



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA, UGANDA AND FRANCE

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Abstract

Conflict remains a recurring challenge to governance, development, and justice across both developing and developed societies. This study undertakes a comparative legal and institutional analysis of conflict resolution in Nigeria, Uganda, and France, examining how different political systems, legal traditions, and socio-economic contexts influence their approaches to peacebuilding. The article adopts a qualitative comparative methodology, drawing from statutory provisions, case law, policy documents, and scholarly literature to assess the effectiveness of each country's conflict resolution framework. In Nigeria and Uganda, the persistence of communal, political, and resource-based conflicts is linked to weak institutional enforcement, corruption, and limited access to justice. Both countries rely heavily on constitutional and statutory mechanisms supported by Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), though implementation remains inconsistent. In contrast, France demonstrates a more coherent and preventive conflict resolution architecture rooted in strong judicial independence, administrative mediation, and social dialogue structures. The study finds that while Nigeria and Uganda's frameworks are largely reactive, France's mechanisms emphasize legal predictability, civic inclusion, and preventive diplomacy. It concludes that sustainable peace requires institutional strengthening, judicial reform, and inclusive governance that bridges the gap between constitutional guarantees and practical enforcement. The comparative findings reveal that lessons from France's legal coherence and civic engagement can inform reforms in African jurisdictions seeking to build durable peace.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Comparative Law, Legal Framework, Peacebuilding, Institutional Reform.

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict, whether political, social, or economic, remains one of the most pervasive challenges to sustainable governance and development globally. Its management and resolution determine the stability and legitimacy of state institutions.¹ The phenomenon is not confined to developing nations; it also manifests within established democracies, albeit in different forms and magnitudes.² In Africa, especially in Nigeria and Uganda, conflicts often emerge from ethnic, religious, and resource-based divisions that reflect historical inequalities and governance weaknesses.³ Conversely, in Europe, particularly in France, the nature of conflict is shaped more by socio-political dissent, immigration tensions, and ideological confrontations within an established legal order.⁴ This article examines the comparative dimensions of

¹ J Burton, *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

² R Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

³ O Otite, *Community Conflicts in Nigeria: Management, Resolution and Transformation* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2001).

⁴ A Wieviorka, *Violence: A New Approach* (London: Sage Publications, 2009).



conflict resolution in Nigeria, Uganda, and France, with a focus on the legal and institutional frameworks that underpin peace and justice in these societies.

Conflict resolution mechanisms are integral to state-building and governance.⁵ The absence of effective legal frameworks can perpetuate impunity and erode citizens' trust in democratic processes.⁶ In Nigeria, recurrent conflicts such as the Boko Haram insurgency, the Niger Delta militancy, and communal clashes in the Middle Belt demonstrate the limitations of existing institutional mechanisms.⁷ Uganda, on the other hand, continues to grapple with post-conflict reconstruction following decades of civil strife involving the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and other insurgent movements.⁸ In contrast, France, despite its advanced democratic system, faces challenges in maintaining social harmony amid rising protests, labour unrest, and ethnic tensions arising from immigration and integration issues.⁹ The diversity of these contexts provides an opportunity to assess how differing legal traditions, common law, hybrid law, and civil law, shape conflict resolution outcomes.¹⁰

The study adopts a comparative legal methodology, analysing constitutional provisions, statutory enactments, judicial decisions, and institutional practices in the three countries. The analysis is anchored on three theoretical perspectives: structural functionalism, which examines how legal and political institutions maintain order; human needs theory, which focuses on socio-economic deprivation as a driver of conflict; and realist theory, which views conflict as an inevitable consequence of competing interests in power relations. These frameworks collectively aid in understanding how each country's legal system operationalises conflict resolution and how institutional weaknesses or strengths affect the attainment of peace.

Nigeria's legal framework for conflict resolution is largely built around the 1999 Constitution (as amended), the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, and several peace-building institutions such as the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and the National Peace Committee. However, judicial inefficiency, corruption, and limited access to justice have often hindered their effectiveness.¹¹ Uganda's system reflects a combination of statutory and traditional mechanisms, with the 1995 Constitution, the Judicature Act, and

⁵ B Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (New York: United Nations, 1992).

⁶C Obi, "Oil Extraction, Dispossession, Resistance, and Conflict in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Niger Delta" (2010) 37 *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 541.

⁷A I Aghedo & O. Eke, "From Alms to Arms: The Almajiri Phenomenon and Internal Security in Northern Nigeria" [2013] 8(1) *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies* 97-123.

⁸ A Branch, *Displacing Human Rights: War and Intervention in Northern Uganda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁹ D Mondon and A Winter, *Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far Right Became Mainstream* (London: Verso, 2020).

