boundless.

The Trump administration's withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal (2018) and the Paris Climate Accord (2017) fractured trust in multilateral diplomacy. Biden's attempts to revive these agreements faced resistance from nationalist factions, reflecting a broader decline in US Leadership (Patrick, 2020).

US unilateralism reflects a tension between sovereignty and global interdependence. While it offers short-term autonomy, long-term challenges require balancing decisive action with collaboration. The future of US foreign policy will likely hinge on navigating this duality, adapting to a multipolar world where neither pure unilateralism nor multilateralism dominates.

Russia's Expansionism

Russian expansionism refers to policies or actions aimed at extending territorial control, political influence, or strategic dominance beyond a state's recognized borders. For Russia, this concept is deeply rooted in its history, from Tsarist imperial conquests to Soviet-era satellite states and modern-day geopolitical manoeuvres under Vladimir Putin. Critics argue it reflects a blend of security paranoia, historical revisionism and aspirations for great-power status, while Moscow often frames its actions as defensive or protective of Russian-speaking populations.

- In the Tsarist Era (16th-18th century) Russia expanded across Eurasia, annexing Siberia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and parts of Eastern Europe, driven by resource extraction, trade routes and imperial rivalry.
- Soviet Union (1922–1991): The USSR consolidated control over Eastern Europe via the Warsaw Pact and suppressed independence movements (e.g., Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968).
- Post-Soviet Era (1991–present): After the USSR's collapse, Russia sought to retain influence over former Soviet states (the "near abroad") through economic leverage, military interventions and support for separatist movements.

However, modern Russian expansion could stem from mere outright territorial annexations to covert and overt areas designated as 'spheres of influence':
- Chechen Wars (1994–2009): Brutal suppression of Chechnya's independence bid, cementing federal control.
- Georgia (2008): Military intervention to support breakaway regions (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), undermining Georgian sovereignty.
- Crimea Annexation (2014): Illegal seizure of Crimea from Ukraine, justified as protecting ethnic Russians and correcting historical "injustice."
- Eastern Ukraine (2014–present): Backing separatists in Donbas and the 2022 full-scale invasion, framed as "denazification" and resisting NATO encroachment.
- Syria (2015–present): Military intervention to prop up Bashar al-Assad, securing a Mediterranean foothold and expanding Middle Eastern influence.
- Hybrid Tactics: Cyberattacks, election meddling and disinformation campaigns in Europe and the US
- Africa: Wagner Group mercenaries and resource deals in Libya, Mali, Burkina Faso and Sudan to counter Western influence.

Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and 2022 invasion of Ukraine violated the UN Charter's prohibition of territorial aggression. The United Nations Security Council's (UNSC's) paralysis due to Russia's veto power highlighted the fragility of international law (Mearsheimer, 2014).

Russian expansionism blends historical precedent, perceived vulnerability and revanchist ambition. While Moscow has achieved short-term gains (a military strong and economically viable country), long-term costs—isolation, economic strain and a somewhat united Western response—pose significant challenges. The Ukraine war has become a defining test: victory could embolden further aggression, while defeat might force a recalibration. Ultimately, Russia's ability to sustain expansionist policies will depend on its capacity to manage domestic stability, global alliances like the Russia/China/Iran/North Korean ties and the rising influence of rival powers like China. In a multipolar world, unchecked expansionism risks triggering systemic instability, underscoring the need for renewed diplomatic frameworks to address security dilemmas, or else how could the second-tenured Trump be hallucinating over the US absorbing not only Canada, Greenland and even Panama, hence 'might is now right'.

European Gang Up
The term "European gang-up" is often used pejoratively to describe instances where European nations or the European Union (EU) act collectively in ways perceived as confrontational, exclusionary or unfairly targeting another state or bloc. This framing typically arises from critics who view European unity as a threat to their interests. European cooperation emerged after 1945 to prevent conflict, rebuild economies and counterbalance US and Soviet influence. Institutions like the EU and NATO institutionalized collective action. Europe relied on US security guarantees but also sought autonomy (e.g., France's Gaullism, the Euro currency). Some Gang-up perceptions includes:
- Sanctions Against Russia 2014–present): EU-wide sanctions over Crimea and Ukraine are framed by Moscow as a Western "economic war" led by Europe, a Russiaphobic manifestation.
- US-EU Trade Disputes: Tariffs under Trump (e.g., steel/aluminium) triggered EU retaliation, seen by some Americans as "ganging up" against US interests.
- Brexit Negotiations (2016–2020): The EU's unified stance in talks with the UK was criticized by Brexit supporters as punitive or inflexible.
- Climate Policy Leadership: The EU's Green Deal and carbon border taxes are viewed by some developing nations as eco-protectionism.
- Digital Regulation: The EU's strict antitrust actions against US tech giants (e.g., Google, Apple) are seen as targeting American dominance.
- Iran Nuclear Deal: European efforts to salvage the deal after US withdrawal (2018) were criticized by Washington as undermining its sanctions.

