

BALANCING PEACE-BUILDING STRATEGIES IN NIGERIA: APPRAISING THE IMPACT OF THE RULE OF LAW VS MILITARY SPENDING

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Abstract

The drive for peace in any country is and has been a cardinal policy of the country's government. In recent years, Nigeria has faced a myriad of security challenges which has necessitated its policy managers to increase the country's military expenditure while also strengthening its rule of law. This work unveils the impact of the rule of law versus military expenditure on Nigeria's peace-building experience. The fully modified OLS technique is used in analyzing the data collected. Data for the study were collected from the CBN statistical bulletin, World Justice Project data-base and the World development indicator data-base. The data covered the period from 2006 to 2023. The findings from the analysis indicates that both the rule of law and military spending impact positively on peace-building in Nigeria, however, the rule of law has more impact on peace-building than increased military spending. It is recommended that Nigeria's rule of law should be strengthened. However, an effort to strengthen the rule of law coupled with responsible military spending is required to create a comprehensive framework for peace-building. It is further recommended that policy makers should adopt a coordinated approach that aligns security spending, legal reform, and social investment strategies in peace-building. Finally regular assessment of peace indices and related variables should be undertaken to guide policy adjustments.

Keywords

Peace-building, Military spending, Rule of law, Social investment, Peace indices.

Resumo

A busca pela paz em qualquer país é, e sempre foi, uma política fundamental do governo nacional. Nos últimos anos, a Nigéria tem enfrentado uma miríade de desafios de segurança, o que levou os responsáveis políticos a aumentar as despesas militares do país, reforçando simultaneamente o Estado de direito. Este trabalho revela o impacto do Estado de direito, em comparação com as despesas militares, na experiência de construção da paz na Nigéria. A técnica OLS totalmente ajustada é utilizada na análise dos dados recolhidos. Os dados para o



estudo foram recolhidos a partir do boletim estatístico do CBN, da base de dados do World Justice Project e da base de dados dos Indicadores de Desenvolvimento Mundial. Os dados abrangem o período de 2006 a 2023. Os resultados da análise indicam que tanto o Estado de direito como as despesas militares têm um impacto positivo na construção da paz na Nigéria; no entanto, o Estado de direito tem um impacto maior na construção da paz do que o aumento das despesas militares. Recomenda-se que o Estado de direito na Nigéria seja reforçado. No entanto, é necessário um esforço para reforçar o Estado de direito, aliado a gastos militares responsáveis, para criar um quadro abrangente para a construção da paz. Recomenda-se ainda que os decisores políticos adotem uma abordagem coordenada que alinhe os gastos com a segurança, a reforma legal e as estratégias de investimento social na construção da paz. Por fim, deve ser realizada uma avaliação regular dos índices de paz e das variáveis relacionadas para orientar os ajustes políticos.

Palavras-chave

Construção da paz, Despesas militares, Estado de direito, Investimento social, Índices de paz.

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Introduction

Nigeria has been confronted by threats that are multifaceted, often intertwined and vary across regions although with similar experiences. Such threats includes; Terrorism and insurgency (Rosenje, et.al, 2022), Crime and transnational organized crimes (UNODC, 2021). Political instability and armed conflicts that threaten to undermine state authority and hinder development (United Nations, 2020). Ethnic and sectarian violence often rooted in historical grievances and resource competition which have led to periodic violence and displacement (Ottoh, 2018). Economic and cyber threats (Akinola & Liaga, 2024), as well as, Public health threats occasioned by outbreaks of infectious diseases such as Ebola, COVID-19, and other pandemics (WHO, 2025). The most prominent among Nigeria security challenges is the insurgency by Boko Haram, an extremist group that emerged in northeastern Nigeria around 2009, leading to thousands of deaths and displacing millions (Onuoha, 2025). In addition to Boko Haram and its splinter group, ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province), Nigeria contends with ethnic and communal violence, particularly in the Middle Belt and Niger Delta regions, driven by resource disputes, land conflicts, and political competition (Akinola, (2011). Socio-economic issues like poverty, unemployment, governance deficits, and marginalization contribute to the persistence of violence and extremism. Criminal activities such as kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, and organized crime further exacerbates insecurity (Olejeme, et.al, (2025)).

Nigeria has adopted a multifaceted approach to peace-building, recognizing that sustainable peace requires addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting reconciliation, and strengthening governance. Example of such approaches adopted includes; i) Regional and international peacekeeping missions, through regional peacekeeping operations under the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN). ii) Dialogue and reconciliation initiatives often focused on national dialogues and reconciliation processes to foster social cohesion. iii) Strengthening governance and state



institutions. iv) Peace education and community engagement as well as, conflict prevention and early warning systems (Essia, 2025).

The Nigerian government has employed a combination of military operations, dialogue, and development programs to address these challenges. Military efforts include the counter-insurgency campaigns by the Nigerian Armed Forces and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) targeted at Boko Haram and ISWAP. Simultaneously, peace initiatives such as amnesty programs for repentant Boko Haram and ISWAP members, as well as, in the Niger Delta and community engagement have sought to foster reconciliation and development (Toye, 2023).

Nigeria's pursuit of peace has been a central theme in its post-colonial development trajectory. Given Nigeria's history of colonialism, conflict, and political instability, the country have continuously sought sustainable peace through various strategies, frameworks, and initiatives. This quest is driven by the recognition that peace is foundational for development, stability, and the well-being of its peoples. The effectiveness of peace-building efforts remains limited due to the inability to address root causes such as poverty, marginalization, and political exclusion, raising concerns about the sustainability of peace and security in Nigeria (Akinola, 2011). Despite these strategies, challenges such as persistent violence, political instability, and resource constraints continue to impede peace efforts.