¹⁰ R David and J Brierley, *Major Legal Systems in the World Today: An Introduction to the Comparative Study of Law* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1985).

¹¹ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended); Arbitration and Conciliation Act, Cap A18 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004; Legal Aid Council Act, Cap L9 LFN 2004.



the Amnesty Act (2000) forming the legal foundation for peacebuilding.¹² Meanwhile, France operates a well-established civil law system rooted in the Code Civil and supported by administrative courts that specialise in resolving disputes between individuals and the state.¹³ The French model emphasizes mediation, administrative oversight, and judicial independence as cornerstones of social stability.

A comparative study of these three countries is justified for several reasons. First, it highlights how differing legal traditions influence the design and effectiveness of conflict resolution frameworks. Second, it provides a basis for understanding how institutional arrangements mediate between law, politics, and society. Third, it contributes to the discourse on peacebuilding in Africa by identifying adaptable practices from more developed jurisdictions such as France. Finally, it strengthens the argument for legal reform in countries where constitutional guarantees of justice remain largely unfulfilled due to weak enforcement and political interference. This study further argues that while Nigeria and Uganda have established commendable legal frameworks, their implementation suffers from chronic underfunding, limited autonomy of peace institutions, and a lack of public trust. In France, however, strong rule-of-law traditions and civic engagement mechanisms have fostered more effective and predictable conflict resolution outcomes. By comparing these systems, the article provides a nuanced understanding of how institutional integrity, judicial independence, and legal culture determine the effectiveness of peace processes.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Conflict

Conflict refers to the incompatibility of interests or values among individuals or groups (Burton, 1990). It arises from competition over power, resources, or identity. In developing nations like Nigeria and Uganda, such conflicts often manifest as ethnic and political crises, while in France, ideological and economic tensions dominate. Effective conflict resolution therefore requires understanding the structural and cultural dimensions that trigger disputes.¹⁴

2.2 Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution refers to addressing underlying causes of disputes through peaceful and legally recognized processes. It includes judicial adjudication, mediation, and conciliation. Nigeria's and Uganda's reliance on legal and customary institutions contrasts with France's emphasis on judicial efficiency and human rights protections. Sustainable peace requires combining both formal and informal mechanisms.¹⁵

¹² The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995; The Amnesty Act 2000; The Judicature Act Cap 13.

¹³ République Française, *Code Civil (Code Napoléon)* (Paris: Journal Officiel de la République Française, 2019); *Code de Justice Administrative* (Paris: Dalloz, 2020).

¹⁴ J. Burton, *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

¹⁵ Burton (n 5).



3. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

3.1 Nigeria's Legal and Institutional Mechanisms

Nigeria's legal framework for conflict resolution is firmly grounded in constitutional provisions, statutory enactments, and judicial precedents. The 1999 Constitution (as amended) provides the foundation for peace, justice, and conflict management by guaranteeing fundamental rights and establishing mechanisms for redress.¹⁶ Section 6 of the Constitution vests judicial powers in the courts, extending to "all matters between persons, or between government and persons in Nigeria," thereby positioning the judiciary as the principal arbiter of disputes.¹⁷ The judiciary's role is reinforced by the High Courts, the Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court, which ensure the interpretation and enforcement of rights through a structured adjudicatory process.¹⁸

However, the Nigerian judiciary faces systemic challenges that impede effective conflict resolution. These include corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and limited funding that weaken judicial independence and delay justice delivery.¹⁹ Consequently, public confidence in the formal legal system has diminished, leading citizens to rely increasingly on informal or extrajudicial means of resolving disputes. To address this, the Arbitration and Conciliation Act (Cap A18 LFN 2004) provides statutory backing for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms such as arbitration, mediation, and conciliation.²⁰ The establishment of the Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse in 2002 marked a major innovation in institutionalizing ADR, significantly reducing court congestion and improving access to justice.²¹ Similar models have since been replicated across several states, including Abuja and Rivers, demonstrating gradual adaptation to modern conflict management strategies.

The Legal Aid Council Act (Cap L9 LFN 2004) further enhances access to justice by providing legal representation for indigent persons, thereby reducing socio-economic disparities that often fuel conflict.²² Institutionally, Nigeria has established the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2000, mandated to conduct research, promote peace education, and advise government on conflict prevention.²³ Other institutions such as the National Peace Committee, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, particularly during elections and communal crises. Despite these structures,

¹⁶ Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)* (Abuja: Government Printer, 2011) s.6.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ E.I. Nwogugu, *Legal System of Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 2006) 119.

¹⁹ C.C. Nweze, *Judicial Integrity and the Quest for Justice in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2018) 54.