The term "European Gang-Up" often reflects geopolitical resentment toward Europe's somewhat perceived enemies or threats. While the EU and NATO amplify Europe's global role, internal divisions and external pressures (from migration to great-power rivalry) complicate its coherence. Critics exaggerate Europe's unity, but its ability to act collectively—whether on sanctions, climate or tech regulation—remains a defining feature of 21st-century geopolitics. The challenge for Europe is balancing cooperation with inclusivity to avoid perceptions of exclusionary bloc politics in a fragmented world, more so under the looming and disturbing shadow of Donald Trump's second tenure.

The Sino Strategy (SS)
Deterring and avoiding open confrontation and war, sequel to its litany of challenges has remained China's foreign compass. While heavily investing in convert economic meandering, China has strengthened its octopian global grip through its controversial Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aims to connect Asia, Africa, Europe and beyond through massive infrastructure projects. The goal is to boost trade, investment and regional integration. However, concerns have been raised about the initiative, particularly regarding the loans China provides to participating countries.
The term "debt trap diplomacy" has been used to describe the risk that China may lend money with unfavourable terms to countries that may struggle to repay. This could lead to China gaining strategic concessions or control over key assets.

For instance, Sri Lanka borrowed $1.5 billion from China to build the Hambantota Port, part of BRI's maritime network. However, struggling to repay, Sri Lanka leased the port to China Merchants Port Holdings for 99 years in a debt-for-equity swap. While some have framed this as a "debt trap," others argue that Sri Lanka's debt was already unsustainable due to mismanagement and global market shifts. Through the ambience of BRICS and ASCEAN, the Sino strategy appears to be silently energized.

International Organizations like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank impose austerity measures on post-conflict states, deepening poverty and resentment. for example, the IMF-mandated cuts to social services in

post-war Liberia worsened inequality (Pugh "et al., " 2016). Western-designed peace-building frameworks often ignore local traditions. In Afghanistan, NATO's dismissal of jirgas (tribal councils) alienated communities, fuelling Taliban resurgence (Barfield, 2010). For the developed West, globalisation remains a potent tool of marginalising the global South, controlling their transformative growth and impinging on indigenous political evolution through their tutored "almighty democracy".

Conclusion

The increasingly complex and interconnected nature of the global arena necessitates innovative approaches to address the myriad challenges that arise. The intersection of technological advancements, shifting geopolitical landscapes and evolving societal needs underscores the imperative for adaptive and forward-thinking solutions. Ultimately the effectiveness of innovations in addressing the challenges of a chequered global arena will depend on their ability to balance competing interests, foster global cooperation and prioritize human wellbeing. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, it is essential that innovations are designed with a global perspective, taking into account the diverse needs and experiences of different cultures, economies and societies.

Recommendations

Modern day application of artificial intelligence towards decoding and analysing lots of emergent data propping up from the human society could help prompt and trace the degenerative stages of dissent from uncompromising misunderstanding to overcome conflict and the destruction of lives and properties. Adequately synthesising good Intel *ab initio* strengthens and underscores intended mitigation, hence principally avoiding simple grievances from blossoming into more complicated and dangerous conflicts.

The contemporary global landscape which is marked by escalating geopolitical tensions, climate crises, economic inequities and transnational challenges, underscores the urgent need to revitalize and reform existing international organizations, which were largely conceived in the aftermath of 20th-century conflicts and now struggle to address the complexities of a multipolar, interconnected world. This study centres on reimagining these institutions—such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization and International Monetary Fund—by advocating for structural and philosophical overhauls that prioritize proactive, anticipatory governance over reactive crisis management, ensuring these bodies are equipped not only to respond to immediate threats but to foresee and mitigate emerging risks, from technological disruptions to ecological collapse. Central to this vision is the establishment of robust checks and balances that democratize decision-making, enforce accountability and dismantle entrenched power asymmetries, thereby fostering equitable participation among nations while curbing the dominance of self-interested actors who often prioritize short-term national gains over collective global stability. By embedding mechanisms for compulsory compliance with internationally agreed norms such as binding climate targets, fair trade practices and human rights safeguards, the proposed reforms aim to transcend the current culture of voluntary adherence, which has allowed systemic injustices and loopholes to persist, while simultaneously creating inclusive platforms for marginalized voices, particularly from the Global South, to shape policies that directly impact their societies. The article argues that only through such holistic restructuring, rooted in transparency, adaptive governance and a redefined social contract between states, can these organizations evolve from bureaucratic entities hobbled by inertia into dynamic, mission driven forces capable of mediating conflicts, redistributing resources fairly and upholding a rules-based order that deters exploitation and hegemony. Ultimately, the goal is to reconcile the idealism of multilateral cooperation with the pragmatism of enforceable frameworks, ensuring that global governance structures are not merely preserved, but transformed into equitable instruments of progress, resilience and shared human security in an era of unprecedented interdependence and existential threats.