Research Objectives

The first objective for undertaking this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of rule of law-based peace strategies in Nigeria. The rule of law is a cornerstone of sustainable peace and development, particularly in regions characterized by political instability, conflict, and fragile governance structures. In Nigeria, where diverse conflicts have persisted over decades, peace-building efforts increasingly emphasize strengthening the rule of law as a central strategy. This approach aims to establish justice, accountability, and legal reforms that foster social stability and prevent recurrence of violence. However, the effectiveness of rule of law-based peace strategies varies across different contexts and requires comprehensive evaluation to understand their impact, limitations, and potential for future application (Foley, 2020). Rule of law-based peace strategies rest on core principles such as equality before the law, independence of the judiciary, access to justice, and legal accountability for human rights violations. These strategies often include institutional reforms, legal capacity building, transitional justice mechanisms, and community-based justice initiatives. The underlying assumption is that establishing justice and legal order reduces grievances, mitigates conflict, and sustains peace over the long term.

Efforts to reform judicial systems (improving accessibility, independence, and efficiency) have yielded mixed results. Countries like Ghana and Botswana have made notable progress in judicial independence, which correlates with increased public trust and peaceful dispute resolution. Conversely, in countries like Nigeria with weak institutions, corruption, political interference, and resource constraints undermine judicial



effectiveness, thereby limiting peace dividends (Azoro, et al. 2021). Although in many Nigeria societies, customary law and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms complement formal legal systems. When integrated effectively, they can enhance local participation, cultural relevance, and sustainability of peace efforts. For instance, in Nigeria's northern regions, traditional councils have played roles in mediating disputes. However, tensions between customary laws and formal legal standards can sometimes hinder justice or perpetuate inequalities, especially concerning gender rights.

The second objective for undertaking this study is to analyze the impact of military expenditure and operations on peace-building in Nigeria. The evaluation of the impact of military expenditure and operations on peace-building reveals a profound tension between the necessity of short-term security and the imperative of long-term sustainable peace and development. While military action is often the prerequisite for ending violence, excessive reliance on militarization can actively undermine the political, economic, and social foundations required for peace to endure. (Garikai & Mahuku, 2022) Military operations aimed at countering insurgency and violence can restore order and protect civilians, but if not carefully managed, they risk causing civilian casualties, eroding trust, and exacerbating conflicts. The effectiveness of military actions depends on their integration with political, social, and economic strategies that address root causes of instability. Overall, a balanced approach that aligns military efforts with comprehensive peace-building measures, respect for human rights, and fostering community engagement is vital for sustainable peace. Strategic and transparent use of military resources can support peace objectives, while over-militarization may hinder long-term stability. Military operations, both national counter-insurgency and International Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs), provide vital immediate security but introduce risks to the rule of law and political trust.

According to Saba & Ngepah (2019), the core negative impact of military spending lies in its opportunity cost and contribution to regional instability, for example, military budgets divert massive resources from essential social and development sectors like health, education, and infrastructure. This undermines the root causes of conflict (poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment) and actively hinders the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Equally, high spending often crowds-out private investment, increases public debt, and has been empirically linked to lower long-term economic growth in low-income states. This weakens the economic foundation necessary for long-term political stability and state legitimacy. Finally, increased military budgets are often perceived as a threat by neighbors, potentially triggering an arms race or deepening regional mistrust (the security dilemma). The peace-building consequence is that, it increases the risk of inter-state and internal conflict reoccurrence.

The third objective is to compare the outcomes of both the rule of law and military approaches to peace-building. The evaluation of peace-building strategies in Nigeria reveals that both rule of law (RoL) and military actions (expenditure/operations) are necessary but profoundly different tools, each carrying inherent strengths and weaknesses that determine their long-term effectiveness. The fundamental distinction is between establishing security (military) and establishing legitimacy and sustainability



(rule of law). While challenges such as institutional weaknesses and resource constraints exist, integrating rule of law with military strategies offers a promising pathway toward sustainable peace in Nigeria. It requires committed political leadership, adequate resources, and community engagement to harness these opportunities effectively (Otaiku, 2018).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides critical insights into the effectiveness of Nigeria's current security strategies, particularly the debate between emphasizing the rule of law versus increasing military expenditure. Understanding which approach yields more sustainable peace and stability is vital for policy makers, security agencies, and civil society to formulate balanced and effective security policies (Ikelegbe, 2014). By evaluating the impact of military spending in comparison to rule of law initiatives, the research offers evidence-based recommendations for optimizing resource allocation in Nigeria's peace-building efforts. Furthermore, the findings can contribute to academic discourses on conflict resolution, governance, and security sector reform in Nigeria. Finally, the study aims to enhance understanding of the interplay between military power and legal-institutional approaches in fostering long-term peace.

Review of relevant previous studies on conflict and security

Nigeria's quest for sustainable peace has been a complex journey characterized by multiple approaches, primarily oscillating between strengthening the rule of law and increasing military expenditure. The debate centers around which of the strategies is more effective in fostering long-term stability amidst the ongoing internal conflicts, insurgencies and communal violence. Peace initiatives refer to deliberate efforts aimed at resolving conflicts, promoting reconciliation, and establishing sustainable peace (Zailani, et al, 2025). In Nigeria, peace initiatives have ranged from community-based approaches, legal reforms, and dialogue processes to military interventions. The effectiveness of these initiatives depends heavily on the strategic emphasis, that is, whether on reinforcing the rule of law or on military force.

The rule of law as a peace strategy

According to Okengwu (2024), the rule of law is foundational to sustainable peace, emphasizing justice, legal accountability, and institutional integrity. Advocates argue that ensuring justice and protecting rights create an environment conducive to peace, social cohesion, and political stability (Akinola, 2011). Nigeria's legal framework, judicial institutions, and rights-based approaches are seen as critical in addressing grievances that often underlie conflicts, such as resource disputes, ethnic tensions, and political exclusion (Toye, 2023).



The challenges in operating an effective rule of law include; weak judicial institutions, corruption, and inadequate enforcement of laws, which limit the effectiveness of rule of law initiatives (Olejeme, et al, 2025). Moreover, many conflicts are rooted in socio-economic grievances that legal reforms alone may not fully address.