²⁰ Arbitration and Conciliation Act, Cap A18 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004.

²¹ Lagos State Judiciary, *Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse Annual Report* (Lagos: LMDC, 2019) 5.

²² Legal Aid Council Act, Cap L9 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004.

²³ Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), *Annual Report* (Abuja: IPCR, 2019) 16.



coordination and enforcement remain weak, with overlapping mandates and inadequate statutory powers limiting institutional effectiveness.²⁴

Judicial pronouncements have also shaped Nigeria's approach to constitutional and institutional conflict resolution. In *Attorney-General of Lagos State v. Attorney-General of the Federation*,²⁵ the Supreme Court underscored the principle of cooperative federalism, emphasizing collaboration between different levels of government in maintaining constitutional order. Similarly, in *Military Governor of Lagos State v. Ojukwu*,²⁶ the Court declared that no authority, including the government, is above the law, affirming the supremacy of the rule of law as a cornerstone of peaceful coexistence. These decisions reinforce the judiciary's constitutional responsibility in mediating disputes within the Nigerian federation.

3.2 Uganda's Legal and Institutional Mechanisms

Uganda's conflict resolution framework reflects both statutory and traditional elements, shaped by decades of internal conflict and post-war reconstruction. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 guarantees access to justice, equality before the law, and peaceful coexistence among citizens.²⁷ The Judicature Act (Cap 13) and The Arbitration and Conciliation Act (Cap 4) provide the statutory basis for the establishment of courts and ADR mechanisms, while the Amnesty Act (2000) allows for the reintegration of ex-combatants and reconciliation following armed conflict.²⁸

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), established under Article 51 of the 1995 Constitution, serves as a quasi-judicial body for investigating human rights violations, mediating disputes, and promoting reconciliation.²⁹ Similarly, the Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS) framework promotes inter-agency collaboration among the judiciary, the police, prisons, and legal aid institutions to enhance access to justice.³⁰ Uganda has also institutionalised community-based approaches to conflict resolution through the Local Council Courts Act (2006), which integrates traditional norms into the formal legal system by empowering local councils to adjudicate minor disputes.³¹ This hybrid structure enhances legitimacy and ensures that justice is delivered within a culturally relevant context.

Nonetheless, Uganda's institutional mechanisms face persistent challenges, including executive interference, corruption, and limited capacity of local courts.³² The post-conflict environment in Northern

²⁴ C. O. Nmehielle, *The Rule of Law, Peace and Security in Africa* (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2015) 42.

²⁵ *Attorney-General of Lagos State v. Attorney-General of the Federation* (2003) 12 NWLR (Pt.833) 1.

²⁶ *Military Governor of Lagos State v. Ojukwu* (1986) 1 NWLR (Pt.18) 621.

²⁷ Republic of Uganda, *The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995* (Kampala: Government Printer, 1995).

²⁸ Amnesty Act 2000 (Kampala: Government Printer, 2000).

²⁹ Uganda Human Rights Commission Act, Cap 24 (Kampala: Government Printer, 1997).

³⁰ Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS), *Annual Performance Report* (Kampala: Ministry of Justice, 2020) 3.

³¹ Local Council Courts Act 2006 (Kampala: Government Printer, 2006).

³² J. Oloka-Onyango, *When Courts Do Politics: Public Interest Law and Litigation in East Africa* (Kampala: Human Rights and Peace Centre, 2015) 74.



Uganda further illustrates the difficulty of reconciling retributive justice with restorative mechanisms. The amnesty provisions that facilitated peace with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), for example, drew criticism for prioritising reconciliation over accountability.³³ Yet, they remain a key part of Uganda's transitional justice approach. Uganda's participation in international judicial processes, particularly through the International Criminal Court (ICC), reflects its dual commitment to domestic and international standards of justice, albeit with political complexities.³⁴

3.3 France's Legal and Institutional Mechanisms

France's conflict resolution framework is anchored in the civil law tradition, characterised by codification, administrative efficiency, and strong institutional autonomy. The Code Civil (Code Napoléon) and the Code de Justice Administrative form the foundation of its legal system, ensuring that both private and public disputes are addressed through defined legal procedures.³⁵ France's judiciary operates through a dual system comprising judicial courts (*ordre judiciaire*) for civil and criminal matters and administrative courts (*ordre administratif*) for disputes involving public administration.³⁶ This separation ensures checks and balances between citizens and the state, enhancing accountability and legal predictability.