The escalating interplay between environmental degradation and global instability necessitates an urgent, unified response to address the multifaceted ways in which ecological crises act as accelerants for conflict, with climate change emerging as a critical threat multiplier that exacerbates existing tensions over dwindling resources, displaces vulnerable populations and destabilizes regions already grappling with political and economic fragility. Rising global temperatures, intensifying droughts and erratic weather patterns are not merely environmental concerns but catalysts for competition over arable land, freshwater and energy sources, as seen in regions like the Sahel, where desertification has fuelled clashes between pastoralists and farmers or in South Asia, where glacial melt and river disputes threaten to escalate into cross-border conflicts. Similarly, environmental disasters from catastrophic floods to wildfires, disproportionately impact low-income nations, destroying livelihoods, displacing millions and creating breeding grounds for radicalization and social unrest, as communities stripped of their means of survival become susceptible to exploitation by armed groups or authoritarian regimes promising stability. To counter these interconnected risks, the global community must prioritize a rapid, just transition to renewable energy systems, investing in solar, wind and geothermal infrastructure not only to reduce carbon emissions but to dismantle the geopolitical stranglehold of fossil fuels, which has long perpetuated resource wars, economic inequality and environmental harm. By democratizing access to clean energy, particularly in developing nations,

this shift could alleviate energy poverty, reduce dependency on volatile global markets and foster economic resilience, thereby addressing root causes of conflict linked to scarcity and inequality.

Parallel to this, the pervasive crisis of plastic pollution with millions of tons suffocating marine ecosystems, entering the food chain and infiltrating human bodies reveals a disturbing illustration of humanity's unsustainable relationship with the planet. Microplastics, now detected in human blood, placental tissue and brain matter, underscore a silent public health emergency, with long-term consequences for neurological health, immune function and generational well-being, while simultaneously devastating marine biodiversity, as coral reefs bleach, fish populations decline and coastal communities lose their primary sources of nutrition and income. Tackling this crisis demands binding international agreements to phase out single-use plastics, incentivize circular economies that prioritize reuse and recycling and hold corporations accountable for the lifecycle of their products, coupled with grassroots initiatives to restore polluted ecosystems and innovate biodegradable alternatives. Crucially, these environmental interventions must be integrated into broader conflict prevention strategies, recognizing that ecological stewardship is not a niche concern but a cornerstone of global security, as degraded environments amplify social fractures, erode trust in institutions and create vacuums of governance exploited by violent actors. This requires reimagining multilateral frameworks to bridge the gap between environmental policy and peacebuilding, ensuring climate adaptation funds are directed toward conflict-prone regions, disaster response mechanisms are linked to early warning systems for violence and environmental justice is woven into diplomatic negotiations, empowering marginalized communities to lead restoration efforts and decision-making processes. Only by confronting these planetary emergencies with the same urgency and cooperation traditionally reserved for military threats can humanity hope to break the cycle of ecological decline and its attendant conflicts, fostering a future where shared stewardship of natural resources becomes the foundation for lasting peace, equity and collective survival.

Technologies like drones, AI-powered social media must be deployed in data collection and monitoring community engagements in all spheres, though with enough protection against privacy misuse. Moreover, gender inclusion demands the inclusion of female peacekeepers detailing on gender-focused programming, hence ensuing trust and deterring sexual violence.

Under-resourced local countries should be groomed and supported to domesticate peace processes through stronger indigenous agencies and in encouraging partnerships with regional and intercontinental groups, erode funding challenges and build resilience. Moreover, hybrid conflicts thriving on disinformation and misinformation, including cyberwarfare could receive equitable attention.