Military expenditure and operations as a peace strategy

Military intervention has traditionally been Nigeria's response to insurgencies and violence, especially in the North-East with Boko Haram, and in the Niger Delta with militant groups. Nigeria's military spending has increased significantly over the years, justified as necessary for national security and combating terrorism (Olejeme, et al, 2025). Proponents of military action on security issues such as Onuoha (2025), argue that, a strong military is essential for deterring violence, protecting the state, and restoring order swiftly during crises. Military solutions often provide quick responses to threats and are visible symbols of state sovereignty.

On the other hand, critics contend that excessive reliance on military expenditure and intervention can be counter-productive, potentially exacerbating conflicts by fostering repression, human rights abuses, and alienation of communities. Moreover, military approaches often address symptoms rather than root causes, risking a cycle of violence and impunity (Okengwu, 2024).

The dichotomy and interplay between the two strategies

The ongoing debate in Nigeria revolves around whether peace can be achieved predominantly through legal-institutional reforms or through military force. Scholars argue that both strategies are necessary but must be balanced (Toye, 2023). While military action may be necessary to contain immediate threats, long-term peace depends on strengthening the rule of law, promoting justice, and addressing socio-economic inequalities. Recent policy shifts suggest the recognition of this interplay, with some initiatives combining military operations with community engagement, legal reforms, and development programs. For example, the Nigerian government's counter-insurgency strategy includes military operations alongside reconciliation and reconstruction efforts in affected regions.

Theories of Peace and Conflict

Understanding the dynamics of peace initiatives in Nigeria requires examining underlying theories that explain how different approaches (rule of law versus military force) contribute to peace and stability. This framework examines relevant theories to analyze the effectiveness, limitations, and interplay of these strategies. Some peace and conflict theories are examined below;



Human Needs Theory

The human needs theory is a perspective in conflict resolution and peace-building that emphasizes the importance of addressing fundamental human needs as a pathway to achieving lasting peace. It posits that conflicts often arise when basic human needs are unmet, and resolving conflicts requires satisfying these needs. The theory has roots in the works of psychologists and conflict theorists such as Manfred Steger, John Burton, and others who viewed conflicts as stemming from unmet human needs rather than solely from material or political grievances. (Burton, 1990).

The core principles of human needs theory includes; i) *Universal human needs*, which asserts that certain needs are universal and must be fulfilled for individuals and groups to coexist peacefully such as, security, identity, participation, development and well-being, ii) *Conflict as unmet needs*, this principle affirm that conflicts emerge when these fundamental needs are frustrated or unmet. For example, ethnic conflicts often involve threats to identity and recognition. iii) *Addressing needs for peace*, which states that achieving peace involves creating conditions that satisfy these needs, thereby reducing the motivation for conflict and violence.

The strengths of human needs theory is embedded in the following values; a) It adopts a holistic approach by looking beyond material aspects to psychological and social needs .b) It is inclusive because it recognizes the importance of identity, recognition, and participation. c) It prevents conflict recurrence by satisfying fundamental needs, it reduces the likelihood of future conflicts. d) It is flexible because it can be applied across cultures and contexts.

The limitations and criticisms of the human needs theory include the fact that, it does not always account for power dynamics, economic interests, or political agendas. Equally, satisfying needs can be complex, especially when interests are deeply entrenched. Finally, different groups may prioritize needs differently thereby complicating negotiations.

In the Nigeria context, human needs theory offers valuable insights for peace-building, especially in post-conflict societies where issues of identity, recognition, and security are prominent. For instance, addressing the needs for security and recognition among marginalized ethnic groups can reduce tensions. Participatory governance can fulfill the need for participation and agency. Social and economic development can meet basic needs for well-being. In conclusion, the human needs theory emphasizes that lasting peace depends on satisfying the core needs of individuals and groups. Its holistic perspective makes it a powerful tool in conflict resolution, particularly in complex and diverse societies like those in Nigeria. However, effective application requires careful understanding of specific needs, contextual factors, and power dynamics (Clerk, 1990).

Structural Violence Theory

Introduced by Galtung in 1969, this theory highlights systemic inequalities embedded within social structures. It suggests that conflicts are rooted in structural violence,



inequities in resource distribution, political exclusion, and social injustice. The rule of law initiatives is better aim to dismantle structural violence by promoting equitable justice, whereas military approaches may inadvertently reinforce structural inequalities through repression. (Henderson, 2019).

Structural violence is a form of violence where social arrangements such as, economic, political, legal, and cultural structures cause harm by limiting access to resources, rights, and opportunities. It manifests through disparities in wealth, education, healthcare, political participation, and legal justice, leading to inequality and social suffering. Because it is embedded in societal systems, structural violence often remains unseen or unrecognized, making it difficult to address directly. The Key Dimensions of the structural violence theory are; economic inequality, political oppression, legal discrimination, cultural and social norms, institutionalization, normalization, deprivation and marginalization (Weber & Pickering, 2011).

The relevance of SVT to peace and conflict studies includes the fact that in the first instance, structural violence is often the root cause of conflicts, as grievances stemming from inequality and injustice accumulate over time. Equally, effective peace-building requires addressing structural violence by reforming social, political, and economic institutions to promote equity and justice. Finally, recognizing and combating structural violence aligns with the promotion and protection of human rights.

According to Hirschfeld, (2017), the critiques and limitations of the SVT include: i) The concept can be criticized for its abstractness and difficulty in measuring or pinpointing specific sources. ii) It emphasizes systemic issues, which may overlook individual agency or immediate violence. iii) Addressing structural violence often requires deep societal reforms, which can be slow and politically challenging.

In summary the structural violence theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how social arrangements perpetuate harm and inequality. Recognizing these hidden forms of violence is crucial for developing sustainable strategies for peace, justice, and social development, especially in contexts like Nigeria, where historical and systemic inequalities continue to impact social cohesion.

Traditional Security Theory

Traditional security theory is one of the earliest and most influential frameworks in the field of security studies. Rooted primarily in realist thought, it emphasizes the protection of the state from external military threats and views security as a matter of national defense and sovereignty. This approach has historically shaped international security policies and military strategies.

According to Bartley (2023), the core principles of traditional security theory are;

- *State-centric focus*, which means that, the primary actor in traditional security is the nation-state. The main concern is safeguarding territorial integrity and political sovereignty.