The Conseil d'État (Council of State) serves as the highest administrative court and provides advisory opinions on government legislation, effectively blending judicial and policy functions.³⁷ France also institutionalises mediation and conciliation under the Médiateur de la République (now Défenseur des Droits), an independent ombudsman office created to protect citizens' rights and promote peaceful resolution of administrative grievances.³⁸ Labour-related disputes are managed through Conseils de Prud'hommes, specialised labour courts that emphasise conciliation and social dialogue.³⁹

French law places significant emphasis on preventive conflict resolution. Administrative procedures require that disputes be addressed through mediation or conciliation before litigation, reflecting the constitutional principle of proportionality and administrative efficiency.⁴⁰ Moreover, civic education, labour dialogue, and social mediation are institutionalised as instruments for maintaining peace and public order.⁴¹ This approach demonstrates the centrality of law as both a preventive and corrective mechanism in sustaining social harmony.

³³ Ronald R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity: The Origins of the Acholi of Uganda Before 1800* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1999) 209.

³⁴ International Criminal Court, *Situation in Uganda: Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen* (The Hague: ICC, 2016).

³⁵ République Française, *Code Civil (Code Napoléon)* (Paris: Journal Officiel, 2019).

³⁶ Conseil d'État, *Rapport Public Annuel* (Paris: Dalloz, 2021) 18.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Défenseur des Droits, *Rapport Annuel d'Activité* (Paris: Défenseur des Droits, 2020) 4.

³⁹ Jean-Claude Javillier, *Le Droit du Travail en France* (Paris: Dalloz, 2016) 95.

⁴⁰ République Française, *Code de Justice Administrative* (Paris: Dalloz, 2020).

⁴¹ Jean Rivero and Jean Waline, *Droit Administratif* (Paris: Dalloz, 2018) 147.



Institutionally, France's success in conflict management lies in the coherence of its governance system, the independence of its judiciary, and the integration of social dialogue into its legal culture. The French model thus represents a matured system where law, policy, and civic responsibility interact harmoniously to prevent disputes from degenerating into violent conflict.

4. COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW

Nigeria and Uganda share similar challenges associated with weak institutional capacity, political interference, and limited access to justice. Both operate in post-colonial contexts where legal systems coexist with customary norms, creating a hybrid framework that sometimes produces jurisdictional ambiguities.⁴² In contrast, France's civil law system provides a unified and predictable mechanism for conflict resolution, reinforced by administrative accountability and strong rule of law culture. While Nigeria and Uganda rely heavily on external interventions and donor-funded peace initiatives, France's model demonstrates endogenous legal resilience.⁴³ The comparative analysis reveals that the success of conflict resolution frameworks depends not only on legal provisions but also on institutional autonomy, political will, and civic participation. For Nigeria and Uganda, adopting preventive legal measures, such as early warning systems, mediation councils, and administrative review processes, could bridge the existing enforcement gaps. Lessons from France's legal coherence and civic mediation structures can therefore inform the strengthening of peace architecture in African jurisdictions seeking sustainable stability.

5. ROOT CAUSES AND NATURE OF CONFLICTS

5.1 Socio-Economic and Political Factors in Nigeria and Uganda

The roots of conflict in Nigeria and Uganda are deeply embedded in socio-economic disparities, governance failures, and the politicization of ethnic identities. In Nigeria, decades of uneven resource distribution and endemic corruption have fostered economic grievances that often translate into violent conflicts. The competition for oil wealth in the Niger Delta, for example, has precipitated militancy and sabotage of oil infrastructure, undermining national stability and development.⁴⁴ Similarly, in Uganda, rural poverty, land tenure insecurity, and historical marginalization of certain regions have contributed to recurring tensions, particularly in the northern part of the country.⁴⁵

Politically, both nations grapple with weak institutions and governance systems that fail to provide equitable access to justice and public services. In Nigeria, the manipulation of electoral processes and ethno-religious polarization have led to post-election violence, while in Uganda, prolonged incumbency and suppression of opposition movements have intensified public distrust.⁴⁶ These shared experiences demonstrate how

⁴² A. Ibidapo-Obe, *The Nigerian Legal System: Contemporary Problems and Prospects* (Lagos: Concept Publications, 2002) 203.

⁴³ OECD, *Peace and Security in Fragile States: Policy Lessons from France and Africa* (Paris: OECD, 2020) 11.

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, *"The Niger Delta: Unequal and Unstable"* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2011) 6–9.

⁴⁵ International Crisis Group, *"Northern Uganda: Understanding Conflict"* (Brussels: ICG Report No. 182, 2019) 11–14.