Resource-driven conflicts, such as the Russia-Ukraine war rooted in territorial control over minerals-rich land, energy pipelines and strategic access to the Black Sea and protracted Middle Eastern struggles over oil, water and geopolitical dominance, including the raging M23/Congo/Rwanda imbroglio. Ego and indoctrinated extremism illustrate how competition for scarce or valuable resources fuels violence, displaces populations and deepens poverty, creating a vicious cycle where deprivation breeds desperation, instability and plausible genocide. The weaponization of essentials like grain and energy in Ukraine has disrupted global supply chains, spiking food and fuel prices, disproportionately harming low-income nations reliant on imports, while Middle Eastern conflicts, often masked as ideological or sectarian, perpetuate prophetic racial dominance are underpinned by struggles to control oil reserves and water sources, showcasing governance failures, corruption and infrastructural collapse that leave millions jobless, hungry and vulnerable to extremism. This nexus of resource scarcity and conflict entrenches poverty, as destroyed farms, polluted water systems and sanctions cripple local economies, pushing communities into survival mode where basic needs go unmet, scholarsticide unleashed and healthcare collapses, leaving generations trapped in cycles of deprivation. The adage "a hungry man is an angry man" captures this reality: when survival is threatened by resource inequity or environmental collapse, marginalized populations whether in war torn Sudan grappling with famine or Sahelian villages facing droughts, or the Nigerian country held down by immense challenges, become fertile ground for recruitment by armed groups, political radicalization or mass protests, further destabilizing regions and global security. Breaking this cycle demands addressing root causes, equitable resource distribution, sustainable land and energy policies and international cooperation to prevent exploitation, ensuring access to food, water and energy are treated not as a geopolitical bargaining chip but as a universal right, foundational to peace.

The intersection of religion and extremism, whether through militant interpretations of Islamist jihadism, radical Christian nationalism, Zionism, Pan-Arabism or other ideologies, demands a nuanced approach to counter violence justified in the name of God, as extremist factions often distort spiritual teachings to legitimize aggression, enforce rigid social control or suppress dissent. Addressing this requires amplifying moderate religious voices and grassroots movements, such as NGOs like "GODLIGHT" which advocates for peace and

nonviolent conflict resolution to dismantle the narratives that fuel radicalization. By fostering platforms where shared ethical principles, compassion, justice, human dignity are emphasized over divisive dogma, such organizations can challenge the allure of extremism, particularly among marginalized youth vulnerable to recruitment and indoctrination due to socio-economic despair or identity crises. Simultaneously, governments and global institutions must support these efforts through policies that curb hate speech, fund community-led peacebuilding initiatives and address systemic grievances like inequality or political exclusion that extremists exploit. Critically, religious leaders and institutions must actively reject weaponized interpretations of theology, modelling tolerance while holding accountable those who incite violence, ensuring faith serves as a bridge to coexistence rather than a weapon of division.

Localized peace-building initiatives have shown promise in addressing complex conflicts. Grassroots initiatives, such as Colombia's Community Action Boards integrates indigenous knowledge into peace processes, reducing coca-related violence (Rettberg, 2019). The effective use of digital tools also enhanced peace-building efforts. Organizations like PeaceTech Lab utilize Artificial Intelligence (AI) to analyse hate speech on social media, enabling early warnings of communal violence in countries such as Kenya and India.

Women's role in conflict resolution globally cannot be underestimated. This is always grass-rooted based. According to Galia Golan (2004), they include women bringing in different perspectives, women hearing what others say, education and civil societies, women may be more in bridging a quarrel that would have escalated. Both in conflictual and post-conflict periods, women have carved a niche for themselves. Could one forget the part played by women negotiators between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) and the government between the 1980s and 1990s? Can one forget the effects of Mrs. Eileen Johnson Sirleaf and Elizabeth Rohn, who through their envoy to Liberia and Sudan acted and presented helpful reports on the impact of conflicts on women.

One cannot totally divorce the necessity of military preparedness as a deterrent in preserving peace which is embedded in global security dynamics, reflecting the grim reality that malevolent actors, authoritarian regimes, terrorist networks or expansionist powers, often exploit perceived vulnerabilities to escalate violence. Unfortunately, it may sound paradoxical to accept that sometimes, certain degrees of violent conflicts may be needed temporarily to not only solve a nagging problem but to institute peace and respectful orderliness. Credible defense capabilities, alliances and multilateral frameworks like NATO or UN-sanctioned interventions aim not to normalize force but to dissuade aggression, as seen in delayed yet critical actions to halt genocide in Kosovo or curb ISIS's territorial advances. The principle "si vis pacem, para bellum" ("if you want peace, prepare for war") emphasizes deterrence over militarism, acknowledging that restraint without strength risks emboldening those who equate compromise with surrender. However, such strategies demand strict ethical boundaries, legal justification, strategic proportionality and prioritization of diplomacy to prevent misuse. Military power, when applied as a last resort, seeks not to "settle" disputes through destruction but to create space for dialogue, justice and lasting stability, recognizing that enduring peace hinges on both the capacity to deter threats and the wisdom to resolve root causes of conflict.