- *Military power and defense*, which entails that, military strength is seen as the most effective means of ensuring security, as such a strong defense posture deters potential aggressors and maintains stability.
- *Anarchy in the international system*, this posits that, the international system is anarchic, meaning no overarching authority governs states. In such a system, states must rely on their own capabilities for security.
- *Security dilemma*, which means that, actions taken by one state to enhance its security (e.g., increasing military capabilities) can threaten others, leading to an arms race. This cyclical process can escalate tensions and conflict.
- *Balance of power* which posits that, stability is maintained when power is distributed relatively evenly among states; hence alliances and military build-ups serve to prevent dominance by any single actor.

The fundamental components of the traditional security theory are; military deterrence, strategic defense, and alliances. For example during the cold war era which was dominated by the bipolar confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union with emphasis on nuclear deterrence (Mutually Assured Destruction - MAD) as a means of maintaining peace was the order of the day. However, during the post-cold war era, there is a shift towards addressing new threats but still heavily reliant on military capabilities for security assurance.

The criticisms of traditional security theory are that; firstly, there is an overemphasis on military aspects thereby neglecting non-military threats like economic instability, environmental crises, and human security. Secondly, is the issue of state-centric view, which mean the roles of non-state actors, international organizations, and transnational issues are ignored. Thirdly is the problem of potential for escalation, this is because arms races and militarization can increase the risk of conflict. Finally is the issue of limited scope, because it fails to address the root causes of conflicts such as social injustice, inequality, and ecological degradation (Attina, 2016). In summary, traditional security theory remains a fundamental concept in understanding state behavior and military strategy. While it provides valuable insights into defense and deterrence, modern security challenges require integrating broader perspectives that encompass non-military threats and human security concerns.

Realist Theory

Realist theory, also known as "Realism" is one of the most influential paradigms in international relations. It emphasizes the competitive and conflictual nature of international politics, viewing states as primary actors motivated by national interests, particularly security and power. In international relations, realism emphasizes state security and the primacy of military power (Sagir, 2024). From this perspective, increasing military expenditure is justified as essential for national security, deterring threats, and maintaining sovereignty. Nigeria's focus on military strength aligns with realist assumptions that security is achieved through force.



The major assumptions of realist theory includes; i) Anarchic international system, ii) States as rational actors, iii) Primacy of sovereignty, iv) Power and security, v) Interest-driven behavior. According to (Donnelly, 2000), there are two main types of realism namely;

Classical realism: It emphasizes human nature as the root cause of conflict and power struggles among states. Thinkers like Hans Morgenthau argue that human greed and ambition drive state behavior (Altman, et, al. 2018).

Neorealism (Structural realism) Developed by Kenneth Waltz, it shifts focus from human nature to the anarchic international structure as the determinant of state behavior. The distribution of power (unipolar, bipolar, multipolar) shapes international outcomes (Schweller, 1997).

The strengths of realist theory revolve round the fact that; a) It provides a realistic lens to analyze state behavior, especially in security and conflict studies. b) It explains why states pursue military buildup, alliances, and strategic interests. c) Many international events, such as Cold War rivalries, align with realist principles.

Critics of the realist theory hinged their arguments on the fact that realism underestimates cooperation, diplomacy, and international institutions' roles. Also, it downplays domestic politics, culture, and economic factors influencing state behavior. Finally, its focus on power and self-interest can justify unethical actions and ignore human rights. As well, realism often portrays international politics as zero-sum, overlooking the potential for mutual gains. Despite its criticisms, realism remains relevant, especially in analyzing power politics, military conflicts, and strategic alliances. It offers valuable insights into the behavior of major powers like the US, China, and Russia in contemporary geopolitics. In summary, the realist theory provides a foundational framework for understanding international relations by emphasizing power, security, and state interests in an anarchic system. While it offers pragmatic explanations for conflict and competition, it must be complemented with other perspectives to fully grasp the complexities of global politics.

Liberal Peace Theory (LPT)

Liberal peace advocates argue that sustainable peace is rooted in democratic governance, rule of law, and socio-economic development (Paris, 2004). It emphasizes building legal and institutional frameworks to prevent conflicts from re-emerging, suggesting that peace is best preserved through legal reforms, justice, and human rights. The liberal peace theory is a prominent paradigm in international relations and peace studies, advocating that democracy, economic development, and respect for human rights are essential for achieving and sustaining peace. Rooted in liberal political philosophy, the theory posits that liberal democracies are less likely to go to war with each other and that promoting liberal values globally can lead to a more peaceful world.

The main principles of liberal peace theory are; i) the theory assert that democratic states, characterized by free elections, rule of law, and respect for civil liberties, are



inherently less inclined to engage in conflict with other democracies. This idea is encapsulated in the "Democratic Peace Hypothesis." ii) economic openness and free markets foster mutual dependencies among nations, reducing incentives for conflict. Prosperous societies with strong economic ties are believed to prioritize diplomacy over violence. iii) the protection of individual rights and the rule of law contribute to social stability and reduce grievances that can lead to violence or insurgency. iv) International organizations (e.g., UN, WTO) facilitate cooperation, dispute resolution, and enforcement of rules, reinforcing peace-promoting norms.

The historical and theoretical foundations of the LPT is rested on; i) the liberal political philosophy, this can be traced back to enlightenment thinkers like Immanuel Kant, who in his essay *Perpetual Peace* (1795), argued that republican constitutions and international federation could promote lasting peace. ii) Kantian peace. Kant's idea that republican (democratic) states are more peaceful and that international federation (global governance) can help prevent wars. iii) Modern development of the liberal theory. The 20th and 21st centuries saw the rise of the liberal peace paradigm through post-World War II efforts, including the expansion of democratic governance and global economic integration (Terminski, 2010).