⁴⁶ J. E. Osaghae, *Ethnicity, Class and the Struggle for State Power in Africa* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2002) 27–33.



fragile political systems and socio-economic deprivation perpetuate a cycle of discontent that fuels conflict. Despite constitutional guarantees for equality and justice in both jurisdictions, enforcement remains inconsistent, allowing grievances to fester without timely legal remedies.⁴⁷

5.2 Ideological and Social Tensions in France

In contrast, conflicts in France are primarily ideological and socio-cultural, reflecting tensions over national identity, immigration, and secularism. The French model of *laïcité* (secularism), while constitutionally enshrined, has generated recurring disputes over religious expression and cultural pluralism.⁴⁸ The 2004 law banning conspicuous religious symbols in schools, and subsequent restrictions on the wearing of face veils, sparked intense debates over civil liberties and minority rights.⁴⁹ These conflicts are less about resource scarcity and more about competing visions of societal values, integration, and citizenship.

Moreover, the socio-economic marginalization of immigrant communities, particularly those of North African descent, has resulted in periodic urban riots and confrontations with law enforcement.⁵⁰ Although France's judiciary and administrative courts provide avenues for redress, public perception often views state responses as discriminatory.⁵¹ Thus, the French experience illustrates how ideological rigidity and social exclusion can generate internal conflicts, even within advanced democracies governed by strong legal institutions.

5.3 Cross-National Comparison of Conflict Drivers

A comparative assessment reveals that while Nigeria and Uganda's conflicts are predominantly economic and political, France's conflicts are largely ideological and socio-cultural. Nigeria and Uganda contend with state fragility, weak legal enforcement, and poverty-induced violence, whereas France faces disputes over identity and rights within an established legal framework.⁵² However, in all three jurisdictions, deficiencies in inclusion and justice underpin the persistence of conflict.

In Nigeria and Uganda, the absence of credible legal mechanisms for equitable resource management amplifies grievances. Conversely, in France, rigid legal interpretations of secularism often alienate minority populations.⁵³ This contrast underscores the universality of conflict causation, where exclusion, whether economic or cultural, becomes a catalyst for unrest. A sustainable peace framework must therefore integrate

⁴⁷Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) ss. 14, 15; Constitution of Uganda 1995 ss. 20–21.

⁴⁸ French Constitution of 1958, Preamble; Law No. 2004-228 of 15 March 2004.

⁴⁹ Conseil d'État (France), *Decision No. 2014-368*, 2014.

⁵⁰ F. Keaton, *Muslims in Paris: Citizenship and the Politics of Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2006) 45–48.

⁵¹ European Court of Human Rights, *S.A.S. v France* (2014) App No. 43835/11.

⁵² P. Collier and A. Hoeffler, *Greed and Grievance in Civil Wars* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2000) 10–12.

⁵³ D. Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) 55–58.



legal, socio-economic, and cultural approaches that address both material deprivation and identity recognition within constitutional and institutional contexts.⁵⁴

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION APPROACHES

6.1 Judicial and Non-Judicial Mechanisms

Conflict resolution frameworks in Nigeria, Uganda, and France reveal notable distinctions in the balance between judicial and non-judicial mechanisms. In Nigeria, the judiciary remains the primary avenue for resolving disputes, with constitutional authority under Section 6 of the 1999 Constitution extending to all civil and criminal matters.⁵⁵ However, procedural delays, inadequate funding, and limited access to justice undermine judicial efficiency. The overburdened court system has led to a growing reliance on non-judicial approaches, particularly community mediation and traditional councils, which continue to serve as accessible mechanisms for local dispute settlement.⁵⁶

Uganda's judicial mechanism similarly suffers from systemic inefficiencies, though reforms under the Judicature Act and the Local Council Courts Act have institutionalized local courts as the first level of dispute resolution.⁵⁷ These local institutions blend customary and formal law, enhancing accessibility and legitimacy in rural areas. France, on the other hand, operates a highly institutionalized judicial system characterized by clear procedural hierarchy and strong enforcement mechanisms.⁵⁸ The Conseil d'État and the Cour de Cassation ensure administrative and judicial accountability respectively, reflecting the centrality of the rule of law in French conflict management.⁵⁹ Unlike Nigeria and Uganda, France's legal culture discourages extra-judicial settlements, emphasizing formal adjudication within a codified civil law system.

6.2 Role of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Alternative Dispute Resolution has emerged as a strategic complement to formal adjudication in all three countries, though at varying levels of institutionalization. Nigeria's Arbitration and Mediation Act 2023 (formerly the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, Cap A18 LFN 2004) provides the statutory framework for arbitration and mediation, while the Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse remains a model for integrating ADR into judicial practice.⁶⁰ However, low awareness and inadequate training of practitioners continue to limit its national impact.