References

Accountability Lab. "Home" Accessed March 4th, 2025. https://www.accountabilitylab.org

Autesserre, S. (2014). *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention*. Cambridge University Press. https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/peaceland Accessed February 25th, 2025.

Barfield, T. (2010). *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. Princeton University Press. https://books.google.com/books/about/Afghanistan.html?id=H-N6yEIjThUC Accessed February 26th, 2025.

Barnett, M., Kim, H., O'Donnell, M., & Sitea, L. (2007). Peacebuilding: What is a name? *Global Governance*, 13(1), 35_58. https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-01301004 https://brill.com/view/journals/gg/13/1/article-p35_4.xml Accessed February 24th, 2025.

Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992). An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacekeeping and Peacekeeping. United Nations. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/145749 Accessed February 24th, 2025.

Brautigam, D. (2020). Is China ensnaring countries in Dept traps?. China Africa Research Initiative. https://www.chinaafricarealstory.com/2020/04/is-china-ensnaring-countries-in-dept.html Accessed February 25th, 2025.

BudgIT. "Track government spending". Accessed March 4th, 2025. https://yourbudgit.com

Clarke, K.M. (2019). *Affective Justice: The International Criminal Court and the Pan-Africanist Pushback*. Duke University Press. https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/22963 Accessed February 25th, 2025.

Connected Development (CODE). "Grassroots project monitoring", Accessed March 4th, 2025. https://connecteddevelopment.org

De Waal, A. (2021, November 8). The African Union and the Ethiopia-Tigray Peace Process. World Peace Foundation. https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventing peace/2021/11/08/the-african-union-and-the-ethopia-tigray-peace-process/ Accessed February 25th, 2025.

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). (n.d.). "Anti-corruption mandate". Accessed March 4th, 2025. https://www.efcc.gov.ng

Ezeonuwka, I. F. (2023). WEF Globalists and the United States in Double Standards and Exceptionalism, Awka Journal of International Relations (AJIREL)

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167-191. https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301 Accessed February 23rd, 2025.

Golan, Golia (2004). The International Community and the Conflict, Palestine-Israel, Journal, Volume II, Accessed 20/12/2023

Homer-Dixon, T. F. (1999). *Environment, Scarcity and Violence*. Princeton University Press. https://press.princeton.edu.books/paperback/9780691004687/environment-scarcity-and-violence Accessed February 23rd, 2025.

Iwuanyanwu, D. and Ezeonwuka, I. (2024). Nigeria's Participation in Peace-Support Operations and the National Interest, 1960-2023, Nigerian Journal of Arts and Humanities (NJAH) Vol. 4, No 1.

Kaldor, M. (2012). *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era (3rd ed.)*. Stanford University Press. https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=22863

Kennedy, P. (1987). *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*. Random House. https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Rise_and_Fall_of_the_Great_Powers.html?id=9fVuv0is-0QC Accessed February 25th, 2025.

Lederach, J. P (1997). Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. United States Institute of Peace Press. https://www.usip.org/publications/1997/01/building-peace-sustainable-reconciliation-divided-societies-free-full-text_download Accessed February 24th, 2025.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). "Why the Ukraine crisis is the West's fault. Foreign Affairs". https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault Accessed February 25th, 2025.

Open Contracting Partnership. "Transparency in public procurement". Accessed March 4th, 2025. https://www.open-contracting.org Open Society Foundations.

Open Society Foundation. "Funding Governance Initiatives". Accessed March 4th, 2025. https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org

Paris, R. (2004). *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*. Cambridge University Press. https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/at-wars-end Accessed February 23rd, 2025.

Patrick, S. M. (2020). *The Sovereignty Wars: Reconciling America with the World*. [Brookings Institution] (https://www.brookings.edu/book/the-sovereignty-wars/)

Pugh, M., Cooper, N., & Turner M. (2016). Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1057/9781137291732 Accessed February 25th, 2025.

Rettberg, A. (2019). Colombia's Peace Agreement: A Toolkit for Difficult Times. International Crisis Group. https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/colombias-peace-agreement-toolkit-difficult-times Accessed February 26th, 2025.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). "Governance Portfolio in Nigeria". Accessed March 4th, 2025. https://www.ng.undp.org

United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (2010). "Post-conflict peacebuilding: A literature review". United Nations. https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/pbc_literature_review.pdf Accessed February 20th, 2025.

Ushahidi. "Crowdsourcing for accountability" Accessed March 4th, 2025. https://ushahidi.com