The main critiques and limitations of the LPT are;

- *Western-centric bias*: Critics argue that the theory reflects Western values and may impose liberal models that are incompatible with local cultures or political contexts.
- *Democracy does not guarantee peace*: Empirical evidence shows that democracies can and do engage in conflicts, including humanitarian interventions and military interventions.
- *Neglect of structural factors*: The theory underestimates economic inequalities, historical grievances, ethnic tensions, and social injustices that can undermine peace despite democratic or economic advancements.
- *Overemphasis on formal institutions*: Formal democratic and legal institutions may exist without substantive social justice, leading to fragile peace or even conflict.

On a final note, the liberal peace theory offers a compelling framework emphasizing the importance of democracy, economic openness, and legal institutions for peace. While it has contributed to global peace initiatives and democratization efforts, its limitations highlight the need for context-sensitive approaches that consider local political, social, and cultural realities. Effective peace-building requires not only promoting liberal values but also addressing root causes of conflict beyond institutional reforms. (Miller, 2010).

Conflict Transformation Theory (CTT)

This theory is associated with Lederach (1997) who advocated for addressing root causes (justice, social equity) alongside managing conflict escalation through security measures.



This hybrid approaches recognize that both military strength and rule of law are necessary, but their effectiveness depends on context, implementation, and balance. Conflict transformation theory is a framework that redefines how conflicts are understood and addressed. Unlike traditional approaches that focus primarily on managing or resolving conflicts temporarily, CTT emphasizes transforming the underlying social structures, relationships, and perceptions that produce conflict. It aims for sustainable peace by fostering deep change at individual, relational, and systemic levels.

The cardinal principles of conflict transformation theory include;

- a. A holistic approach. This entails that the CTT considers conflict as a complex social phenomenon rooted in cultural, economic, political, and psychological factors. It advocates for addressing these multiple dimensions simultaneously.
- b. Focus on relationships. This principle emphasizes transforming relationships between conflicting parties, fostering mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation.
- c. Change at multiple levels. This principle posits that the CTT targets change at personal, relational, structural, and cultural levels, recognizing that conflicts are embedded in social systems.
- d. Participation and empowerment. CTT emphasizes the promotion of inclusive participation of all stakeholders, empowering marginalized groups and encouraging active engagement in the peace process.
- e. Long-term perspective. This approach aims for enduring change, not just short-term conflict management or resolution.
- f. Peace-building as a process. CTT sees peace as a process of ongoing growth, learning, and adaptation, rather than a static outcome.

While conflict resolution often emphasizes negotiation, mediation, or cessation of violence, conflict transformation broadens the scope to include social change and ongoing development of positive relationships. It views conflict as an opportunity for growth and societal improvement, rather than merely a problem to be solved.

The challenge of the CTT upon which it draws criticism includes the fact that, the transformational processes are often slow and require sustained effort. Again, assessing what constitutes "change" can be subjective and context-dependent. Equally, it requires skilled facilitators and genuine stakeholder commitment. Finally, its lack of clear quantifiable indicators, makes evaluation challenging.

On a final note, the conflict transformation theory offers a comprehensive and profound approach to understanding and addressing conflicts. It emphasizes that lasting peace arises from deep social, cultural, and structural change, not just the cessation of violence. Its focus on relationships, participation, and systemic reform makes it a valuable framework for sustainable peace-building, particularly in complex, protracted conflicts. This theoretical framework underscores that peace drives in Nigeria are rooted in diverse



paradigms, those emphasizing justice, legal reforms, and social equity versus those prioritizing security through military might. An effective peace strategy likely requires an integrated model that combines the strengths of both approaches while addressing their limitations, guided by theories that recognize the importance of legitimacy, social justice, and security. (Botes, 2003).

Empirical review on how rule of law and military spending impact peace-building

Nigeria's approach to peace-building has involved a combination of legal reforms, judicial initiatives, and military interventions. Empirical studies provide insights into the effectiveness, limitations, and outcomes of these strategies in different conflict contexts.

Empirical evidence supporting the rule of law in peace-building

The work of Williams (2025) indicates that, reforming judicial institutions can reduce conflict and violence by increasing access to justice and promoting accountability. For example, in Liberia, post-civil war judicial reforms contributed to increased trust in state institutions and reduced recurrence of violence. Similarly, studies such as Geraghty (2020), show that countries with more effective, transparent legal systems tend to experience higher levels of peace and stability. Rwanda's efforts to rebuild its justice sector after the genocide, including *gacaca* courts and legal reforms, are associated with national reconciliation and peace consolidation.

The UNDP report (2024) noted that, a positive correlation exists between the rule of law and economic growth, which in turn supports peace. For example, in Kenya, improvements in legal frameworks and property rights have been linked to increased investment and social stability.

Finally, the empirical results of the work of Ayal, et al, (2025) also demonstrates that legal measures such as land rights laws and anti-corruption statutes, help address underlying grievances that fuel conflict. In Ethiopia, land reform laws contributed to reducing land disputes and ethnic tensions

Despite positive evidence, challenges such as weak institutions, corruption, and political interference hinder rule of law initiatives. Studies highlight that without genuine political will and institutional capacity, rule of law reforms are often superficial and fail to produce sustainable peace (Nharaunda-Makawa, 2022).

Empirical evidence supporting military expenditure/operations in peace-building

Military efforts, including peacekeeping missions and targeted operations, have played a significant role in stabilizing conflict zones and supporting peace-building in Nigeria. According to Bellamy & Williams, (2020), African-led and international peacekeeping



missions have contributed to reducing violence and creating space for political processes. For example, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) have been associated with reductions in hostilities and progress toward peace agreements

Equally, studies by Onuoha, (2025), revealed that increased military expenditure, especially in counter-insurgency, can deter violence and insurgency. In Nigeria, military spending and operations have been crucial in countering Boko Haram, although with mixed results regarding long-term stability. As well, Chafer, et al, (2020) discovered that targeted military interventions can stabilize fragile states temporarily, providing a foundation for subsequent political reconciliation. For example, in Mali, French military operations (Operation Serval and Barkhane) helped regain control over territories held by insurgents, enabling political processes to resume

Critics like Okengwu (2024) argue that military approaches often result in human rights abuses, alienating local populations and fueling cycles of violence and distrust. Equally, Zailani, et al, (2025) noted that, military solutions are often short-term, addressing symptoms rather than root causes. Over-reliance on military expenditure can also divert resources from development and social programs critical for long-term peace.