⁵⁴ Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (Nigeria), *Annual Report* (Abuja: IPCR, 2021) 22.

⁵⁵ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) s 6.

⁵⁶ O. Fagbohun, *Law and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria* (Lagos: Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, 2014) 29–31.

⁵⁷ Judicature Act, Cap 13 Laws of Uganda; Local Council Courts Act, Cap 120 Laws of Uganda.

⁵⁸ J. Bell, *French Legal Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 44–47.

⁵⁹ Conseil d'État, *Rapport Public Annuel* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2020) 15–17.

⁶⁰ Arbitration and Mediation Act 2023 (Nigeria); Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse (Civil Procedure Rules) 2012.



Uganda's Mediation Rules 2013 introduced court-annexed mediation, which has improved case clearance rates and promoted reconciliation in civil disputes.⁶¹ The Centre for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution (CADER), established by statute in 2000, further institutionalizes ADR as a formal component of Uganda's justice system.⁶² France, while historically reliant on formal litigation, has increasingly embraced mediation and conciliation, especially after the implementation of the Ordonnance No. 2011-1540, which encourages amicable settlements prior to judicial proceedings.⁶³ The Code de procédure civile now mandates mediation attempts in certain family and labour disputes, demonstrating a shift toward restorative justice.⁶⁴

6.3 Involvement of Regional and International Bodies

Regional and international organizations have played significant roles in conflict resolution within Nigeria and Uganda but have limited engagement in France due to its internal stability and strong governance systems. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has intervened in Nigeria's sub-regional peacekeeping efforts, particularly in Liberia and Sierra Leone, establishing Nigeria's reputation as a peace enforcement actor.⁶⁵ Similarly, Uganda has been central to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) initiatives in the Horn of Africa, contributing to mediation efforts in South Sudan.⁶⁶ Both countries also cooperate with the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council in implementing conflict prevention frameworks.⁶⁷

France's engagement is primarily external, as a leading member of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) Security Council. It contributes to peacekeeping operations and global conflict mediation, leveraging its diplomatic influence rather than requiring external mediation within its own borders.⁶⁸ The contrast highlights a structural divide: while Nigeria and Uganda are recipients and participants in regional peacebuilding initiatives, France functions largely as a donor and mediator state in international peace diplomacy.

6.4 Institutional Efficiency and Political Context

Institutional efficiency remains a decisive factor in determining the success of conflict resolution frameworks. In Nigeria, overlapping mandates among institutions such as the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), the National Peace Committee, and various ministries often result in

⁶¹Judiciary of Uganda, *Mediation Rules 2013*.

⁶²Centre for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution (Establishment) Statute, No. 8 of 2000 (Uganda).

⁶³Ordonnance No. 2011-1540 du 16 novembre 2011 relative à la médiation.

⁶⁴*Code de procédure civile* (France) arts. 131-1 to 131-15.

⁶⁵ECOWAS, *Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security* (Abuja: ECOWAS Secretariat, 1999).

⁶⁶Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), *Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) Annual Report* (Addis Ababa: IGAD Secretariat, 2021).

⁶⁷African Union, *Peace and Security Council Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM. (DCCCXCV)* (Addis Ababa: AU Commission, 2020).

⁶⁸United Nations, *France and UN Peacekeeping Contributions* (New York: UN Secretariat, 2022).



duplication and poor coordination.⁶⁹ Uganda faces similar challenges, as the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and National Reconciliation Forums operate with limited autonomy and political influence.⁷⁰ Political interference and patronage weaken institutional credibility in both nations, blurring the line between governance and peacebuilding.

In France, institutional efficiency is underpinned by bureaucratic independence and a professional judiciary insulated from political manipulation.⁷¹ The presence of specialized bodies such as the Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme (CNCDH) ensures proactive conflict prevention through policy advisory mechanisms.⁷² Consequently, while France's political context supports institutional resilience, Nigeria and Uganda's conflict resolution frameworks remain constrained by politicized governance and limited enforcement capacity. The comparative experience underscores that durable peace depends not only on the existence of legal mechanisms but on their institutional integrity and operational independence.⁷³

7. Challenges and Lessons

7.1 Legal and Institutional Limitations

Across Nigeria, Uganda, and France, the legal and institutional frameworks for conflict resolution exhibit notable contrasts in design and performance. Nigeria's legal instruments, such as the 1999 Constitution (as amended) and the Arbitration and Mediation Act 2023, provide an extensive normative basis for dispute resolution.⁷⁴ However, the translation of these provisions into practical outcomes is constrained by institutional inefficiencies, weak judicial independence, and limited enforcement.⁷⁵ Procedural delays and corruption in the judiciary erode public trust and dissuade litigants from pursuing legal remedies, thereby encouraging extra-legal means of settling disputes.⁷⁶ Moreover, overlapping mandates between agencies like the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and the National Orientation Agency result in duplication of efforts and fragmented policy outcomes.⁷⁷

In Uganda, the integration of customary law into formal adjudication has enhanced accessibility but also created inconsistencies between statutory provisions and traditional practices.⁷⁸ Although the Judicature Act and the Local Council Courts Act aim to harmonize both systems, inadequate training and funding limit

⁶⁹ Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, *Annual Report* (Abuja: IPCR, 2021) 28–29.