Despite positive contributions, empirical evidence also highlights risks such as unintended escalation, dependency on military solutions, and undermining local governance. The case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) demonstrates that military operations without comprehensive political strategies may lead to cycles of violence (Dunn, 2002).

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this research is the *ex poste* analysis, this is because it allows researchers to analyze data that has already been collected, providing insights based on actual events and outcomes rather than theoretical models. Equally, it is useful in situations where experimental manipulation is unethical or impractical, such as studying the effects of natural disasters or policy changes. Finally, it facilitates the examination of trends and patterns over time, contributing to understanding long-term effects and developments.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework for the study is hypothesized in the table 3.1 below;

Analyzing the impact of the rule of law and military spending on peace-building in Nigeria requires a comprehensive framework that moves beyond simply measuring the presence of laws and military might. It necessitates evaluating how RoL and military interventions affect stability, governance, human security, and reconciliation.



Table 1. Hypothesized analytical framework

Variable	Expected sign	Rational
RLAW	Positive (+)	Stronger rule of law is associated with higher levels of peace. (Kobayashi, et al, 2025)
MIL	Positive (+/-)	A well-funded military can act as a deterrent to conflict, thus promoting peace. (Gromes 2025). Equally, military action may result in human right abuses which may fuel other cycles of violence and distrust thereby leading to more crises. (Okengwu, 2024)

Source: Authors compilation.

Table 1 shows that the impact of the rule of law on peace-building promotes stability and order, builds credibility and trust in institutions, protects human rights and justice, facilitates disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, prevents the re-emergence of conflict, supports economic development and social justice, enhances international support and cooperation. Hence it is expected that a positive relationship exist between rule of law and peace-building.

On the other hand, it is observed that the impact of military spending on peace-building could either be positive or negative depending on the aspect it leads to. On the positive side, it enhanced security and stability, protection of peace agreements, support for humanitarian operations. While on the negative side military intervention on peace-building could lead to; perpetuation of arms race, undermining diplomatic solutions, resource allocation issues as well as, fear and suspicion. In relations to this study, it is expected that military spending will exhibit either a positive or negative relationship with peace-building

Model Specifications

In this study, a fully modified OLS model based on the human needs theory earlier mentioned is specified in line with similar study by Obomeghie (2025), and Wagner et, al. (2020). The Fully Modified Ordinary Least Squares (FM-OLS) is an econometric technique developed by Engle and Granger (1987). It is designed specifically for estimating long-run relationships among non-stationary, cointegrated variables. It extends the traditional OLS method by making modifications to correct for issues like endogeneity and serial correlation that commonly arise in time series data. FM-OLS provides consistent, unbiased estimates of cointegrating vectors, enabling reliable inference about long-term equilibrium relationships in macroeconomic and financial data.

The basic form of the fully modified ordinary least square is given as;

$$PEI_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RLAW_t + \beta_2 MIL_t + \beta_3 SERV_t + \varepsilon_t \text{ -----}1$$

Where;

β_0 = Intercept



$\beta_1\beta_2\beta_3$ are the coefficient and

ε_t is the error term.

Equation (1) is further transformed to the error correction model as follows;

$$\Delta PEI_t = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^p \beta_1 \Delta RLAW_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^p \beta_2 \Delta MIL_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^p \beta_3 \Delta SERV_{t-1} + \lambda ECT_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \text{ -----2}$$

Where;

Δ = First difference

P = Number of lags

λ = Speed of adjustment

Justification for estimating a FM-OLS

The justification for using a FM-OLS in this study includes the fact that it;

- *Corrects for endogeneity and serial correlation.* While standard OLS estimates can be biased and inconsistent when regressors are endogenous or when errors are serially correlated. FM-OLS explicitly accounts for endogeneity arising from correlation between regressors and error terms by modifying the OLS estimator, leading to consistent estimates.
- *Addresses serial correlation and endogeneity in error terms.* In standard OLS, serial correlation in errors can lead to inefficient estimates and invalid inference. FM-OLS on the other hand, applies a non-parametric correction to eliminate serial correlation and endogeneity bias, improving estimator efficiency.
- *Provides asymptotically unbiased and consistent estimates in cointegrated systems.* When dealing with cointegrated time series, OLS estimates of the cointegrating vector are biased in small samples. FM-OLS on the other hand produces asymptotically unbiased and consistent estimates of the cointegrating relationships, making it more reliable in long-run equilibrium modeling.
- *Better inference and hypothesis testing.* Standard errors from OLS may be invalid under non-stationarity and cointegration. However, FM-OLS adjusts for these issues, allowing for valid statistical inference and hypothesis testing about long-run relationships.
- *Suitable for non-stationary data.* While standard OLS can give spurious results when applied directly to non-stationary series. On the hand, FM-OLS is designed specifically for cointegrated (non-stationary) variables, ensuring meaningful and reliable estimates

In summary, FM-OLS is justified over ordinary OLS because it provides more reliable, consistent, and efficient estimates of long-run relationships in systems where variables are non-stationary but cointegrated, especially when issues like endogeneity and serial correlation are present



Data Sources

The data used in this analysis were obtained from various sources such as the CBN statistical bulletin, the World Bank database, as well as the World justice project data base, covering the period from 2006 to 2023.

Results

From table 2 above, it can be seen that military expenditure (MIL) has the highest mean while the rule of law (RLAW) has the lowest mean with 2328.123 and -1.00875 respectively. This shows that the Nigeria government has a tendency for higher investment or focus on military activities than on the rule of law.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

	PEI	RLAW	SERV	MIL
Mean	2.743750	-1.008750	50.53750	2328.125
Median	2.830000	-1.010000	50.50000	2195.000
Maximum	2.920000	-0.840000	59.80000	4470.000
Minimum	2.470000	-1.180000	42.30000	1500.000
Std. Dev.	0.167685	0.117863	4.951077	755.9296
Skewness	-0.574855	-0.123611	0.118607	1.481852
Kurtosis	1.664150	1.519982	2.412598	5.048898
Jarque-Bera	2.070885	1.501048	0.267541	8.654349
Probability	0.355069	0.472119	0.874791	0.013205
Sum	43.90000	-16.14000	808.6000	37250.00
Sum Sq. Dev.	0.421775	0.208375	367.6975	8571444.
Observations	16	16	16	16

Source: Authors compilation.

As well, MIL has the highest standard deviation while RLAW again has the lowest standard deviation with 755.9296 and 0.117863 respectively. This indicates that the values for military expenditure vary widely across the data set. It also means that, there is a large amount of fluctuation or inconsistency in military spending among the observations. On the other hand, the rule of law with the lowest standard deviation means that, the values for the rule of law are relatively stable and consistent across the data set, showing less variability

Table 3. Stationarity test

Variable	Order	ADF	Prob	Conclusion
D(PEI)	I (1)	-2.5680	0.014	Stationary
D(RLAW)	I (0)	-6.5557	0.000	Stationary
D(SERV)	I (1)	-3.4917	0.000	Stationary
D(MIL)	I (1)	-4.037	0.000	Stationary

Source: Authors compilation.



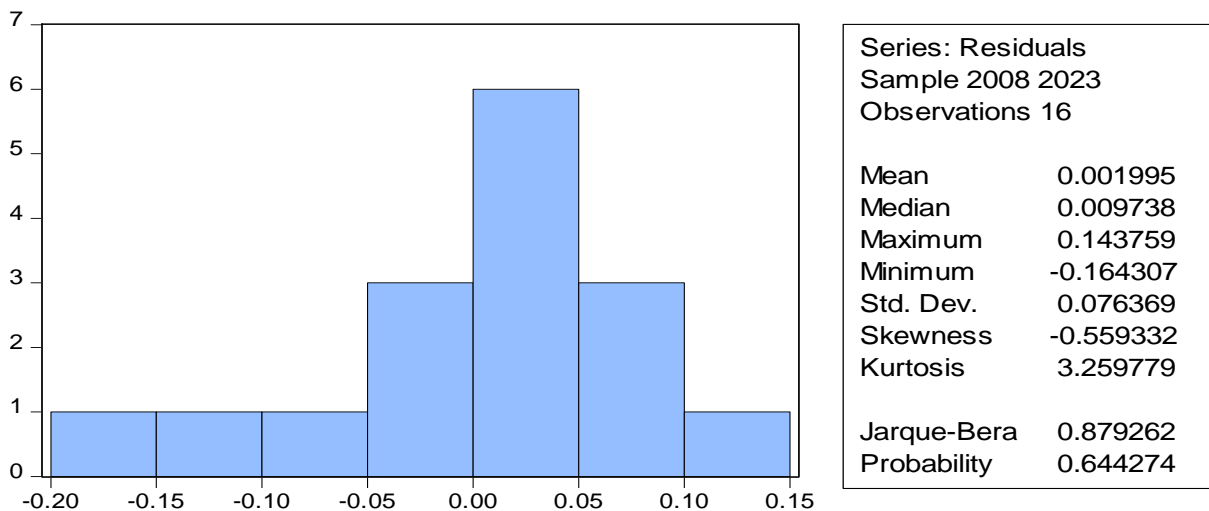
From table 3, it can be observed that all the variables used in the analysis are stationary at first difference except RLAW which is stationary at levels. If values are stationary, it means that they do not change or fluctuate over time. In statistical and analytical contexts, stationarity has specific implications for empirical analysis which includes;

Predictability and stability; Since values remain constant over time, future values can be reliably predicted based on past data. This stability simplifies modeling and forecasting because the underlying data distribution does not change.

Simplified analysis; Many statistical techniques, such as regression analysis and time series modeling, require stationarity to produce valid results. Non-stationary data can lead to spurious correlations, so stationarity ensures more accurate and meaningful analysis.

No trends or cycles; Stationary data lack trends, seasonal effects or cycles, meaning that the mean and variance are constant. This implies a steady environment without significant shifts or long-term changes.

Figure 1. Normality test



From figure 1 which depicts the normality test, the Jarque-Bera value of 0.879262 with a corresponding probability of 0.644274, indicates that the variables used are normally distributed. The implications of normal distribution in econometric analysis include;

Validity of statistical inference; Many inferential statistics, such as t-tests and F-tests, rely on the assumption of normality of the error terms or variables. Normality ensures that the sampling distribution of estimators is approximately normal, especially in large samples, enabling valid hypothesis testing and confidence interval construction.

Efficiency and unbiasedness of estimators; Under the assumption of normally distributed variables, the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimators are not only unbiased but also



the Best Linear Unbiased Estimators (BLUE). It also helps in verifying the assumptions needed for estimator optimality.

Simplification of model diagnostics; Normality facilitates the use of residual analysis, Q-Q plots, and other diagnostic tools to assess the goodness of fit. It simplifies the detection of outliers and influential data points.

Applicability of parametric tests: Many parametric tests assume normality; if variables are normally distributed, these tests are more reliable. This includes tests for coefficients, joint hypotheses, and model specifications.

In conclusion, if variables are normally distributed, it generally enhances the validity and reliability of statistical inference in econometric models, simplifies diagnostics, and supports the use of parametric tests.

Table 4. Cointegration test

Trend assumption: Linear deterministic trend				
Series: PEI RLAW SERV MIL				
Hypothesized		Trace	0.05	
No. of CE(s)	Eigenvalue	Statistic	Critical Value	Prob.**
None *	0.914236	74.11373	47.85613	0.0000
At most 1 *	0.858092	39.72751	29.79707	0.0026
At most 2	0.485134	12.39145	15.49471	0.1391
At most 3	0.198489	3.097585	3.841466	0.0784
Unrestricted Cointegration Rank Test (Maximum Eigenvalue)				
Hypothesized		Max-Eigen	0.05	
No. of CE(s)	Eigenvalue	Statistic	Critical Value	Prob.**
None *	0.914236	34.38622	27.58434	0.0057
At most 1 *	0.858092	27.33606	21.13162	0.0059
At most 2	0.485134	9.293869	14.26460	0.2625
At most 3	0.198489	3.097585	3.841466	0.0784

Source: Authors compilation.