⁷⁰ A. Rugumayo, *Governance and Conflict Management in Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2018) 35–38.

⁷¹ Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature, *Statistical Report on Judicial Independence* (Paris: CSM, 2021).

⁷² Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme (CNCDH), *Annual Report on Human Rights* (Paris: CNCDH, 2022).

⁷³ P. O. Nwokedi, *Constitutionalism and Institutional Governance in Africa* (Enugu: CIDJAP Press, 2019) 55–57.

⁷⁴ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended); Arbitration and Mediation Act 2023.

⁷⁵ O. Fagbohun, *Law and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria* (Lagos: Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, 2014) 45–47.

⁷⁶ E. O. Akintayo, "Judicial Corruption and Access to Justice in Nigeria" (2018) 9 *Nigerian Law and Practice Journal* 102–105.

⁷⁷ Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, *Annual Report* (Abuja: IPCR, 2021) 16–17.

⁷⁸ J. M. Kakooza, "Customary Law and Conflict Resolution in Uganda" (2019) 12 *African Journal of Law and Society* 87–89.



their effectiveness.⁷⁹ France, in contrast, maintains a robust and coherent legal structure grounded in codified law, yet bureaucratic rigidity and lengthy administrative processes occasionally delay justice delivery.⁸⁰ The comparative evidence suggests that while Nigeria and Uganda face deficiencies in institutional capacity and implementation, France's challenge lies in procedural formality that may hinder swift conflict management.

7.2 Governance and Enforcement Issues

Governance deficits remain a major impediment to effective conflict resolution in Nigeria and Uganda. Political interference in the judiciary and peace institutions weakens their autonomy and legitimacy.⁸¹ In Nigeria, executive dominance over law enforcement agencies often obstructs the impartial enforcement of judicial decisions, particularly in cases involving political elites or ethnic tensions.⁸² Similarly, Uganda's semi-authoritarian governance model has been criticized for using security laws to suppress dissent rather than address the underlying causes of conflict.⁸³ The selective application of justice and lack of accountability further exacerbate grievances and foster a culture of impunity.

France, by contrast, benefits from institutionalized checks and balances that prevent political intrusion into judicial processes.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, challenges related to social integration and ideological extremism, particularly in urban areas, pose enforcement dilemmas that require balancing public security with civil liberties.⁸⁵ The governance dimension thus underscores that effective conflict resolution is not only a matter of legal architecture but of political will and institutional integrity. Without credible enforcement, even the most sophisticated legal frameworks risk becoming symbolic rather than functional.

7.3 Comparative Lessons and Policy Implications

The comparative experiences of Nigeria, Uganda, and France yield several lessons for improving conflict resolution mechanisms in developing states. First, institutional coherence and coordination are indispensable for sustainability. The Nigerian and Ugandan models reveal that fragmented mandates and resource constraints undermine implementation despite strong legal foundations.⁸⁶ Second, judicial independence must be preserved through transparent appointments, adequate funding, and security of tenure to restore public confidence.⁸⁷ Third, while France's centralized model ensures efficiency, its

⁷⁹Local Council Courts Act, Cap 120 Laws of Uganda; Judicature Act, Cap 13.

⁸⁰ J. Bell, *French Legal Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 53–55.

⁸¹ A. E. Ibeanu, "Governance and Conflict Transformation in Africa" (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 2016) 28–29.

⁸² O. A. Olong, *Judicial Politics and Governance in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2017) 42–44.

⁸³ A. Rugumayo, *Governance and Conflict Management in Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2018) 32–33.

⁸⁴ Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature, *Report on Judicial Independence in France* (Paris: CSM, 2021).

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, *France: Counterterrorism and Human Rights Concerns* (Paris: HRW, 2020).

⁸⁶ Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, *Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Nigeria* (Abuja: IPCR, 2022) 21–23.

⁸⁷ S. Adeyemi, "Judicial Independence and Constitutional Development in Nigeria" (2020) 11 *Journal of African Law and Policy* 64–66.



adaptability to multicultural contexts remains limited, a reminder that conflict resolution frameworks must reflect social diversity.⁸⁸

From a policy standpoint, Nigeria and Uganda could strengthen their conflict management systems through integrated peace architecture combining statutory, traditional, and community-based mechanisms under a unified regulatory framework.⁸⁹ Additionally, enhancing regional cooperation through ECOWAS, IGAD, and the African Union could promote early warning and preventive diplomacy.⁹⁰ For France, policy lessons point toward deeper civic engagement and inclusive dialogue to address the socio-political roots of extremism.⁹¹ Ultimately, the overarching implication is that legal reform alone cannot ensure peace; it must be complemented by governance accountability, institutional efficiency, and participatory policymaking to create a holistic system of sustainable conflict resolution.⁹²

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This comparative study has demonstrated that while Nigeria, Uganda, and France each possess legal and institutional structures for conflict resolution, the degree of their effectiveness varies significantly according to governance, institutional independence, and socio-political context. The findings reveal that:

- (1) Nigeria and Uganda have comprehensive statutory frameworks but face persistent enforcement and coordination challenges;
- (2) France's conflict management institutions exhibit greater procedural efficiency due to codified legal systems and judicial autonomy;
- (3) the predominance of political interference in Nigeria and Uganda undermines institutional integrity and public trust;
- (4) judicial delay and corruption hinder the accessibility and credibility of conflict resolution processes;
- (5) customary and community-based mechanisms remain essential but lack formal recognition within the statutory legal order;
- (6) France's challenge lies in addressing ideological and social tensions rather than institutional fragility;
- (7) regional and international organizations play crucial support roles in African states, whereas France functions primarily as a donor and mediator at the global level; and
- (8) sustainable peace requires the harmonization of legal, political, and social structures within a participatory governance framework.

⁸⁸ Conseil d'État, *Rapport Public Annuel* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2020) 17–18.

⁸⁹ African Union, *Framework for Structural Conflict Prevention in Africa* (Addis Ababa: AU Commission, 2018).

⁹⁰ ECOWAS, *Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Mechanism* (Abuja: ECOWAS Secretariat, 2021).

⁹¹ CNCDH, *Annual Report on Human Rights in France* (Paris: CNCDH, 2022).

⁹² P. O. Nwokedi, *Constitutionalism and Institutional Governance in Africa* (Enugu: CIDJAP Press, 2019) 58–60.



9. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that legal mechanisms alone cannot secure enduring peace without corresponding improvements in governance, institutional integrity, and political accountability. Nigeria's and Uganda's experiences highlight the need for a more holistic approach to conflict resolution, one that integrates law, policy, and social dialogue. The constitutional and statutory frameworks in both countries provide a solid foundation for peacebuilding; however, poor enforcement, political interference, and underfunding have limited their effectiveness. France's model, though structurally sound, underscores the importance of preventive mechanisms that anticipate rather than merely respond to conflict. A comparative perspective thus affirms that institutional efficiency and judicial independence are central to the success of conflict resolution systems, and that the absence of these elements leads to recurring instability and mistrust in the justice process.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, this article offers the following recommendations:

- a) **Strengthen Judicial Independence:** Both Nigeria and Uganda should institutionalize transparent appointment procedures, guarantee financial autonomy of the judiciary, and insulate courts from executive influence to restore confidence in legal institutions.
- b) **Enhance Access to Justice:** Legal aid schemes and community justice initiatives should be expanded, particularly in rural areas, to ensure equitable participation in formal and informal dispute resolution mechanisms.
- c) **Integrate Customary Mechanisms into Formal Frameworks:** Traditional and community-based conflict resolution systems should be legally recognized and harmonized with statutory law, with clear oversight mechanisms to prevent abuse.
- d) **Institutional Coordination and Capacity Building:** Nigeria and Uganda should streamline overlapping mandates among conflict management agencies, prioritize inter-agency coordination, and invest in the training of judicial and ADR practitioners.
- e) **Promote Preventive Diplomacy and Early Warning Systems:** Governments should collaborate with regional bodies such as ECOWAS, IGAD, and the African Union to establish proactive monitoring mechanisms capable of identifying and addressing emerging conflicts.
- f) **Foster Political Accountability and Governance Reform:** Anti-corruption measures, respect for the rule of law, and transparent policymaking are prerequisites for sustainable peace and justice.



- g) Adopt Comparative Best Practices: France’s experience in maintaining judicial independence and procedural efficiency should serve as a model for developing countries to emulate, adapted to their socio-political realities.
- h) Encourage Civic Participation: Strengthening civil society engagement and promoting inclusive dialogue across ethnic, religious, and political lines will enhance legitimacy and reduce grievances that often lead to conflict.