Table 4 shows the cointegration result for our analysis. From the results, it can be seen that there exist a long-run relationship between our dependent variable and the selected independent variables. The implications of cointegration in econometric analysis are; i) *The presence of a long-run equilibrium relationship.* Cointegration indicates that although individual variables may be non-stationary (their values fluctuate over time), a linear combination of these variables is stationary. This suggests that the variables move together over the long term, maintaining a stable equilibrium relationship despite short-term deviations. ii) *The avoidance of spurious regression issues.* Non-stationary variables can lead to spurious regressions, where relationships appear significant but are actually meaningless. Cointegration confirms that the observed relationship is genuine and not a statistical artifact, allowing for valid inferences. iii) *The use of Error Correction Models (ECMs).* When variables are cointegrated, the appropriate modeling approach is often an Error Correction Model. ECMs capture both short-term dynamics and long-term equilibrium relationships, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how



variables adjust to deviations. iv) *Implications for policy and forecasting*. Recognizing cointegration implies that policy makers can focus on long-term relationships, knowing that variables tend to move together over time. Forecasts based on cointegrated variables are more reliable because the long-run equilibrium relationship anchors their movements. v) *Model specification and testing*. Cointegration necessitates specific tests (e.g., Engle-Granger, Johansen tests) to identify the number of cointegrating relationships. Proper modeling of cointegrated variables ensures that estimates are consistent and meaningful.

Table 5. The FM-OLS result

Dependent Variable: PEI				
Method: Fully Modified Least Squares (FMOLS)				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
RLAW	1.184708	0.144811	8.181089	0.0000
SERV	0.019699	0.004263	4.621090	0.0006
MIL	0.000108	2.92E-05	3.690276	0.0031
C	2.690307	0.306880	8.766651	0.0000
R-squared	0.792432	Mean dependent var		2.743750
Adjusted R-squared	0.740540	S.D. dependent var		0.167685
S.E. of regression	0.085414	Sum squared resid		0.087547
Long-run variance	0.003574			

Source: Authors compilation.

Discussions

From table 5 which represents the FM-OLS estimates, the adjusted R^2 value of 0.74 from our estimates clearly shows that all the independent variables used in the analysis have been able to explain about 74% of the variation in the dependent variable within the period under review.

Our first independent variable is the rule of law (RLAW). The estimates indicates that for each unit increase in rule of law (RLAW), peace-building (PEI) is expected to increase by approximately 1.18 units, holding other factors constant. In other words, there is a positive relationship between rule of law (RLAW) and peace-building (PEI) since the p-value is much less than the typical significance level of 0.05.

With respect to our second independent variable which is government expenditure on services (SERV), the analysis indicates that for each unit increase in government expenditure on services (SERV), the peace-building (PEI) is expected to increase by approximately 0.0197 units. Again this relationship is statistically significant suggesting a positive and meaningful association between service expenditure and peace outcomes in the studied context

From our final independent which is military expenditure, the results again indicates that for each unit increase in military expenditure (MIL), peace-building (PEI) is expected to



increase by approximately 0.000108 units. The very small magnitude suggests that the effect is positive but quite small in scale. The relationship is statistically significant

Conclusion

Enhancing the rule of law contributes significantly to peace-building in Nigeria. This suggests that stronger legal institutions, effective enforcement of laws, and equitable justice systems promote social stability, reduce conflict, and foster peaceful coexistence. This is in line with the work of Cox & Cobb (2025).

With respect to government expenditure on services, the findings suggest that higher government expenditure on services contributes to peace and stability in the country. This positive association indicates that investments in health, education, social welfare, and related services may help mitigate conflict drivers such as inequality, poverty, and social exclusion, thereby fostering a more peaceful environment. Studies such as, Debraj & Esteban, (2017), have further demonstrated that increased social spending correlates with reductions in civil unrest and violence

With regards to government military expenditure, the findings suggest that, military spending contributes to maintaining peace, possibly through deterrence or stronger defense capabilities. One should note that, the positive correlation does not necessarily imply that increased military expenditure causes greater peace. It might be that, peaceful conditions allow for higher military spending. Other factors like economic development, political stability influence both military expenditure and peace. This is in line with similar findings by Momoh (2024).

In summary it has been demonstrated that the rule of law has more impact on peace-building in Nigeria than military spending/intervention. This is because while RLAW responded with a coefficient of 1.1847, on the other hand MIL responded with a marginal value of 0.00018.

Recommendations

Nigeria should further strengthen the rule of law by prioritizing judicial reforms, enhance legal institutions, and promote transparency and accountability this is because a robust rule of law fosters social trust, reduces corruption, and mitigates conflict, thereby promoting peace (North, 2009; World Bank, 2011).

While military expenditure is positively associated with peace in this context, it suggests that a well-funded and professional military can contribute to stability. However, it is crucial to ensure that military spending is transparent, focused on defense and peacekeeping, and not diverted to internal repression or conflict-provoking activities. Governments should aim for transparent and strategic military spending that supports national security without undermining economic development or civil liberties (SIPRI, 2020).



Equally, Nigeria should increase expenditure on services by investing in health, education, social protection, and infrastructure because these can address the root causes of conflict such as poverty, inequality, and marginalization. This fosters social cohesion and enhances peace stability (Akinola & Liaga, 2024). Governments should also ensure that social spending is effectively targeted, equitable, and sustainable to maximize its peace-promoting effects. (Obomeghie & Bello, 2017)

One may note that, combining efforts to strengthen the rule of law, responsible military spending, and social investment creates a comprehensive framework for peace-building. Policy makers should adopt a coordinated approach that aligns security, legal reform, and social development strategies. Also policy makers in Nigeria should embark on regular assessment of peace indices and related variables because such adjustment can guide policy adjustments, hence, the need for holistic and dynamic strategies, (Obomeghie & Ugbohmhe, 2021).

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